

When we were told we would be greeted as liberators but had become treated like occupiers, this Congress cut and run from its oversight responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, Republicans want to portray the greatest foreign policy challenge of a generation as simply a choice between staying the course and cutting and running. Democrats look forward to this debate.

Mr. Speaker, oversight requires the vigilance and patriotic determination of every Member of Congress to do the job we were sent here to do and ask the questions that their constituents want.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for new priorities in Iraq and here at home.

BETTY BRADY'S RETIREMENT

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Betty Brady for nearly 30 years of service to the Powder Springs, Georgia community, most recently as the city clerk.

Betty's retiring from public service this year, and I know the whole city will miss her enthusiasm and her dedication.

Betty has worked with the City of Powder Springs since 1977, and in 1992, she was appointed city clerk. Over the past 14 years, Betty has worn many hats, accomplishing administrative, organizational and public relations duties for the mayor and city council.

As a native of Powder Springs, Betty brought a passion to her role as city clerk. Never one content to sit on the sidelines, Betty gave her time and energy to almost every aspect of city government.

In retirement, Betty will have more time to spend with her husband Aubrey, her three sons and her seven grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me and all my colleagues in thanking Betty Brady for her years of service to the Powder Springs, Georgia community.

LEAK OF SENSITIVE PERSONAL INFORMATION AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

(Mr. SALAZAR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, the leak of the sensitive personal information of millions of veterans and active duty military personnel by the Department of Veterans Affairs is a disgrace.

The information, including Social Security numbers, dates of birth and disability was taken from the VA to an employee's home via his laptop. When the laptop was stolen from his residence, the private, sensitive informa-

tion of more than 26 million veterans and active duty troops were stolen with it, making them all potential targets for identity theft.

No employee of the Federal Government should have the ability to walk out of their office with that amount of personnel data on their computer. The administration needs to make sure that something like this never happens again.

The VA must also work with Congress to provide assistance to the millions of victims of this leak without affecting veterans' benefits. Veterans should have the resources made available to them free of charge to monitor their credit reports for suspicious action.

If any of our veterans or troops become victims of identity theft because of the security breach, they should not be held responsible. After all, it was by no act of their own that their personal information was compromised.

Last night, I introduced H.R. 5588, a bill that would ensure the veterans are protected in case of their stolen identity.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES GAINING GROUND IN IRAQ

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, as the House prepares to consider a resolution for victory in the global war on terrorism, I would like to congratulate U.S. troops and coalition forces for training Iraqi security forces.

In 3 years, coalition troops have transformed hundreds of thousands of Iraqi volunteers into battle-tested Iraqi security forces. The Defense Department's quarterly report recently stated that there are more than 263,400 trained and equipped Iraqi security forces. Additionally, the Iraqi Army now controls 30,000 square miles of territory, an area roughly the size of my home State of South Carolina. Nearly two-thirds of combat operations are now conducted by Iraqis alone or jointly with coalition forces.

Day by day, Iraqis are defeating terrorists and gaining control over their country. Progress in Iraq is helping to ensure security in America, and we must remain committed to completing this critical mission protecting American families.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

REPUBLICAN RAID ON STUDENT AID INCREASES LOAN COSTS

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, with tuition costs rising and the availability of financial aid declining, many parents in our country are finding it harder and harder to afford the cost of college education for their sons and daughters. However, these families know the importance of having a college degree in today's economy. We really cannot underestimate the importance.

Therefore, large numbers are relying on student loans to help meet tuition costs. While these loans can be a great resource to make college accessible to more students, they can also cause great financial hardships for the borrower when they graduate and the payments are due.

The administration has supported making paying for these loans even more difficult by enacting their raid on student aid and cutting \$12 billion from the higher education budget. Because of these drastic and devastating cuts, interest rates on student and parent loans for college will increase significantly July 1.

To avoid this dramatic increase in interest rates, I encourage all Federal student loan borrowers to visit www.loanconsolidation.ed.gov to consolidate their loans before July 1.

KATRINA BILLS

(Ms. MCKINNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, this week several of my colleagues and I are circulating a chart listing 176 Katrina bills, out of which only a dozen have become law to date. As we sit here today, dozens of survivors are protesting the injustices suffered at the hands of FEMA. Hurricane season is upon us again, and FEMA continues to deny housing assistance to tens of thousands of needy families, many of them now rendered homeless.

New Orleans remains a toxic disaster zone that still looks much like it did the day after the hurricane. Despite the tens of billions of dollars spent on no-bid, sweetheart contracts, much of it wasted.

Will the 163 Katrina bills sitting in committee also go to waste? Or will Congress address the ongoing specific needs of the survivors by moving existing legislation and checking fraud and abuse by providing real oversight of appropriations?

The choice is ours.

□ 1230

HOUSE REPUBLICANS TURN BACKS ON MIDDLE CLASS; ECONOMIC INSECURITY GROWS

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)