

On rollcall 403, H.R. 5749, I was not present. If I had been there, I would have voted "yes."

On rollcall 404, H. Res. 977, I was not present. If I had been there, I would have voted "yes."

On rollcall 405, H. Res. 1257, I was not present. If I had been there, I would have voted "yes."

On rollcall 406, H. Res. 1257, I was not present. If I had been there, I would have voted "yes."

On rollcall 407, H. Res. 1265, I was not present. If I had been there, I would have voted "yes."

On rollcall 408, H. Res. 1265, I was not present. If I had been there, I would have voted "yes."

On rollcall 409, H.R. 1553, I was not present. If I had been there, I would have voted "yes."

On rollcall 410, H.R. 5749, I was not present. If I had been there, I would have voted "yes."

On rollcall 411, H.R. 5749, I was not present. If I had been there, I would have voted "no."

On rollcall 412, H.R. 5749, I was not present. If I had been there, I would have voted "yes."

On rollcall 413, S. 2146, I was not present. If I had been there, I would have voted "yes."

IT'S TIME TO TALK TO IRAN

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 17, 2008

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, on Tuesday of this week I had the wonderful experience of participating in a very important and worthwhile exercise in civilian diplomacy.

Coordinated by the Campaign for a New American Policy in Iran, Tuesday's event, called "Time to Talk with Iran," brought together a bipartisan gathering of Members of Congress, citizen groups, and religious organizations calling for bilateral negotiations without preconditions between the United States and Iran to dissuade Iran from seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

Our message was simple: It is time to talk to Iran.

In fact it is past time we talk to Iran.

Because we hear the same people who supported a disastrous war of choice in Iraq now steadily beating the drum for war with Iran.

We have been down this road before and Americans have learned a simple truth from five hard and bitter years in Iraq:

No unjust war ever produced a just and lasting peace.

It has not worked in Iraq. It will not work in Iran.

We do not need another rush to unwarranted, unnecessary, and misguided military action. We need instead to launch a diplomatic surge for peace and reconciliation.

That is why earlier this year I introduced H.R. 5056, the Iran Diplomatic Accountability Act of 2008, which directs the President to ap-

point a high-level envoy empowered to seek to conduct direct, unconditional, bilateral negotiations with Iran for the purpose of easing tensions and normalizing relations between the United States and Iran.

My bill takes a common sense approach and it is one the American people understand.

Six out of 10 Americans do want their president to talk to Iran's president, according to the most-recent Gallup poll.

Many leading organizations active in the nuclear nonproliferation movement support this approach as indicated by the attached letter in support of diplomatic dialogue with Iran from the Friends Committee On National Legislation, FCNL.

Foreign policy experts also support direct negotiations without preconditions. In fact, a group of 5 bipartisan former U.S. secretaries of state have called for the U.S. to open talks with Iran to find common ground and resolve differences on Iraq, Iran's nuclear program, and other issues.

They understand that the current policy of avoiding serious negotiations with Iran until Iran suspends uranium enrichment has not worked. They understand that an offer of bilateral negotiations with a precondition is essentially no offer at all, when the precondition is the object of the negotiations.

Not only is talking to Iran the most sensible approach—it is far superior to preemptive military action against Iran. We know from the misadventure in Iraq that the humanitarian, economic, political, and military consequences of military conflict with Iran would be staggering.

Simply put: this Nation cannot afford these costs—especially on top of the tremendous costs of the debacle in Iraq.

Finally, Madam Speaker, although many persons were responsible for planning this extraordinary exercise in civilian diplomacy, I would like to single out for special recognition Carah Ong of the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation; Bill Gould, Executive Director of the Congressional Progressive Caucus; and Nicole King of my personal staff. They did a wonderful job organizing this event.

It is time to talk to Iran. As the "Time to Talk to Iran" event this past Tuesday, all it takes to begin is one "Hello."

FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL LEGISLATION,
Washington, DC, June 3, 2008.

DEAR MEMBER OF CONGRESS, We write to call your attention to the recent call from five former U.S. secretaries of state for the U.S. to open talks with Iran. We urge you to speak out in favor of such talks and to support legislation to encourage them.

Colin Powell, Henry Kissinger, James Baker III, Madeleine Albright, and Warren Christopher all urged the U.S. to open a dialogue with Iran to find common ground and resolve differences on Iraq, Iran's nuclear program, and other issues.

The administration's policy of avoiding serious negotiations with Iran until Iran suspends uranium enrichment has not worked. We agree with those in Congress and elsewhere who have argued that to offer bilateral negotiations with a precondition is no offer at all, especially when the precondition is the object of the negotiations. This position guarantees that the negotiations with the best chance of settling U.S.-Iran differences will not begin.

Former national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and the late former National Security Agency director William Odom wrote recently that "Current U.S. policy toward the regime in Tehran will almost certainly result in an Iran with nuclear weapons." They and many other analysts have concluded that U.S. military action against Iran would only delay an Iranian nuclear weapons program and insure their determination to acquire nuclear weapons. Extreme elements would be strengthened and the cause of reform in Iran would be set back for years to come. Military action would also increase animosity toward the U.S. in the Middle East and elsewhere. It would prompt a big spike in the price of oil and would likely lead to retaliatory actions against the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Current U.S. policy not to seriously negotiate with Iran has failed. The absence of talks and the addition of ever more stringent economic sanctions will resolve nothing. Military action would be disastrous. The only sensible option that serves the interests of the U.S. and the nations of the Middle East is to explore the possibility of finding common ground with Iran through direct negotiations. Common ground is not hard to imagine. For starters, both countries have an interest in a stable Iraq, a Taliban-free Afghanistan, and increased oil production capacity in Iran. The U.S. need not wait to develop leverage.

Please add your voice to those of the five former U.S. secretaries of state and other senior figures who are urging the U.S. to open talks with Iran. And please look for legislative opportunities to put Congress on record in support of such talks.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

JIM FINE,
Legislative Secretary for Foreign Policy.

HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF JO-ANN LOFTUS

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 17, 2008

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a wonderful woman; Jo-Ann Loftus is retiring from the New York Stock Exchange after being a dedicated employee for the past 34 years.

Jo-Ann has proven herself to be a dedicated and relentlessly hardworking employee. Starting out as a secretary, Jo-Ann has worked her way up to become manager of the Government Relations department. In her many years of employment there, Jo-Ann has touched many lives at the NYSE.

Jo-Ann is also the mother of two children and would be described by them as supportive, loving and full of life and integrity. Jo-Ann raised her children as a single mother, working full time and putting both through college on her own. She has also never missed one dance recital, baseball game, after-school event or award ceremony that her children have been involved in.

Jo-Ann is also the founder of His Final Touch Prayer group and has been the faithful leader for over a decade. Jo-Ann is also a very involved member of her local Catholic parish and community.