

States troops entered Iraq, and it has become clear that the democratic elections that have been provided to the people of Iraq through this campaign have begun to spread throughout the region.

In Beirut on Monday, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese protesters gathered in Martyr Square, which some are now calling Freedom Square, to demonstrate for the removal of Syrian troops to withdraw from Lebanon. They chanted, "Sovereignty, Freedom, and Independence."

When their prime minister was assassinated 4 weeks ago and replaced with a pro-Syrian prime minister, the Lebanese people took to the streets and called for freedom. Their protests sparked the resignation of the pro-Syrian prime minister.

Because of U.S. efforts in the Middle East, freedom is no longer something inconceivable to the people of this region. Instead, they have witnessed the spread of freedom to their neighbors and have been empowered by it.

We must continue to support policies which promote freedom in the Middle East.

MEMORIALIZING THE NATIONAL DAY OF SILENCE

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

Mr. FARR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to provide a voice for those too often silenced, the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered students who face verbal, nonverbal and physical harassment in our schools.

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Today is the National Day of Silence; and across the country, students have taken a vow of silence to protest the discrimination and intolerance that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people face on a daily basis. We must continue to promote the diversity that makes our country so rich, while denouncing stereotypes that make it harder for youths to accept themselves. Stereotypes also contribute to the harassment, prejudice, and discrimination that silence GLBT youth.

For that reason, I am proud to sponsor H.R. 123, which memorializes the National Day of Silence.

I would also like to highlight the new campaign from the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network called TeachRespect.org.

I would also like to thank Mat Friday and Bruce Carlsen, community members in my district who are working hard to make K-12 schools safe, and especially Stewart Rosenstein, who is a tireless advocate for the GLBT youth in Santa Cruz, California.

I commend my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL), for introducing such important legislation. I urge my colleagues to be cosponsors.

NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

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

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, this week is the 25th anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. When President Reagan first announced National Crime Victims' Rights Week, he said, "For too long, the victims of crime have been the forgotten persons of our criminal justice system. Each new victim personally represents an instance in which the system has failed, and lack of concern for victims compounds that failure."

The Crime Victims' Rights constitutional amendment is an important step forward that will empower crime victims by allowing them to confront their assailants in court and alerting them of prisoner releases and allowing victims to seek restitution from their attackers.

Last Congress, we passed the PROTECT Act, also known as the Amber Alert bill. The PROTECT Act stiffens penalties for sex offenders, eliminated the statute of limitations for these crimes, and created a national Amber Alert system. We passed the Debbie Smith Act, which funds expanding and improving the quality of crime labs to conduct DNA analyses to catch sex offenders and other criminals, ensuring that the right person is going to jail.

But there is more we can do. Last year, Minnesota suffered a great tragedy with Dru Sjodin being abducted. We need to pass Dru's Law this year.

ARROGANT MAJORITY DISMANTLES ETHICS PROCESS

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, a dark cloud and a suspicion of corruption hangs over this House of Representatives. It is the talk of the Nation. With no Committee on Standards of Official Conduct or reasonable ethical standards to speak of, there is no hope that the dark cloud will recede and that daylight will be let in.

By systematically dismantling the House ethics process, the majority has denied this House the right to investigate its own Members and thus betrayed our core American values. Honesty, integrity, and accountability, the values, which should be the hallmark of this government, have instead been thrown under the bus by an arrogant majority, casualties in a misguided campaign to shield from accountability those who abuse this House.

This House cannot function without an open, accountable, and independent ethics process; and the molestation of that process by the majority is an abuse of power that cannot stand.

It is for these reasons I have repeatedly asked the Chair of the Committee

on Rules to hold a bipartisan ethics hearing. As guardians of the democratic process, our Committee on Rules has the unique responsibility to protect the integrity of this hallowed institution.

What are we waiting for? This dark cloud must be lifted, the air must be cleansed, and the ethics rules must be fully restored, because the very credibility of the government and its ability to lead the American people hang in the balance.

DEATH TAX REPEAL PERMANENCY ACT KEEPS FAMILY FARMS THRIVING

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

Mr. RYUN of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to vote to permanently repeal the death tax. The death tax hurts average Americans who have worked hard to build a family business and want to pass it on to their children.

Arguments from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle ignore those who the death tax hurts the most. I am particularly concerned about one group of people impacted by the death tax, and that is the family farm.

There are approximately 2 million family farms in America, many of which are in my district, the second district of Kansas. These farms produce 94 percent of the American agricultural products that are sold. More importantly, however, they pay death taxes as high as 47 percent when they deed the farm to their children. Furthermore, there are twice as many farm estates paying death taxes than any other type of estates combined. This troubles me because family farms cannot afford to pay high taxes that could be pushing them out of business.

Unless we act, the death tax will be reinstated in 2011. If that happens, countless family farms will be forced to sell land, buildings, and equipment, putting them out of business.

For this reason, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the family farm and vote for the Death Tax Repeal Permanency Act.

REPUBLICAN-LEANING "PLAIN DEALER" EDITORIAL SEEKS BREATH OF INTEGRITY

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, from April 8, a Plain Dealer editorial from a Cleveland Republican-leaning newspapers writes: "Tom DeLay, the House Majority Leader, can fashion what to him is a reasonable explanation for each of the ethics questions increasingly being raised against him.

"It's a witch hunt by a Democrat out to destroy him," DeLay responds. This is the Plain Dealer writing.