

GREAT PLACES TO RAISE KIDS FOR LESS—NEBRASKA

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

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate 11 Nebraska towns for being named "Great Places to Raise Kids for Less" by Business Week Magazine.

Anyone who has ever been to Nebraska knows it's a great place to raise a family. Now it looks like others are finding out, and I hope the rest of the Nation takes note.

Nebraska boasts 11 of the 50 places in the United States which offer kids and their parents the right combination of safety, community, and education. I am also proud to point out that out of those 11, seven are in Nebraska's Third Congressional District, which I have the honor of representing.

So congratulations to the towns of Davenport, Loomis, Diller, Petersburg, Bartlett, Lawrence and Arapahoe for showing the rest of the country how good Nebraska's good life can be.

FCC NEEDS TO LISTEN TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, today the Federal Communications Commission may do violence to its own name. The idea of communication is that you speak, but you also listen. And in a stunning act of bureaucratic arrogance, the FCC today may refuse to listen to the thousands of Americans who have told them to listen to America and not change the media consolidation laws.

The FCC went out and held these hearings, including in Seattle, Washington, where thousands of people came and told the FCC in no uncertain terms that their arrogant effort to remove these productions for the first amendment could not stand, and yet they refused to listen to Americans who told them that.

We know that when we lose access to information, democracy suffers. I hope the FCC today might have second thoughts and decide that part of their job is listening to the American people, in fact, the highest part of their job. And we're going to do everything we can, if they do this today, to stop in the tracks this effort to undo protection against media consolidation.

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THIRTEEN-FOLD FLAG RECITATION

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

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. Veterans service organizations across the Nation

often provide funeral honors at national cemeteries, including the folding and presentation of the flag, the recitation of the flag-folding steps, and playing of Taps.

As you may know, for a very brief period recently, the Veterans Affairs prohibited the flag-folding step, known as the 13-fold flag recitation, at funerals. In response to national outrage, the VA issued a letter to all cemetery directors in the National Cemetery Administration that states that 13-fold flag recitation will be allowed at veterans' funerals.

While I commend this decision, the policy will allow employees and volunteers to recite the ceremony only if requested by the veterans' grieving family members. Families should not have to remember to request the 13-fold flag recitation. The recitation of flag-folding steps should be proactively offered.

The choice to have the flag-folding ceremony read aloud should belong to the family of the deceased. That is why today I am introducing a resolution that requires the VA to offer families the choice of whether or not to have the ceremony and let the decision rest with the families and not with the bureaucrats here in Washington.

FINAL OMNIBUS BILL IS A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT OVER THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST

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

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, last night this House acted in bipartisan fashion to reject some of the President's harmful budget cuts to important education programs. Had this Congress simply rubber-stamped President Bush's budget, education funding would have been slashed by \$1.2 billion, including a 50 percent cut in vocational education and the elimination of every student aid program except Pell Grants and Work Study.

This House rejected those cuts. Instead, we invest \$767 million more than the President's request for K-12 education, including targeted increases in special education, teacher quality grants, after-school programs and Head Start. We invested \$575 million above the President's budget for technical training in high schools and community colleges. And we provide \$1.7 billion more than the President for Pell Grants and other student aid programs.

Mr. Speaker, this new Democratic Congress has prioritized the needs of children and young adults by investing in their education so they can better compete in an ever-expanding global economy.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. OBEY). The rules of the House stipulate

that Members are to keep the well cleared when another Member is under recognition.

IT IS TIME TO LIFT THE TRAVEL BAN TO CUBA

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

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, in the past 24 hours, we have heard word from Cuba that President Fidel Castro does not plan to return to power. This is good news, I think, for all of us. And this is not a surprise to those of us who have been watching Cuba. But here we are, as Americans, on the sidelines again still. For the past 40 years, we have been on the sidelines offering no influence whatsoever in what happens in Cuba.

This is a travesty, Mr. Speaker. It is time for a get-tough policy with Cuba. It is time to allow Americans to travel there and spread freedom and influence. If we lift our travel ban, some say that Cuba will simply impose their own on us. But if somebody is going to limit my travel, it should be a communist, not my own government. We should let freedom ring here, and it will soon ring free in Cuba.

ARMED SERVICES AND NATURALIZED CITIZENS

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

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize all our service men and women, especially those celebrating the holiday season away from their families and friends. This past Saturday, I had the honor of welcoming home 200 soldiers who served in the 115th U.S. Army Unit located and based out of South El Monte. These are two young gentlemen that I happened to meet earlier this year in Iraq on a recent visit. I was delighted to see that they were home. Many had already spent two or three tours there. In fact, I would like to have the House recognize that there are over 600,000 immigrants currently serving in our Nation's Armed Forces; 35,000 of those have pledged their service and loyalty to our country in spite of not being citizens.

I am particularly proud of this young gentleman, Jose Diaz, a resident in the 32nd Congressional District, who came, communicated in my office and said, Congresswoman, I want to become a citizen. We helped to expedite his paperwork while he was serving abroad. I was also happy to see him this Saturday at a homecoming for his family.

I say this today to you, Members, because in the holiday season, we need to remember all of our brave soldiers, men and women who are currently serving us across the country, and I would ask all of you to please remember them in your prayers.