

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

LET'S NOT FORGET IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, this week was the beginning of the 111th Congress, and it is absolutely clear we face enormous challenges. We must deal with an economic crisis that is robbing the American people of their savings, their jobs and their homes. We must tackle our problems in health care, energy, education and the environment. The domestic agenda is going to be long, it is going to be hard, and it is going to demand our time and our energy.

But I rise today to make this plea: Let us not forget Iraq. About 140,000 American servicemembers remain in harm's way in Iraq. Military families and veterans continue to struggle and to suffer, and the occupation continues to cost us over \$11 billion a month. That is money that is desperately needed to help the American people right here at home. Yet Iraq seems to have disappeared from our radar screens, from our newspapers, from our media. The three major television networks have decided to remove their full-time reporters. With Iraq off television screens, I am concerned that it will be out of sight and out of mind.

But forgetting Iraq would be wrong. It would be dangerous. The dying hasn't stopped. Nearly 100 civilians have been killed in the first few days of this month alone. In addition, over 300 died in December and over 300 died in November. Many, many more are sure to die in the days and months ahead, not to count those that are being injured and displaced. The number of Iraqis being killed today is about the same as the number that were being killed in 2003 and 2004.

There are other issues that demand our attention as well; the new Status of Forces Agreement, which is bound to create confusion and new problems for our troops. And we must come up with a plan, a plan to meet the refugee crisis. Four million refugees must be resettled. The humanitarian crisis goes on and on.

But despite all these problems, there is reason for hope. The administration that decided to destroy Iraq in order to save it will be gone in 2 weeks, and I am confident that the new administration, with President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton leading the way, will put us on the right path. They are committed to ending the occupation within 16 months. I actually urge them to do it even sooner and to ignore the voices that will advise them

to leave residual forces and permanent bases behind. I also urge them to engage the international community and Iraq's neighbors, including Iran, in a diplomatic effort to stabilize the Middle East, which is absolutely essential.

A full redeployment of our troops in a new diplomatic effort will send a signal to the world that a compassionate America is committed to peace; that it is committed to human rights instead of war and instead of torture.

Madam Speaker, the pundits and neocons who got us into the Iraq mess in the first place are calling it a victory. This is the second time they have called it a victory. They would like us to close the book on Iraq and to move on. But the occupation is still standing in the way of peace, it is still undermining our moral authority in the world and is draining our Treasury at the worst possible time.

We have more than enough domestic problems to deal with, but ending the occupation of Iraq must also be at the very top of this new administration's agenda. I am confident that it will be, because we will finally have the leadership in the White House and the State Department that will do the right thing.

Madam Speaker, let's not forget Iraq.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ENSURING FAIRNESS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. GILLIBRAND). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, here we find ourselves at the end of the first week of this new session of the 111th Congress. There is a lot of talk and has been a lot of talk since the election about bipartisanship. There has been a lot of talk on both sides of the aisle about bipartisanship, and that is important. I am a strong supporter of bipartisanship, and everybody talks about it. Bipartisan discussions, however, require bipartisan action. If action in a bipartisan way doesn't follow those discussions, then credibility is denied.

Now, I firmly understand and appreciate that elections have consequences, and the election of this past November resulted in a House, the United States House of Representatives, with a membership ratio of 59 percent on the Democrat side and 41 percent on the Republican side. So on the floor of this House, that is the ratio, and it is reflected in votes even this week.

Nobody would argue, I don't believe, Madam Speaker, that every single Member, every single Member of this

House is important. We all represent virtually the same number of people, and it is pivotal that each and every Member be given the appropriate and equal opportunity to be involved in the process, because that is what gives credibility to representative government.

Now, as you and I both know, Madam Speaker, and as our colleagues know, the bulk of the congressional work is done in committees. That is where the critical issues are debated, that is where the hard work is done, that is where the issues are tossed back and forth and where solutions are hammered out.

Now, when voices are silenced, either by not being able to speak in committee for various problems with rules or when individuals are not even allowed to sit in committees, then it does a disservice to each and every American. We are better when we are tussling with those ideas, when we are working as hard as we can to come up with the appropriate solution for our Nation. We are not better when we are just talking about politics.

Again, in reviewing the ratios on the House floor, they are 59 percent Democrat, 41 percent Republican. Most Americans, if you asked them, would say that is what ought to be reflected in the committees, because that is where that hard work is done, that is where those issues are hammered out. I agree those ratios should be reflected in committee. If they aren't, then America is cheated and democracy is cheapened. The committee ratios are incredibly important because they determine the work product that occurs in this House. So, again, Madam Speaker, the House of Representatives, 59 percent Democrat, 41 percent Republican.

Now, when we look at committee ratios that have just come out this week, it appears that on some of the most pivotal committees where issues like taxes and financial services and health care are going to be decided, that ratio has not held. The ratio appears to be closer to 63 percent Democrat, 37 percent Republican. This is a significant decrease of a significant number of seats, and it disenfranchises many Americans across this Nation. It is a matter of fairness, Madam Speaker. It is a matter of fairness. The American people may not care about the specific processes here, but they do care about fairness.

So I call on the Speaker, I call on the majority leader, I call on the majority party, to make certain that the committee numbers, the numbers, the ratios of Democrats to Republicans in our committees, reflect the appropriate ratio that is reflected on the floor of the House of Representatives. Madam Speaker, it is a matter of fairness.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.