

Mr. HOYER. I would hope they would. I voted for it. I believe that they were a response to what we have seen is a lack of transparency, a lack of as much accountability as the taxpayer has the right to expect, and also the failure of the TARP funds already approved to help average people around this country who are faced with losing their homes, having their mortgages foreclosed on. The legislation that we passed yesterday, in a bipartisan vote, as you know, was legislation which said we ought to have greater accountability, greater transparency so the American public knows how their money is being spent and also that we need to have a greater focus on Main Street, not exclusively on Wall Street. I think the American public are for that legislation. I would hope the Senate would pass it.

Very frankly, I will tell my friend one of the problems that it has in the Senate is that there is a large number of Members in your party, I believe, who are not for money being diverted to mortgage relief. I disagree with that as a policy, but the issue is whether they can get 60 votes to take it up. I tell the gentleman I'm hopeful that they will.

In addition, as I said on this floor in response to Congresswoman FOXX, it is my understanding that Chairman FRANK and President Obama have had discussions and that President Obama believes that conditions and transparency and focus on helping people whose mortgages are at risk is something that his administration is going to follow whether or not that legislation is passed into law.

Mr. CANTOR. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to say in closing that I would hope that the standard of transparency and openness that should be applied to the expenditure of the TARP moneys can be applied to the conduct of the proceedings of this House over the next 2 years during the 111th Congress. I think we owe it to the American people. We owe it to the American people to know what the Members that they elect are doing, what they're voting on, which is why I again say to the gentleman I hope that the proceedings next week on this unprecedented amount of money in the bill that is currently being marked up, this unprecedented amount can come to this floor in the most open, transparent way possible, giving the minority, the Republicans on this side of the aisle, the ability to make their proposals known, to have votes on those ideas because, after all, that is the spirit in which we would like to work not only with the gentleman and his party but certainly with the new President.

when the House adjourns on that day, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning-hour debate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LUJÁN). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

□ 1400

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HEINRICH). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

A RETURN TO JUSTICE FOR ALL

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud the bold leadership coming from our new administration. Today President Obama signed executive orders to put an end to destructive policies of the Bush administration. Americans and people all over the world will know, once again, that the United States rejects the use of torture and that we will proceed with the rule of law.

With his announcements this morning, President Obama is taking an important step for undoing the damage that has been caused over the past 8 years. The prison at Guantanamo Bay and the horrors at Abu Ghraib have so stained the honor of the United States that it will take years to regain the trust of the international community.

Under the past administration the world saw a White House that operated in secrecy and was all too eager to bend and break the rule of law when it was convenient to do so. Progressives fought every step of the way and demanded an end to torture and the closure of Guantanamo Bay.

President Obama is living up to his campaign promises, and he is signaling to the world a return to the very values that have led our Nation to be viewed as the greatest democracy on earth, our unyielding commitment to the rule of law and profound respect for human decency.

This Congress stands ready to help the administration. Whether it's bringing an end to prisons like Guantanamo or bringing our troops home from Iraq, we pledge to help the President forge a new path for America and for the world. Again, Mr. Speaker, I applaud the administration's bold move forward, and I will commit to supporting our renewed role as world leader for justice and human rights.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I bring you news from the second front. The second front is the border war on the southern border of the United States between America and Mexico.

It is important that America understand that there is a violent atmosphere in Mexico, our neighbors to the south. It's a possibility that the government may collapse. There is chaos, there is high unemployment, and much of the blame goes to the drug cartels that are operating in Mexico. They are violent; they are mean; they have a lot of money; and it makes no difference who they kill that gets in their way to smuggle that cancer into the United States.

This should concern all of us. We cannot wait for the reaction of the violence along the Texas-Mexico border, especially, to come into the United States. We must be proactive and not wait for Americans to be killed before our country does something about it.

You know, our country protects the borders of other nations, nations that many Americans don't even know where they are on the map. But the first duty of government is to protect our Nation and protect our borders, especially from those narcoterrorists that come into the United States habitually.

Even the Department of Homeland Security now has actually admitted that there is a problem on the border. For so long, in my opinion, Homeland Security has done very little to protect our border in the southern part of the United States.

But Homeland Security has developed a plan involving the U.S. Northern Command to deploy the United States military to protect American citizens in the event the drug wars in Mexico spill into the United States.

Just last year, there were over 5,300 murders in Mexico, that's more murders in Mexico than the number of American troops killed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan put together, and it's all because of the drug cartels and the violence that has occurred there.

I have had the opportunity to be on the Texas-Mexico border and the border all the way to California that we have with Mexico. I have been there many times, and every time I go, it's worse. The violence is terrible.

There used to be a time when Americans would go to Nuevo Laredo across the river from Laredo. Not any more. The three drug cartels are fighting for turf in Nuevo Laredo to smuggle drugs into the United States.

I want to read, Mr. Speaker, a portion of a military report that I have obtained from November 25, 2008, from the United States Joint Forces Command. It states that Mexico "bear[s] consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse," because "its politicians, police, and judicial infrastructure are all under sustained assault and pressure by criminal gangs and drug cartels." "Any descent by Mexico into chaos would demand an American response

HOUR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at noon tomorrow; and, further,

NEWS FROM THE SECOND FRONT

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

based on the serious implications for homeland security alone.”

What this military report by our military says is the Mexican government could be on the verge of collapse because of the drug cartels. It should concern us that our neighbors to the south are having this problem. It's important to America that there be a stable government in Mexico and that we get a grip on the drug cartels and not wait for crimes to be committed in the United States, but immediately send our military to the United States-Mexico border so we can take care of those drug dealers that come into the United States.

A border sheriff once told me that the drug cartels that come into the country, have more money, have better equipment and more people than he has to fight them off. Now is the time to be prepared and send our military there to protect the integrity of the United States border.

It's important that we help Mexico, but, Mr. Speaker, I am not one that favors giving blanket checks to Mexico as we have done in the Merida Initiative, \$1.5 billion we have sent down there in equipment and money. Unfortunately, it may happen that that equipment be used by the drug cartels against our border protectors. It's important that we reinforce this side of the United States border and be prepared for any action of the drug cartels that come across the border from Mexico and figure out other ways to help Mexico.

Border security is the number one issue in this country. It is time to secure our borders. The fight has already begun. We have to be engaged in this and protect the people of this country from the drug cartels.

And that's just the way it is.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Maryland (Ms. EDWARDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING JOURNALIST LASANTHA WICKRAMATUNGA

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

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, in 2006 I cofounded the Congressional Caucus for Freedom of the Press, and since then this bipartisan, bicameral caucus has sought to highlight the importance of free expression around the world. I rise today to honor Lasantha Wickramatunga, a brave journalist who was gunned down while driving to work in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo.

Threats, attacks and murders of journalists are becoming all too common in

Sri Lanka. Mr. Wickramatunga knew the dangers too well but courageously continued reporting. Recognizing his work might cost him his life, Mr. Wickramatunga wrote a letter to be published in the event of his assassination.

Today I will read excerpts of his letter which was published by his paper, The Sunday Leader, on January 11, 3 days after he was killed.

He wrote, “No other profession calls on its practitioners to lay down their lives for their art save the armed forces and, in Sri Lanka, journalism. In the course of the past few years, the independent media have increasingly come under attack. Electronic and print media institutions have been burnt, bombed, sealed and coerced. Countless journalists have been harassed, threatened and killed. It has been my honor to belong to all those categories and now especially the last.

“Why then do we do it? I often wonder that. After all, I too am a husband, and the father of three wonderful children. I too have responsibilities and obligations that transcend my profession, be it the law or journalism.

“But there is a calling that is yet above high office, fame, lucre and security. It is the call of conscience.

“The Sunday Leader has been a controversial newspaper because we say it like we see it: whether it be a spade, a thief or a murderer, we call it by that name. We do not hide behind euphemism. The investigative articles we print are supported by documentary evidence thanks to the public-spiritedness of citizens who at great risk to themselves pass on this material to us. We have exposed scandal after scandal, and never once in these 15 years has anyone proved us wrong or successfully prosecuted us.

“The free media serve as a mirror in which the public can see itself, sans mascara and styling gel. From us you learn the state of your nation, and especially its management by the people you elected to give your children a better future. Sometimes the image you see in that mirror is not a pleasant one. But while you may grumble in the privacy your armchair, the journalists who hold the mirror up to you do so publicly and at great risk to themselves. That is our calling, and we do not shirk it.

“If I seem angry and frustrated, it is because most of my countrymen—and all of the government—cannot see this writing plainly on the wall.

“It is well known that on two occasions I was brutally assaulted, while on another my house was sprayed with machine-gun fire. Despite the government's sanctimonious assurances, there was never a serious police inquiry into the perpetrators of these attacks, and the attackers were never apprehended. In all these cases, I have reason to believe the attacks were inspired by the government. When finally I am killed, it will be the government that kills me.

“As for me, I have the satisfaction of knowing that I walk tall and bowed to no man. And I have not traveled this journey alone. Fellow journalists in other branches of the media walked with me: most of them are now dead, imprisoned without trial or exiled in far-off lands.

“As for the readers of The Sunday Leader, what can I say but Thank You for supporting our mission. We have espoused unpopular causes, stood up for those too feeble to stand up for themselves, locked horns with the high and mighty so swollen with power that they have forgotten their roots, exposed corruption and waste of your hard-earned tax rupees, and make sure that whatever the propaganda of the day, you were allowed to hear a contrary view. For this I—and my family—have now paid the price that I have long known I will one day have to pay. I am—and have always been—ready for that. I have done nothing to prevent this outcome: no security, no precautions. I want my murderer to know that I am not a coward like he is, hiding behind human shields while condemning thousands of innocents to death.

“That The Sunday Leader will continue fighting the good fight, too, is written. For I did not fight this alone. Many more of us have to be—and will be—killed before The Leader is laid to rest. I hope my assassination will be seen not as a defeat of freedom but an inspiration for those who survive to step up their efforts. Indeed, I hope that it will help galvanize forces that will usher in a new era of human liberty in our beloved motherland. I also hope it will open the eyes of your President to the fact that however many are slaughtered in the name of patriotism, the human spirit will endure and flourish. Not all the Rajapakses combined can kill that.

“People often ask me why I take such risks and tell me it is a matter of time before I am bumped off. Of course I know that: it is inevitable. But if we do not speak out now, there will be no one left to speak for those who cannot, whether they be ethnic minorities, the disadvantaged or the persecuted.”

These were the words he wrote in anticipation of his own assassination.

Mr. Speaker, I submit the entire text of his letter for the RECORD.

The following editorial by Lasantha Wickramatunga, was published in The Sunday Leader on January 11.

No other profession calls on its practitioners to lay down their lives for their art save the armed forces and, in Sri Lanka, journalism. In the course of the past few years, the independent media have increasingly come under attack. Electronic and print-media institutions have been burnt, bombed, sealed and coerced. Countless journalists have been harassed, threatened and killed. It has been my honour to belong to all those categories and now especially the last.

I have been in the business of journalism a good long time. Indeed, 2009 will be The Sunday Leader's 15th year. Many things have changed in Sri Lanka during that time, and