we suspected: that the people most threatened by Saddam Hussein's rule of terror were the oppressed Iraqi citizens.

The disorder and political uncertainty we are witnessing in postwar Iraq, while at one level unsettling, is to some extent a reflection of how completely Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime dominated and dictated Iraqi life. International economic sanctions against Iraq have been lifted, and the international community is beginning to get involved in the reconstruction of Iraq.

The removal of Hussein has also improved the regional security situation in the Middle East. Syria has made commitments to crack down on terrorist offices in Damascus; Iranian opponents of the clerical regime in Tehran have been emboldened; the removal of the Iraqi threat has enabled the United States to announce we will end the controversial stationing of U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia; and, the release of the ''road map'' has re-energized the difficult but critical search for peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

There are efforts in the Congress to employ a full investigation into these difficult issues to understand whether mistakes were made, and to take action to fix them, in fulfillment of Congress's important oversight responsibilities. To date, the chairmen of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence reject a broader probe of the WMD issue.

The Coalition forces in Iraq have investigated approxiamely 200 of 1,000 potential sites. New information continues to come to the attention of the Coalition forces as members of Hussein's regime come forward. Since we do not know the outcome of these efforts, calls for an investigation seem premature at best.

Finally, we are beginning to see evidence that America's readiness to act against Saddam may be encouraging better behavior by other rogue states like North Korea and Sudan, which may increase the chances of peaceful resolution of our disputes with them as well.

I know there are concerns about our failure to find weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq, and whether that indicates that the prewar intelligence on Iraq's WMD was either incorrect or biased. There have been some challenges hampering the Administration's efforts to locate Iraq's WMD program, such as Hussein's 12-year practice of WMD concealment and deception, reluctance of Iraqi WMD scientists to discuss their past works and fears of reprisal, and the looting of suspected WMD sites.

I believe Congress is exercising its oversight authority and has set in place procedures to review comprehensively, and on a bipartisan basis, the intelligence surrounding Iraq prior to the outbreak of war, and to take account of any dissident views on the Iraqi threat within the intelligence community. The U.S. armed forces are still trying to pacify sectors of Iraq and to deal with daily attacks on U.S. soldiers west and north of Baghdad. People who have lived in a police state with no freedom of speech are unlikely to volunteer information until stability and security are achieved in Iraq. We must all remember, 30 years of living under a dictatorship cannot be reversed overnight.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my time out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

SAVE HEAD START

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

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the distinguished gentleman from Maryland and the distinguished gentleman from California and the Chair of our Black Caucus who will be coming up in a minute for organizing this important discussion on the future of Head Start.

Later in the week, the House of Representatives will consider H.R. 2210, a bill that radically alters the Head Start program. H.R. 2210 is ill-conceived and ill-devised. It sacrifices accountability and oversight in favor of standardized testing of 4-year-olds. It teaches our children a wrong lesson on discrimination by repealing current civil rights protections and allowing programs to discriminate in their hiring practices based on religion. It gambles with our children's future by diverting already limited resources into experimental block grants that can be diverted to other Federal programs.

H.R. 2210 is a classic bait and switch bill. The major changes in and new requirements under title I are not contained in title II of the bill, which creates an experimental block grants program for Head Start in eight States. This overhaul reverses the precedent in achievement that was created by the No Child Left Behind Act.

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NCLB seeks to close the achievement gap through strong standards and stronger Federal oversight. H.R. 2210 will only damage the integrity and efficiency of the program by redirecting resources to a block grant system and neglecting Federal standards and oversight.

Indeed, changing the funding formula to block grants under Title II creates a daunting scenario for Head Start. The four eligibility requirements under Title II do not address quality or expertise. The legislation requires the bare minimum of the eight participating States. All that a State has to do is to have an existing preschool system, a basic standard for school readiness and basic requirements for the allocation of Head Start funding.

All 50 States meet these minimum requirements, but too few provide quality service. For example, only three States currently provide all the services needed to get at-risk children ready to learn. These States provide the same set of eight comprehensive services required of Head Start through State-run pre-K programs. At present, there is simply no clear body of research demonstrating the effectiveness of State pre-kindergarten programs.

Let me also elaborate on other shortcomings of the proposal to change Head Start into a block grant program. Title II of H.R. 2210 does not specify minimum thresholds on class size, class-staff ratios or curriculum content. It calls on each State to create its own school readiness standards and own criteria for measuring achievement. With State preschool programs varying greatly in content and quality, how can we ensure that low-income children from across the Nation will receive a quality education?

H.R. 2210 also does not contain adequate evaluation and oversight requirements. Instead of annual reports and on-site evaluation by the HHS every 3 years, States under the block grant program will not be held to any minimum threshold requirements on quality or appropriateness of their State plans. This is a giant step backwards for the Head Start program.

Finally, the bill allows the States to use Head Start funds to supplement other Federal programs. Governors may be able to use this money to cover budget deficits in their States. My home State of California receives over $800 million in Federal moneys for Head Start. California is now suffering from a budget deficit in excess of $38 billion. With the block grant proposal, my State could divert TANF and Title I preschool funds to offset the State's budget deficit, then use the Head Start block grant to fund TANF and Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This loophole allows States to reduce Head Start funding legally, which severely shortchanges our low-income children.

Mr. Speaker, this is the wrong way to go.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GINGREY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

DO NOT BLOCK GRANT HEAD START

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