

this war for a lack of support for those who fight it. In fact, the Bush administration and his team at the Pentagon have demonstrated a potent lack of support for the troops through poor planning, poor planning for the long military operation of Iraq. And by neglecting to provide every soldier with the life-saving body armor needed to survive military combat.

Hundreds of lives could have been saved if our troops had not been left as sitting ducks on the battlefield without the body armor, without the plated armor for Humvees and without what would have saved their lives during battle.

Finally, the Bush administration and the Republicans in Congress have clearly neglected to support the soldiers once they come home. Veterans health care continues to suffer under this administration's reckless fiscal policies, and America has not kept its promise to properly provide for the health care of our soldiers once they have returned from the war.

In fact, one of the champions of veterans in the Republican party, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) was stripped of his Veterans Affairs Committee chairmanship precisely because he advocated for full support of our veterans. And then, after losing his chairmanship, he was removed from the committee.

What kind of message does that send to our troops currently stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan?

If they think their lives are tough on the battlefield, just wait till they come back home and wait till they need services for either physical or mental health or whatever else they are going to need from us when they return.

Mr. Speaker, I introduced H. Con. Res. 35 with the support of 28 of my colleagues in the House. This legislation will help secure Iraq by withdrawing our troops, which will ensure that America's role in Iraq actually does not make our troops sitting ducks. H. Con. Res. 35 is part of a larger national security strategy that I call SMART security. SMART is a sensible multilateral American response to terrorism. And it will ensure America's security by relying on smarter policies, policies that encourage a commitment to diplomacy, a committee to international cooperation and a commitment to nuclear security. Smart security will actually make our country safer.

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

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. FORTUÑO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my special order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Puerto Rico?

There was no objection.

88th ANNIVERSARY OF U.S. CITIZENSHIP FOR PUERTO RICANS

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

Mr. FORTUÑO. Mr. Speaker, at the end of the Spanish American War in 1898, Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States and became a territory under the Territorial Clause of the U.S. Constitution. It was not until 1917, by virtue of the passage of the Jones Act, that people born in Puerto Rico were granted the privilege of becoming citizens of this great Nation.

On March 2, 1917, exactly 88 years ago, Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens. We value our citizenship dearly, and over the years, Puerto Ricans have honored their citizenship by making major contributions to our great Nation. We have distinguished ourselves in the arts, the sciences and sports. But most important of all, courageous Puerto Rican men and women have served their Nation proudly defending our valued principles of freedom around the world.

Puerto Ricans have served with honor and distinction in the Armed Forces of the United States in all wars and conflicts since 1917 to this day, where 3,400 of our men and women are active in our Nation's war on terrorism, including 825 soldiers currently serving in Iraq.

Four Puerto Ricans have received the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest award given for valor on the battlefield. Today I want to again honor these four Puerto Rican heroes: Private First Class Fernando Garcia, who fought in the Korean War; Private First Class Carlos Lozada, who fought in the Vietnam War; Captain Euripides Rubio, who fought in the Vietnam War; and Specialist Hector Santiago-Colon, who also fought in the Vietnam War.

18,000 Puerto Ricans served in World War I. During World War II, 65,034 Puerto Ricans, including 200 Puerto Rican women, served in the Armed Forces. More than 61,000 Puerto Ricans served in the Korean War during which the 65th Infantry Regiment, comprised mostly of Puerto Rican soldiers, distinguished themselves for bravery.

Actually, I would like to quote tonight General Douglas MacArthur who said in Tokyo on February 12, 1951, and I quote, "The Puerto Ricans forming the ranks of the gallant 65th Infantry on the battlefields of Korea are writing a brilliant record of achievement in battle, and I am proud indeed to have them in this command. I wish that we may have many more like them," and I close the quote.

More than 48,000 Puerto Ricans served in Vietnam. Of these, over 430 were killed and over 3,000 were wounded.

Close to 2,600 Puerto Rico National Guard volunteers and U.S. Army Reserve soldiers were mobilized for Desert Storm.

Puerto Ricans have always responded to the call of defending our Nation and have had no qualms in shedding their blood on the battlefields to defend the cause of liberty.

On February 15 of this year, I visited Private First Class Emanuel Melendez-Diaz from Comerio, Puerto Rico, who is in intensive care in Walter Reed Army Medical Center from injuries suffered in Iraq as part of our global war against terrorism. I was deeply moved by the intense pride his parents show in their son and in the sacrifice he made for our Nation. And yet, I could not help but think that Private First Class Emanuel Melendez-Diaz had not been able to vote for his Commander-in-Chief because he is Puerto Rican. That is morally wrong.

Today we commemorate the 88th anniversary of Congress granting US citizenship to the people of Puerto Rico. Yet we still cannot vote for our President, cannot vote in this Chamber, cannot vote on legislation that affects us. Congress has an unfinished agenda with Puerto Rico. The 4 million U.S. citizens that live in Puerto Rico should finally be given the opportunity to make an educated, fair and democratic choice regarding their final status preference. After 106 years of territorial status, and 88 years of being U.S. citizens, we are tired of waiting. The people of Puerto Rico deserve better. We have earned our right to be heard.

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

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

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY

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

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today, March 2 marks Texas Independence Day, and this morning at the Texas State Cemetery in Austin, Texas, Texans paid tribute with a musket volley salute in full costume to the Texas veterans who are buried there.

Texas cities and towns across the State are holding many important Memorial events in honor of the fact that 169 years ago today, the Texas Declaration of Independence was ratified by the Constitutional Convention of 1836 at Washington-on-the-Brazos.

Less than 100 years after American patriots declared independence from the tyrannical British Empire's military domination, Texas declared its independence from Mexico. After July 4, 1776, democratic government became a birthright for the people of the new