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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 14, 2006.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JEB BRADLEY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 31, 2006, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) for 5 minutes.

ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF PASSAGE OF HOUSE RESOLUTION 135, ESTABLISHING HOUSE DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 1-year anniversary of passage of House Resolution 135, which established the House Democracy Assistance Commission. Upon the resolution's passage, 16 appointments were made, and I was honored to be appointed as chairman of this effort by Speaker HASTERT; and I

know that my colleague, DAVID PRICE, the ranking minority member, was equally honored to be appointed by Ms. PELOSI as the ranking minority member.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the purpose of the House Democracy Assistance Commission is to strengthen legislatures in emerging democracies. In recent years, we have seen that the spread of democracy cannot be contained; but these new democracies have little experience in the actual practice of democracy. Over our 230-year history, we have learned that elections are relatively easy. It is the mechanics, practice, and procedure of democracy that is far more difficult.

Many fledgling democracies have a long history of authoritarian rule. The revolutions that sweep dictators and reformers in often center around charismatic leaders that, with popular support, secure the levers of executive power.

But as our Founding Fathers understood, the people's branch of government, the legislature, serves as the safeguard, ensuring that new leaders did not lead their nations back down towards a path of dictatorship. Acting as a check on executive power by conducting oversight and overseeing the national budget are necessary authorities for a parliament to exercise if democracy is to flourish.

Unfortunately, parliamentarians working in authoritarian systems often have no incentive or ability to learn about their rights and responsibilities as members of parliament. The commission has seen it in Georgia, where decades of Communist rule emasculated the parliament. We see it in Macedonia where Tito's rule and the Balkan wars made democratic rule impossible. We have seen it in Kenya, where the plague of African corruption has stalled democratic reform. We have seen it in Indonesia, where the strong-armed rule of Suharto reduced par-

liament to an afterthought. We have seen it in East Timor, the newest nation on the globe, which has no history of self-government, democratic or otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, the commission has or soon will travel to these places to provide peer-to-peer technical assistance to these legislatures at their request. We hope to soon be working in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Ukraine, and Iraq as well. America has long extolled the virtue of democracy to our neighbors abroad. Our commission allows the House of Representatives to do its part to keep democracy on the march.

We know that democracy remains a work in progress for all of us, but global progress requires that democracy works. It is our obligation to help new democracies by sharing the lessons that we have learned.

From Tbilisi to Dili, from Kabul to Nairobi, from Beirut to Baghdad, Mr. Speaker, stronger democracies make stronger allies; and through our work we will come closer to securing the undeniable right of freedom for all.

STANDING UP FOR A FREE NORTH KOREA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 31, 2006, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, the North Korean regime has the worst human rights record in the world. Citizens are denied the most fundamental freedoms in classic Communist fashion, the economy results in shortages and an ever-present threat of starvation.

Additionally, the regime has divided citizens into 51 classes. At least 7 million citizens, more than one-third of the population, are regarded as members of a hostile class, categorized as a potential threat to the existence of this regime. Members of this class are

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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