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## House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MCNERNEY).

### DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,  
July 23, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JERRY MCNERNEY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,  
*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

### MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate. 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 Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

### PLIGHT OF IRAQI REFUGEES

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the front page of the Washington Post yesterday had the harsh and ugly reality. We cannot afford not to help the Iraqis who trusted and worked with the United States with the opportunity for refugee status.

I quote:

“The American Ambassador in Baghdad, Ryan Crocker, has asked the Bush administration to take the unusual step of granting immigrant visas to all Iraqis employed by the United States

Government in Iraq because of growing concern that they will quit and flee the country if they cannot be assured of eventual safe passage to the United States.”

For the last 7 months, I have been working with a broad bipartisan group of people on legislation that would deal with the largest ongoing humanitarian crisis in the world other than Darfur. And unlike the tragedy in the Darfur region of the Sudan, the United States is front and center in Iraq. We have over 300,000 American soldiers, contractors, and civilian U.S. Government employees. We see firsthand every day the train wreck, while officials at the top of the food chain appear, sadly, oblivious and powerless to do anything about it.

I am proud to say that there are young American soldiers who will try to do something about it, even after they rotate out of the country. That is how I first became involved in this issue, as young Oregonian Guard members fought valiantly to try to save the life of their interpreter when they returned to Oregon, knowing that her life was at risk. Working with those young guardsmen and with high school students from Lincoln High School in Portland, Oregon, we were able to have a happy resolution in this one case. But, sadly, it is only one case.

I have become acquainted with another true American hero. Kirk Johnson was a young USAID worker who, as he rotated out, embarked upon a crusade to save the lives of Iraqis who were at risk because they were known to have helped the United States. He has compiled a list of over 500 Iraqis who were interpreters, who were guides, who were civilian employees. Not one, the last time I talked to Mr. Johnson, had been able to make it to the United States.

The sad fact is that we are failing miserably in terms of responding to the refugee requirements. Since I became

involved last fall, the United States has admitted the grand total of 133 Iraqi refugees, a shocking number when we consider that over 2 million Iraqis have fled the country and another 2 million within Iraq have been displaced from their homes. It's not that we can't figure out how to do it if we care, if we establish a priority, if we work on it. In that same period of time that we could only admit 133 Iraqis, we have allowed 3,500 refugees from Iran, a country with whom we have rocky relations, to say the least, where we have deep concerns about terrorism.

It makes a mockery of our commitment to accept 7,000 during this fiscal year which ends September 30. There must be a sense of urgency and a profound sense of obligation. In order to make even that modest goal of 7,000, we are going to have to admit more Iraqi refugees every working day than we have for the entire last 9 months.

It is not just the right thing to do for these poor souls and their families. There is a harsh geopolitical reality. With 4 million Iraqis displaced, more than half fleeing the country, there's 1.2 million in Syria, and the accounts of what these people are forced to do to keep body and soul together are truly disturbing. Or three-quarters of a million Iraqi refugees across the border in Jordan, threatening to overwhelm that small country, adding another element of instability to this already unsettled part of the world.

I urge my colleagues in the House of Representatives to look at a letter that we are circulating to them today that includes this article from the Post. I urge them to cosponsor our bipartisan legislation, H.R. 2265, have them urge a markup and action before we recess for August. Our failure to keep our commitment will be exceedingly serious. We undermine our ability to carry out

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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