THE PRESIDENT'S PRIORITIES

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, all too often we've seen this administration turn a blind eye toward the priorities of our very country. While the administration has consistently failed to demonstrate restraint when it comes to escalating the occupation of Iraq, it has cold-heartedly insisted on denying the children of struggling working families with health insurance in the name of fiscal discipline. Once again, the values of the administration are glaringly out of step with the values of the American people.

The administration will not stand for accountability, transparency, or dissent when it comes to ending the occupation of Iraq. They will, however, support another blank check, resulting in more lives lost and more of our priorities left unfunded.

Earlier today, the House voted on overriding the President's veto of the children's health insurance reauthorization, or SCHIP. When the President vetoed SCHIP, he argued that the appearance of fiscal responsibility was more important than the health of 10 million of our children in this Nation. But when we learned that insuring 10 million children in America for 1 year costs the same as 40 days in Iraq, it is clear that the administration does not have its priorities straight.

Mr. Speaker, supporting our service men and women is certainly our absolute responsibility. Our Nation has an obligation to those who sacrifice and defend us during times of war. However, our servicemembers in Iraq were sent into combat without adequate training, without state-of-the-art body armor and equipment, and without assurances that their tours of duty will not be overextended. The glaring failures in Iraq show that not only is the Bush administration defunding our Nation's priorities to continue the occupation, but that it is allowing much of that money to be wasted.

The Inspector General has reported that $8.8 billion appropriated for Iraq's reconstruction cannot be accounted for. Media sources have recently reported that the administration is constructing a $600 million American Embassy located in the Green Zone in Iraq. This embassy, which is the largest in the world, in fact, it is larger than the Vatican, this embassy will include grocery stores, a movie theater, tennis courts and a social club.

It will require $1 billion a year to keep it up and to be maintained. Instead of our children's health care, the priorities of the Bush administration seem to be waste, fraud and abuse.

Mr. Speaker, when the administration vetoes a bipartisan investment in health insurance for our Nation's children, it rejects the priorities of the American people. When the administration spends billions on constructing and maintaining an embassy in Iraq while Iraq's infrastructure collapses around them, it compromises the safety of our troops abroad. And when the administration refuses to end the occupation in Iraq, it assures that countless generations will suffer for their mistakes.

Mr. Speaker, the priorities of the American people are clear. They want to provide health care for children. They want to promote peace and protect our troops. They want us to fully fund the efforts to bring our troops home. They want us to do it now.

□ 1415

THE FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor weary but well after a week in which I have had the privilege of being involved in not one but two debates over the very freedoms enshrined in the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States. I am humbled as someone who not only has been charged with public duties in representing the good people of eastern Indiana here on the floor of the Congress, but I am humbled as someone who, from my youth, has been fascinated with the freedoms enshrined in the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

This week, I had the privilege of seeing legislation that I authored 3 years ago come to the floor of this Congress and be adopted in overwhelming and bipartisan measure. It was legislation known as the Free Flow of Information Act that I first introduced in the last Congress in partnership with Congressman RICK BOUCHER of Virginia, and our journey over these last 36 months brought us to that moment, this Tuesday, where we were able, through regular order, through a thorough process of committee hearings and markups and amendments on the floor, to see the first Federal legislation concerning the freedom of the press to be adopted by this Congress, a sense that freedom was enshrined in the first amendment and added by Congress to the Constitution itself.

What was especially gratifying to me was that we did it in a bipartisan way. Because I want to say as a recurrent theme this afternoon that on this floor there are many differences of opinion, but freedom is not a partisan issue in the House of Representatives. And the freedom of the press and the freedom of speech proved this week not to be a partisan issue, when 398 of our colleagues came together across the partisan divide to say ''yes'' to a free and independent press.

I come before this Chamber today, Mr. Speaker, to say ''thanks'' and to say how moving it was for me to play some small role in putting what I believe was a stitch in a tear in the fabric of the first amendment, freedom of the press. In that legislation known as the Free Flow of Information Act, we created for the first time a privilege, a qualified privilege for reporters to keep information and sources confidential.

Now, this was not a radical step. Some 33 States already have statutes that protect a reporter's privilege. But it was the first time that it has succeeded in passing the House of Representatives on the Federal level. And we await action by the Senate on similar legislation and hope for a conference committee and resolution of the matter that it might be sent to the President. We also hope, despite concerns expressed by the administration, that we can continue to shape this legislation, continue to work with the good men and women in the Department of Justice Criminal Division to dial it in in such a way that would make it possible for this President to sign this legislation.

I come before you today not just because I was privileged to co-author legislation that protected a reporter's right to the freedom of the press and a free and independent press enshrined in the Constitution, but also because I have authored one other piece of legislation about which we have taken action this week which is also about freedom of the press. It is called the Broadcaster Freedom Act. It is principally my purpose for coming before the Chamber today. But in each case, I want to begin by saying, Mr. Speaker, that I see the two as inextricably linked, that the work that Congressman RICK BOUCHER and I with, now, 390-plus of our colleagues to strengthen a free and independent press for those who engage in the business of reporting the news, we were attempting to do just as vigorously and just as effectively for those who commentate on the news. Because it has been the subject of commentators, especially commentators on talk radio in America, about which there has been much discussion and much consternation since this summer. And as I will expand further, there has been what I would characterize as, both on Capitol Hill and off Capitol Hill, troubling discussion about returning censorship on the airwaves of America by reimposing what used to be known as the Fairness Doctrine on radio and television broadcast outlets in this country.

I want to begin by stitching these two projects together because I think they are linked. Back in southern Indiana, we like to say ''what is good for the goose is good for the gander.'' The press freedom that our Founders enshrined in the first amendment for those that engage in reporting is also the same freedom I would argue that protects those that are engaged in commentating. We tend to forget that opinions that we hear, left, right and center, on radio and television are