

I and others of this House have asked the President to pardon Gilmer Hernandez, and we hope eventually the President does pardon him. He has, after all, served his time.

But Saturday, as the magnificent sun began to set, the town of Rocksprings came out to cheer and honor and praise and totally support its favorite native son. After all the hoopla, the town went down the road to the fairgrounds for barbecue and homemade desserts. And, by the way, the sheriff gave Gilmer back his badge, hoping some day he will be able to wear it again.

Deputy Gilmer Hernandez is a remarkable person, and the town of Rocksprings is a uniquely remarkable place to be from.

And that's just the way it is.

□ 1945

THE IRAQ WAR

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

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, today President Bush requested an additional \$46 billion war request. This request is on top of an existing \$142 billion request pending from earlier this year.

The President told reporters that the funding was simply for day-to-day military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. He said that the bill provides for basic needs like bullets and body armor, protection against IEDs, and mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles.

The President would lead us to believe that there are only two options in Iraq; Congress must either continue to fund the war indefinitely, or we must choose to pull the rug out from under the troops and strand them in the field without body armor and bullets. This, of course, is a ridiculous characterization of our position. We feel that continuing to referee a civil war in Iraq runs counter to our national security interests.

There is no military solution to the war in Iraq no matter how many soldiers, weapons and dollars you dump into the country. Bombs and bullets have not and will not bring us peace in Iraq. I believe there is only one answer to the war in Iraq: a fully funded redeployment of our troops and military contractors.

I think a reasonable Member of Congress would welcome a plan from the President on how we're going to safely leave Iraq, and we would be happy to fund it. But asking us to continue funding, providing funds for the occupation of Iraq until President Bush decides to change course is tantamount to asking us to just continue to support the war.

The choice is clear; it is time to face the facts: We either provide funds to continue the war or we provide funds to end the war.

Mr. Speaker and Members, I'm bothered by this request. I'm bothered by it

because the President is playing politics with the issue. The President of the United States is saying, "I want this \$46 billion and I want it now, and I want to use it for very necessary armor and equipment," because he knows that the Members of Congress do not like to be seen in a bad light, having folks believe that somehow they're not providing support for the soldiers. And he keeps testing the will of this Congress with these kinds of antics.

We know that the American public wants us out of Iraq. We also know the American public wants to indicate its support for the soldiers who are not there because they've decided that we would go to war, but rather, they answered the President's call because they are patriotic, many of them needed jobs, they needed resources, they needed money, so they're there.

Everybody supports the soldiers, but the President is trying to set us up. He is trying to set us up so that if we don't immediately vote on this \$46 billion it will look as if we are not giving the soldiers the necessary equipment in order to wage the war. This is absolutely ridiculous.

And I don't know how long this President thinks he can get along with mismanaging this war in the way that he's doing. We have 101 questions we ought to be forcing on him. First of all, where are the 190,000 weapons that have been lost? Where is the money we were supposed to have been getting from the oil wells in Iraq? Where are the billions of dollars that they sent over in cash in the beginning of this war? What happened to all of that money?

We can go on and on and on with questions about Blackwater and the contractors and the mercenaries. We can go on and on about this government that they put together that does not function and will not function. We can ask them, whose side are you on, the Sunnis, the Shias? And now you're trying to manage what Turkey does with the Kurds. The Kurds killed Turkish soldiers. The Turks threatened to go over and invade the Kurdish territory, and now we're over there trying to manage that. It is complicated. We have no business there.

This occupation is draining us, not only the lives of young men and women who are there trying to answer the President's call, but the dollars that should be going into comprehensive universal health care, truly supporting Leave No Child Behind, truly supporting moderate and low-income housing, truly being used to rebuild the infrastructure that's falling apart all over America.

Come on, Mr. President, don't challenge us this way. There are some of us who know what we're going to do, and others are going to get wise very soon.

MILITARY DEATH GRATUITIES TO TAX FAVORED ACCOUNTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman CHARLIE RANGEL and the House Ways and Means Committee for their work in putting together a package of legislation called the Heroes Earning Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2007, which is designed to help members of the United States Armed Forces and their families. I'm especially grateful, Mr. Speaker, that the committee has indicated plans to include in this legislation a bill that I first introduced in 2005.

H.R. 418 would permit military families to receive the death gratuity to invest the full amount into certain tax-favored accounts. A death gratuity is a \$100,000 payment paid to survivors of servicemembers whose death resulted from combat-related circumstances.

Current tax law limits the amount that recipients of the death gratuity can place in tax-preferred accounts, such as a Roth IRA or Coverdell Education Savings Account. This legislation would change that to allow recipients to contribute up to the full amount of the gratuity payment to these accounts.

Mr. Speaker, as the families of our fallen heroes try to put their lives back together, they need all the help they can get. The families should not have to worry about saving the death gratuity to pay for health care, college or other expenses and then have the government come in and tax the interest on that savings. This bill would help ensure that does not happen.

Mr. Speaker, the need for this legislation was brought to my attention by Captain Michael Ceres, a constituent stationed at Marine Corps Air Station New River. Captain Ceres, who just returned from serving in Iraq, contacted my office and suggested that Congress should institute this change to ease the burden on grieving military families.

Mr. Speaker, the Joint Committee on Taxation has scored this legislation at no cost, meaning that the actual cost of this proposal is less than \$500,000 over 9 years. Our men and women in uniform serve this Nation with great honor and distinction; many give their lives for this country. We owe it to our fallen military heroes to expand this option of families who receive the death gratuity, families who have paid the ultimate cost with the loss of their loved one.

H.R. 418 has also received the endorsement of The Military Coalition, a group of prominent national military and veterans organizations that represent more than 5.5 million members plus their families.

Mr. Speaker, of the 35 organizations that have voiced their support for H.R. 418, let me name just a few: the Air Force association, AMVETS, Fleet Reserve Association, Gold Star Wives of America, Military Officers Association of America, Marine Corps League, Navy League of the United States, and there are many others.