

before I came to Congress, I was a judge for 22 years in Texas, and before that I was a prosecutor.

Many years ago, when I prosecuted cases, I prosecuted an individual who raped a 9-year-old. When her mother testified on the witness stand, she would not refer to the crime as rape or as sexual assault. She referred to that crime as a fate worse than death. And when she explained to the jury what that meant, she was saying that being sexually assaulted as a child is a fate worse than death. Hopefully our Supreme Court will not require a child victim to be murdered before the Supreme Court will allow the death penalty for the perpetrator, because it is, as this lady has testified many years ago, a fate worse than death. When a person commits a crime of sexual assault, they try to steal the soul of a victim.

So, Madam Speaker, I support a State's right to decide for itself whether or not a child rapist should be executed or not, because children are more important than rapists.

And that's just the way it is.

BEGIN IMPEACHMENT HEARINGS ON RESOLUTION OF IMPEACHMENT OF VICE PRESIDENT

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

Mr. WEXLER. Madam Speaker, on November 7, 2007, this House voted to refer Congressman KUCINICH's resolution of impeachment of Vice President CHENEY to the House Judiciary Committee. As a member of the Judiciary Committee, I now ask that we immediately begin impeachment hearings.

The issues at hand are far too serious to ignore. DICK CHENEY faces credible allegations of abuse of power that if proven may well constitute high crimes and misdemeanors.

Did the Vice President manipulate intelligence to push this Nation into war based on false pretense?

Did the Vice President unmask a covert CIA agent for political purposes?

Did the Vice President order the illegal surveillance of Americans and the illegal use of torture?

These questions must be answered.

Just recently, former White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan revealed that the Vice President and his staff purposely gave him false information to report to the American people, a clear obstruction of justice.

This administration has undermined the checks and balances of our government by brazenly ignoring congressional subpoenas and recklessly claiming executive privilege. Impeachment hearings are the only way to force the Bush administration to answer questions and tell the truth.

Congress must take the first step by enforcing the subpoenas against Harriet Miers and the President's Chief of Staff and hold them in contempt of

Congress. In this time, at this moment, Congress must stand for the truth. If we fail to act, history may well judge us complicit in the alleged crimes of Vice President CHENEY.

Madam Speaker, a growing chorus of Americans are calling for accountability. The response from Congress thus far has been silence and denial.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida is reminded to refrain from personal references toward the Vice President.

Mr. WEXLER. Madam Speaker, not long ago I launched a Web site in support of my call for hearings. The people responded en masse. After only 4 weeks, over 189,000 Americans have registered their support for hearings, names I now hold in my hand. These frustrated and patriotic Americans come from all 50 States and share one common goal: accountability for the Bush-Cheney administration and a rebirth of Congress as an equal branch of government.

So many have been working on this cause before me. Groups like Democrats.com, AfterDowningStreet.org, CodePink, ImpeachBush.org, Impeach for Peace and others. All told, there have been well over 1 million signatures urging us to take action.

Tomorrow, I will deliver these names to my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee with a letter to my friend Chairman CONYERS calling for hearings. I will ask my colleagues to sign this letter. In addition, tomorrow, and continuing every day for months, I will publish in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD several thousand names of supporters who have signed up.

History demands that we take action, because the case against Vice President CHENEY is far stronger than the illegalities surrounding Watergate. When compared to the partisan and petty allegations made against President Clinton by Ken Starr and the GOP Congress, the true gravity of the case against the Vice President appears in its devastating clarity. In fact, in the history of our Nation, we have never encountered a moment where the actions of a President or a Vice President have more strongly demanded the use of the power of impeachment.

I have heard the arguments that it is too late, that we have run out of time, and that we don't have the votes. While today there may not be enough votes to impeach, it is premature to think that such support would not exist after hearings. Let us remember that it wasn't until after hearings began that the Watergate tapes emerged. Who knows what facts will comfort when the full truth is told in this case?

Arguing that it is too late signals to future administrations that in the waning months in office they are immune from constitutional accountability. Hold hearings which will put the evidence on the table, and the evidence alone must determine the outcome.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Visitors in the gallery are guests of the House and shall refrain from displays of approval or disapproval.

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

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

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

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

COMMEMORATING THE 79TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, today marks the 79th anniversary of the birth of history's greatest champion of peace, Dr. King, who became the youngest person ever to win the Nobel Peace Prize when he received that great honor at age 35.

At the King Center in Atlanta, visitors are asked to take a pledge that includes the words: "I pledge to do everything I can to make America and the world a place where equality and justice, freedom and peace will grow and flourish."

Today, Madam Speaker, America needs to hear Dr. King's message of peace more than ever before, because our Nation's leaders continue to take reckless actions to put the world on the road to ever-widening conflicts. We have seen many new examples of war-mongering in just the past few days and weeks. Twelve days ago, a leading Republican candidate for President said it would be fine for him if the American occupation of Iraq continued for another 100 years. Think about that. He would ask babies born 80 years from now to go to Baghdad for a commitment that the American people want to end right now.

Now, President Bush continues his saber-rattling over Iran. Days ago, he warned that the world must take action against that country before it is too late. Isn't this a clear signal that the administration is still considering an attack against Iran, even though we know that it is not developing nuclear weapons that can threaten the United States?

Therefore, as a lesson to be learned, we don't know all the facts about the

incident with the Iranian boats yet; but until we know the whole story, I would advise my colleagues to be wary of coming to any conclusions too soon.

And as if that weren't enough, the administration told us again that the occupation of Iraq will continue indefinitely, right into the next Presidency. But this morning we learned that it could last through several more Presidencies. The Iraqi defense minister was quoted in the press as saying that Iraq will not be able to take full responsibility for its internal security until the year 2012, nor responsibility for defending its borders until at least 2018. Yet, it has been over 2½ years since this administration announced that its strategy in Iraq is: as the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down. And it has been over a year since the President's famous surge speech where he said: "I have made it clear that America's commitment is not open-ended." But, Madam Speaker, it is.

Madam Speaker, America loses its moral authority every day that our occupation of Iraq continues. According to a study conducted by the Iraqi Government and the World Health Organization that was published last week, 151,000 Iraqis died of violence in the first 3 years of our occupation. The study also found that there was a 60 percent increase in nonviolent deaths in Iraq, including deaths from childhood infections.

Martin Luther King understood that, if America is to lead the world, we must be more than a powerhouse; we must be a moral powerhouse.

I ask my colleagues to devote this session of the 110th Congress to the responsible redeployment of our troops out of Iraq and the creation of a new foreign policy committed to the values that Dr. King espoused: equality and justice, freedom and peace.

100-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY, INC.

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

Ms. WATSON. Today, Madam Speaker, January 15, 2008, is an auspicious day for Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, as it celebrates its 100th birthday anniversary. Founded in 1908 on the campus of Howard University in Washington, D.C., Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority is the first Greek-letter organization founded by African American college women. Alpha Kappa Alpha is a sisterhood of women who have consciously chosen to improve the socioeconomic conditions in their city, State, Nation, and the world.

Its history tells a story of changing patterns of human relations in America in the 20th century. The small group who organized the sorority was just one generation removed from slavery. The sorority has directed its efforts toward improving the quality of life for all mankind while living the sorority motto: by culture and by merit.

I am proud to count myself as a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority; and throughout the years I have witnessed firsthand how the power, vision, and commitment of our founders and members have inspired AKA to endure and prosper through 10 decades. Our membership includes high-profile women from all walks of life and from all disciplines, including the astronaut and physician Dr. Mae Jemison, poet Maya Angelou, actress Phylicia Rashad, entertainer Gladys Knight, entrepreneur Suzanne de Passe, U.K. member of Parliament Diane Abbot, performing artist Alicia Keys, Indira Gandhi, and a host of other regional, national, and international political leaders. My colleagues SHEILA JACKSON-LEE and EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, also retired Congresswoman Eva Clayton, and the late Juanita Millender-McDonald are sorors, too.

Alpha Kappa Alpha led the way with such programs as Vocational Guidance, Foreign Fellowship, the Mississippi Health Project, Health Programs, Non-partisan Council, the American Council on Human Rights, Sickle Cell Anemia, Job Corps, the purchase of Martin Luther King's birthplace, the establishment of Educational Advancement Foundation, and the African Village Development Program, among a few.

The AKAs have always understood that the world's greatest asset is its youth, and developed several integral programs in an effort to increase their opportunities. These programs include PIMS, or Partnership in Mathematics and Science; ON TRACK: Organizing Nurturing, Team-building, Respecting, Achieving, Counseling, and Knowing; Ivy AKAdemy; and the Young Authors Program.

Inspired by the vision, Celebrating Our Past, Serving Our Community, Honoring Our Sisterhood, women from around the world have gathered in our Nation's Capital today to honor this anniversary, celebrate our achievements, and resolve to build on the legacy of our founders by strengthening our commitment. Today, the sorority donated \$1 million to Howard University and \$10,000 to the Andrew Rankin Chapel.

On July 10-11, 2008, the AKAs, under the astute leadership of Dr. Barbara A. McKinzie, Centennial International president, will host its Centennial Boule here in the United States Capital, the sorority's birthplace. More than 20,000 members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority will tell the Nation and the world the story of 20 women who started a movement which advanced a people and changed the course of history.

And I ask all of you to join me in acknowledging this great milestone as Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority embarks on its second century of service, the bedrock of our sorority, and excellence. It was true in 1908 and it is true today.

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

tleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

HONORING THOR HESLA

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

Mr. WU. Madam Speaker, America has lost a great public servant. Thor Hesla died in Kabul, Afghanistan last night, a victim of the Taliban.

That Thor should pass at the hands of religious extremists is perhaps one of the great ironies of life because he was such a strong proponent of the humane, human virtues in life. He worked in tough places, tough jobs in America, in Kosovo, in Afghanistan, always promoting peace, democracy, and the general public welfare. He worked so many hard, dangerous jobs, and he was such a colorful person that he was larger than life. And I guess there are some of us who came to believe that the bullets would always go around him, and in his own particularly human way, Thor had become a touch immortal.

I owe him a deep debt of friendship and gratitude. He was my 1998 campaign manager, and we won a hard-fought campaign under his leadership. But that was the least of it. It was what he did afterwards. His friendship, his support, and his wise advice, which I was sometimes wise enough to accept, that was what for me set him apart and built our deep relationship. And I believe that there are hundreds of people across this country and perhaps thousands of people around the world who similarly feel this bond of friendship and this debt of gratitude to Thor. America and the world are better for his life and his work.

Earlier, I used the word "victim" in connection with Thor; and I misspoke, because Thor was no one's victim. He chose his life, he chose his work, and he chose Kabul.

Because of events earlier during the recess, I had an opportunity to speak with my son about life and its end. And while there are many ways to live well, to live a good life, there are few, if any, good ways to pass on. But if there are any, it is to pass on in the company of friends and family or to pass on for a cause. Now, Thor wasn't with his family in Atlanta or here in Washington, his sister, his brother-in-law, his nieces, or his parents; but he was with a family and a circle of friends, the family of those who care, the friends of those who care for others and who care to risk for others. He died in the cause of bringing some small measure of peace, prosperity, and democracy to those who are in dire need of those things.

So tonight we mourn, we remember, we celebrate the life of Thor Hesla. America has lost a fine public servant, but he is now a public servant for all