

Now, there are those who say, “Colombia, yeah, they are our partner, and, of course, they are the oldest democracy in Latin America. But there has been violence in that country.” Historically they are right. President Uribe, when he was elected, pledged to defeat the FARC, the left-wing narco-trafficking terrorist group which has troubled the nation of Colombia over the last 40 years. And he has made tremendous progress.

In fact, President Uribe today enjoys 80 percent approval. Eight out of 10 Colombians approve of the leadership of President Uribe. And if you look at this Congress, this House of Representatives, this Congress has an 18 percent approval rating. So clearly, the Colombians think more of their president than the American people do this Congress. And at the same time that he has made progress defeating the left-wing narco-trafficking FARC, 73 percent of the Colombian people believe he has made Colombia more secure and safer while respecting human rights. In fact, today the murder rate in Colombia is lower than in Washington, D.C. It is lower than in Baltimore. In fact, it is safer in Colombia than it is in our Nation’s Capital.

The U.S.-Colombia trade promotion agreement is a good agreement for American workers, American farmers and American manufacturers. Let’s bring it to a vote.

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana 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 North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA VOTING RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia? There was no objection.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, this is a special day for all Americans, none more so than the people I represent,

the residents of the District of Columbia. And so I have come this evening to offer some remarks, remarks that I think are particularly justified today when the residents of the District of Columbia, like all other American citizens, are paying their Federal income taxes. The difference is they are doing so without any voting representation on the floor of the House or the Senate.

First, I begin with some gratitude to my colleagues, the so-called Blue Dogs, for whom this hour had been claimed, but who gave it to me this evening because of the subject matter of this special order. I very much appreciate their support. For those of you who don’t know who the Blue Dogs are, they are the more conservative Members of the House. They supported the D.C. Voting Rights bill that indeed passed the House, one of the first.

We hadn’t been here 6 months, I don’t think we had been here more than 4 months before this bill to give the District of Columbia citizens, the citizens of the Nation’s Capital, voting rights only in this chamber, the people’s House. It was indeed passed by the House of Representatives, mind you, the only House that is affected. In a Nation known more for its incrementalism than for rapid change to effect justice, we have accepted the notion that we must begin with the House, the people’s House. After more than 200 years of meeting every obligation that has been met by every other citizen, we think it is not too much to ask that the residents of the Nation’s Capital have the vote at least in the people’s House. We are asking for no more than that.

Our thanks go especially to the Speaker of the House, NANCY PELOSI, who made it a priority to pass this bill and put her full energy behind it. She was willing to bring it to the floor. She made it clear that she, as the leader, the first woman to lead the House of Representatives, wanted to put her signature on this bill and asked four Members on both sides of the aisle to support it. Majority Leader STENY HOYER, a longtime supporter of this bill, as well, put all of his energy in it. Particularly when it was stopped first by a parliamentary maneuver, he worked tirelessly until he got this bill passed. He has been with us every step of the way. These two leaders have stood for full representation and equality for Americans in so many ways. No one should be surprised at the leadership they have given us on this bill.

I have to very especially mention Congressman TOM DAVIS who doggedly started us on what has been a truly bipartisan path. When I was in the minority and he indeed became the chief sponsor of the House-only bill, I discovered indeed a partner for us. The State of Utah barely missed getting a House vote in the last census. And they missed it for reasons I have to put into the RECORD. Utah sends many of its citizens who willingly agree to go away and become missionaries when they are

young for a few years of their lives. They, of course, are missionaries for their Mormon church. And they are coming home to their families. Like others who come home, the State of Utah wanted them counted since they remained residents. They took the matter all the way to the Supreme Court. And because of the way the Census Bureau and the administrative process had ruled, the Court allowed the census to stand. And all of these missionaries exercising their freedom of religion, their freedom of speech, while being residents of their State, lost their State a seat.

To say the least, residents of Utah were not joyful about this. And they have joined us in what would seem to be the example par excellence of win-win in our country. A heavily Republican district and State, some would say the most Republican State in the union, a big city in the United States tends to be Democratic, this one is, joined together. It’s a wash politically. Nobody gains and nobody loses. Why hasn’t this bill passed?

Well, it has almost passed. And we will get into that in a minute. Just a few more indications of gratitude. HENRY WAXMAN, chairman of the committee that has direct jurisdiction, along with another chairman, JOHN CONYERS, were extraordinary leaders in this process. I mentioned Utah. I thank Governor Jon Huntsman for coming here to testify about the importance of the bill and the entire Utah delegation, Representatives BISHOP, CANNON, and MATHESON.

I particularly thank the 219 Democrats and 22 Republicans who won a vote of 241-177 and passed this bill last year. And may I thank the 8 Republicans and 49 Democrats who have brought us so close that it is hard to believe that we are not already there.

Only in the other body is 57 percent not a majority. The Senate has required 60 votes. We are three votes short. We are so close. I have every reason to believe that we will, in fact, this year pass the D.C. Voting Rights Act, creating a historic 110th Congress that every Member, I think, will be proud of.

I have to thank the local and national civil rights organizations that have been a formidable force spreading around the country the message. There are too many of them to name on the local level. The great leader has been DCVote Ilir Zerka and his army of residents in the region and in the city carrying a message for us, the leadership conference on civil rights, the Nation’s great leader on civil rights matters has been a major figure in this bill. We could not possibly have gotten this far without them, along with every major civil rights organization in the country.

I particularly thank my own mayor, Adrian Fenty, and city council chair, Vincent Gray, who joined every mayor and city council of the District of Columbia in supporting our residents and