

RECOGNIZING THE MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD HONOR GUARD TEAM ON THEIR VICTORY

(Mr. PAULSEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Minnesota National Guard Honor Guard team for their victory at the Army's recent National Guard Honor Guard competition in Fort Myer, Virginia.

The competition featured eight of the most elite honor guard teams from around the country, testing their knowledge, testing their abilities and performing military funeral honors, uniform items and other aspects of military honors. Properly honoring the men and women who have given their lives and service to the United States demands the utmost commitment, attention to detail, and training.

The Minnesota National Guard holds that commitment in the highest regard, and their victory in this competition is a testimony to that fact. But as we offer our congratulations to the Minnesota honor guard team, let us also remember those who have given their lives in the name of the United States of America and continue today to recognize those that also work and serve to protect our country each and every day.

WE CAN'T BORROW, TAX, AND SPEND TO PROSPERITY

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, more Americans are looking for jobs, families are in crisis and facing the tragedy of foreclosure.

Yet in Washington, Democrats continue to push their out-of-touch agenda, which will eliminate jobs and tax families and small businesses. Under the Democrat national energy tax, prices will skyrocket to heat and cool homes, drive cars and shop for food.

Under the Democrat Big Government health care takeover, senior citizens are under attack. Families and small businesses will pay more taxes as they are forced to navigate a sea of new regulations and mandates from a health czar.

In the meantime, Democrats are scheming new ways to borrow taxpayer dollars to top this year's record \$1.4 trillion deficit. Such actions will only increase the catastrophe of high unemployment.

We need to end this attack on senior citizens and small businesses. Both parties should work helping our small businesses get families back to work.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ONCE AGAIN POISED TO UNJUSTLY CONDEMN ISRAEL

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, this week the U.N. Human Rights Council is considering a highly biased and one-sided report on Israel's defense against the attacks of Hamas this past January.

The council, which has been frequently discredited by its coddling of real human rights violators, is back to its favorite pastime, condemning the nation of Israel for defending itself against the attacks of violent terrorist groups like Hamas. Its latest faux crusade will only serve to further undermine any scrap of legitimacy that the body may have left.

If the council votes to condemn Israel and accuse it of war crimes, it's committing a great injustice and allowing itself to serve as a mouthpiece for those who wish to sabotage a true and lasting peace in Israel.

This report is not about human rights abuses. It's about taking biased cheap shots at the nation of Israel and undermining its right as a sovereign nation to defend itself against attacks. The U.S. must continue to stand by Israel, a strong democratic ally in the Middle East.

LET'S GET TO THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE

(Mr. GOHMERT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, earlier this afternoon we heard the chairman of the Education Committee really fiery and passionate, fussing, looking over at this side talking about Republicans playing politics and how this side over here had been playing politics with the water bill. There is nothing in playing politics when you are talking about tens of thousands of people being out of work and an important part of the country not being able to produce.

What would be playing politics is when the chairman of the committee finds out that someone opposing the water bill from California has a motion to recognize the University of California, Irvine, for winning the NCAA national championship in men's volleyball and pulls the bill because he opposes the chairman's bill. My friends, that's playing politics, and it is outrageous.

Let's stop the games and get to the work of the people.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

AIG'S EXECUTIVE BONUSES

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

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my deep outrage over AIG's plans to give \$198 million in bonuses to their employees next March, especially after paying out \$165 million in bonuses earlier this year. Meanwhile, Goldman Sachs is on track to provide a record payout to its executives by the end of 2009 and other firms will undoubtedly follow suit.

Well, I find it infuriating and insulting that these firms continue to reward incompetence and egregious risk-taking with taxpayer money. They have not only received billions in direct Federal bailouts to avert crises largely of their own making, but they also benefited from an array of Federal fiscal policies that have placed increased burdens on taxpayers and our deficit.

These companies must be held accountable for their decisions and for the Federal assistance they only too gladly accepted. That's why I supported legislation to block these bonuses and to ensure that taxpayers receive a full refund. I will continue to press my colleagues and the administration to ensure that as Wall Street again enjoys profitability, American taxpayers also see some reward.

I want to commend Chairman FRANK and the Financial Services Committee for their hard work on the financial regulatory overhaul that is so critically needed in our country to prevent another crisis from happening. I anxiously look forward to seeing this legislation come to the floor very soon. It's clear that our financial system demands commonsense regulation, increased transparency, and improved oversight.

Wall Street CEOs cannot run their businesses assuming that the fruits of success will be entirely theirs to enjoy while the cost of failure will be shared, will be the shared responsibility of the American people. Wall Street's compensation plans can no longer benefit top executives at the expense of their companies, shareholders and employees, and ultimately the American taxpayer.

After all this country has been through, when we have an unemployment rate of 9.8 percent nationally, and especially when 12.8 percent of Rhode Islanders are unemployed, seeing that Wall Street has not learned its lesson is a tremendous disappointment. We have to take action now so that we don't go down this road again.

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

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

HAITIAN PEOPLE PURSUE STABLE, PROSPEROUS AND DEMOCRATIC FUTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my longstanding commitment to assist the Haitian people in their pursuit of a stable, prosperous and democratic future.

During my trip to Haiti, I was reminded of the tremendous challenges facing this island nation. The U.N.'s appointment of President Clinton as special envoy to Haiti has helped to keep a much-needed spotlight on Haiti. President Clinton's appointment of Dr. Paul Farmer as the Deputy U.N. Special Envoy for Haiti, adds an invaluable wealth of experience and knowledge to the U.N.'s work in Haiti.

As a founder of Partners in Health and the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti, Dr. Farmer has demonstrated a selfless commitment to the advancement of health and democracy in Haiti for the past 20 years. I have witnessed firsthand Dr. Farmer's dedication to helping improve the lives of those in need.

He has strong south Florida ties. I am proud to call him a friend, along with our mutual friend, Jennie Block, who has also worked so hard on issues of concern to the Haitian community.

I understand that the conference on the Inter-American Development Bank in Haiti went quite well. I was pleased to see that the United Nations voted unanimously this week to extend the authorization for the U.N. Mission in Haiti for another year.

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I would also like to take a moment to express my condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in last weekend's plane crash during a U.N. mission. The U.N. mission in Haiti has helped to play an important role in bringing security and stability to some of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Haiti. I continue to support its mission and the many men and women from around the world who work to carry it out.

However, it seems that Haiti just can't get to the next step. From assistance to debt relief, from trade benefits to hurricane recovery, U.S. policy toward Haiti has run the gamut, but it is not achieving the long-term goals that we had hoped for for the Haitian people and that the Haitian people want for themselves and their nation.

I am pleased to know that our State Department is taking a closer look at some of the challenges we are facing in Haiti. Last week, Secretary Clinton's chief of staff and her point person on Haiti briefed Members on some of the initial findings of this review.

I am confident that this review will help us to better understand how U.S. assistance to Haiti can be better targeted and supportive of Haiti's own

plans and goals; how assistance within the donor community can be better coordinated; how the U.S. can better engage the Haitian Diaspora in our assistance efforts; and, finally, how the U.S. can finally make our assistance sustainable so that outside efforts can ultimately be transferred into the hands of the Haitian government and its people.

It is crucial that the efforts made by the U.S., the U.N. and others are effectively coordinated to ensure maximum efficiency and maximum benefit for the people of Haiti. Innovative microcredit and microenterprise programs would help to empower individuals, create self-reliance and create sustainability at the grassroots level. We should also look at the very small-scale renewable energy programs for impoverished rural villages and settlements that are not served by electric grids.

One of the immediate ways we can help the people of Haiti would be to grant temporary protected status to the Haitians currently living in the U.S. Granting TPS to Haitians is the missing piece of a successful U.S. approach to supporting the people of Haiti in the short and long term. I will continue to work with my colleagues to encourage the administration to take this important step.

In addition, I will continue to support Haiti's inclusion in security initiatives, such as the Merida Initiative, to ensure that the U.S. is doing all we can to help President Preval in his efforts against the narco-traffickers.

Success in Haiti is in the U.S. national security interest, and we must work together to help address the many challenges we face and that our Caribbean neighbor faces day in and day out.

PURSUIT OF AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL AMERICANS

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

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure again to come to the floor to talk about the issue that is capturing all of the national attention and a lot of attention of this body, and that is our pursuit of affordable health care for all Americans.

There has been a lot of discussion about this so-called public option, this choice people would have when they are searching for insurance when they don't have it, the idea being that if you have a public alternative, an option that doesn't rely on profits, that doesn't rely on high overhead, that consumers would have a chance to choose it if they don't have insurance through their own employers.

Now, it is interesting, because just this week we got an enormous boost, those of us who care about having a public option in the final bill, and it came from, of all places, the health in-

surance lobby. In a rare moment of candor, in a rare moment of telling us exactly what it is that they are going to do, they have told us something that should come as no surprise to anyone that has health insurance. They said they are going to keep raising rates. They said we can pass whatever we want here in Washington, they are going to keep raising rates. As a matter of fact, by their calculation, by 111 percent.

Well, on one hand, I am stunned that they told the truth. On the other hand, I am not very surprised. Our rates have been going up twice if not three times the rate of our salaries every year. They have been going up about \$1,000 for people who have health insurance. So the idea that they are thumping their chest and saying they are going to keep doing it is not a surprise. But the fact that they were so honest about making it very clear that we need competition for the health insurance companies is refreshing.

They have made it crystal clear. The private insurance companies have said, you know what? If you don't have competition for us, rates are going to keep going up.

The public option, by the way, is not a mysterious thing. A lot of my colleagues here in the House of Representatives have it. Yes. They have Medicare. And I checked. Not a single one of them that is eligible for the government public plan we have today has said no. Maybe it is because they are like the country, that says, you know what? Ninety-six percent of people say they like Medicare. They like the care they get. It only has 3.5 percent overhead, not the 30 percent overhead and profits that private insurance companies get.

They like it, but they don't want you to have it. They don't want you to have the plan that they have. So many Members of Congress who are 65 say, no, you can't have it if you are 55 or 45 or 35. It is only for us.

Well, that is not exactly true. It is for every single American who turns 65. It is a government-funded, single-payer, government-administered health care plan that every year we do a survey about, and 96 percent of people who are on Medicare say they like it.

You can do the following test: Knock on the door or go to a neighbor or stop someone at the diner who looks like they are 55. Ask them, would you like it if tomorrow you got Medicare? Watch their face light up. They would love it.

Now, we are not proposing that. The President is not proposing that. I know I would like to have a program like Medicare for all Americans. All that is being proposed in the public option is that people who don't have insurance through their work, people that don't have insurance through Medicare or Medicaid, that relatively small group of people, the 10 percent or so of the country, that when they go out and