

In America, there are always challenging issues facing the future of our country. The only choice we have in the matter is whether to tackle them or leave them for future generations. For the last few decades, many have unfortunately preferred to put political expedience over responsible governance and allow major issues to be decided by someone else. For too long Congress has ceded its legislative authority to the executive branch and to the courts.

But, Madam Speaker, article 1 of the Constitution says the buck stops right here. And this week, the House will do its duty by the Constitution and the American people and make our voices heard on two of the toughest challenges facing our Nation today.

First, we will take up the District of Columbia Personal Protection Act which would guarantee the second amendment rights of District residents. For years American citizens in Washington, D.C., have had their right to self-protection denied them, and it is time to set things right. Washington residents are American citizens and, therefore, deserve the same right to bear arms, to defend themselves, as much as anyone else. The homes of this city will be safer when its law-abiding citizens are on a equal footing with its violent criminals.

Second, we will take up the Marriage Protection Amendment which would reaffirm the definition of marriage as the union between one man and one woman. The marriage issue, like too many issues these days, is being forced upon the American people by judicial activists overstepping their authority. Congress must assert itself. The voice of the people must be heard.

It is our job to make the laws in this country. And as easy as life would be for us if the most controversial bill we had to vote on was to rename a post office, that is not what we were elected to do. We were elected to deliberate over difficult issues, to come down on one side or the other and to ultimately defend our decisions in open debate before the American people.

That is how the framers wanted it. And this week, Madam Speaker, that is how it is going to be.

BUYOUT AND FDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Madam Speaker, I have just had a number of farmers leave my office this morning, and they are not real sure they are going to be farming this year. So I rise today because tobacco farmers, growers and allotment holders desperately need a tobacco buyout, and they expect Congress to pass one before leaving in October.

Without a buyout, approximately half of North Carolina's tobacco grow-

ers could go out of business this year. A buyout means a difference between bankruptcy and solvency, between being forced out of business and retiring with dignity, and between surrendering everything to creditors or having a legacy to leave to the next generation.

A buyout would pump almost \$4 billion into rural North Carolina at a time when they are really hurting. This infusion of capital would launch our agriculture sector into a new era of growth and development and provide greater stability to those who wish to continue to farm.

Because the buyout is so critical to North Carolina's farm families and to the continued strength of North Carolina's agriculture sector, it is time for Congress to make the tough decisions necessary to ensure the buyout's success. Now, in the past several months, it has become increasingly clear that the ultimate success of a tobacco buyout is directly tied to the inclusion of FDA regulation.

Madam Speaker, tobacco growers do not want us to have a prolonged fight over FDA. That is what they have told me over and over again. They want a buyout today, and they are fully prepared to pay the price of FDA regulation to ensure and expedite the buyout package.

I have long opposed FDA regulation of tobacco, but let me state clearly, if inclusion of FDA regulation gets us to the goal of enacting buyout legislation before we leave town this year, so be it.

Madam Speaker, I know you are being asked by many people to separate FDA regulations from the buyout. They promise that a buyout can become law without FDA. Madam Speaker, I warn you here and now, if you choose that path and the buyout is defeated, either in the House or the Senate, for any reason, you and they will be responsible for that failure.

The Senate buyout/FDA amendment garnered an incredible 78 votes, more than enough to override a filibuster or overcome a veto. The Senate Republican leader and Senate Republican Whip have said FDA is needed for a buyout to become law, so have Republican Senators DOLE, DEWINE and MCCAIN. Today, we have seen one of the Senate conferees, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pension, Senator GREGG, will insist that FDA remain a part of the buyout package.

Madam Speaker, tobacco growers and allotment holders are at the end of their rope. Failure is not an option. Congress must pass the buyout without further delay, and it is time to make the tough choices necessary to get it done.

Madam Speaker, let us do right by our tobacco-farming families. Let us stop making promises and start delivering results. Let us get the buyout to our farmers and quota holders before the election this year. They deserve nothing less.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair cautions all Members against making improper references to Senators.

IRAQI ELECTIONS MUST GO FORWARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, a country was looking for free, democratic elections. Yet, a violent insurgency controlled about one-third of the nation's territory. Insurgents mined roads to prevent transportation and potential voters had to dodge sniper fire just to vote. Yet people by the hundreds of thousands risked their lives to have the opportunity a chance to vote, a chance for freedom.

For those that may not recognize this piece of history, the year is 1982, and the country is El Salvador, and 2 years later the people of that country had to risk the same peril to vote. This situation sounds familiar, does it not.

I doubt many can forget the horrible atrocities committed during the Civil War in El Salvador that claimed over 75,000 lives. The insurgents in that day were no less ruthless than those at the interim government that Afghanistan and Iraq are facing. Violent efforts were increased before and on the day of election to prevent the people of El Salvador from choosing their destiny. The reason was simple. Elections, as pointed out in a recent New York Times article, "suck the oxygen from a rebel army."

Interim Prime Minister Allawi knows this as well as Afghanistan President Karzai. Prime Minister Allawi was on this floor last week and stated emphatically that despite the naysayers in the media, and the supporters of Senator KERRY, Iraq will have free elections next year. Yet, not a day goes by that some pundit or some strategist talks about conditions in Iraq and says that the country is not ready for elections.

However, Madam Speaker, I think it would be worthwhile for those who say they are experts to listen to the Iraqi people. According to some Arab news media reports and Iraqi blogs, only a small portion of Iraq is under control of the insurgents. We are talking about a country that is roughly the size of California, and only a small portion remains vulnerable to the insurgencies.

Allawi is right to move forward with the elections. Iraqis are beyond fed up with these terrorist acts and may surprise many with their resilience in the face of these attacks.

Look at the Iraqi police and National Guard. Despite being persistent targets of these extremists, Iraqi citizens continue to risk their lives to sign up for

the change to help bring peace to their nation.

I think these so-called experts on elections in Iraq and Afghanistan are in for a rude awakening. Afghanistan's elections are set for October 9. Also, next month, Iraqis will begin registering to vote with election scheduled for January of next year. Will it be difficult? Most definitely. Will the insurgents try to disrupt this process? Yes. We have already seen that they will increase their attacks.

But the fact is the insurgents are scared. They know that a legitimately elected leader can put an end to this illegitimate insurgency. An elected leader can offer his people peace, stability and prosperity. Insurgents can only offer hate, fear and death.

An elected leader can undermine an insurgency by reaching out and addressing the perceived ills for which they are supposedly fighting for, or expose their motives as pure extremism. An elected leader can transform his country for the better.

Madam Speaker, it will not happen overnight. It took years for El Salvador but it can happen. It is a task that the United States must continue to support without hesitation.

Let me refer to two other examples. Violence and unrest were prevalent in Indonesia. Yet, recently, Indonesia conducted its direct presidential elections, orderly, peacefully, without disruption to voters' access.

Finally, I think we can all remember the problems in Serbia with Milosovic and what happened with his military action. On June 13 and 27 of 2004 this year, Serbia held presidential elections which is a welcome change in the political direction of Serbia and its relationship with the international community.

Remember what Prime Minister Tony Blair said when he addressed this body. Here is his quote which I think rings a very positive note: "How hollow would the charges of American imperialism be when these failed countries are seen to be transformed from states of terror to nations of prosperity, from governments of dictatorship to examples of democracy, from sources of instability to beacons of calm." He went on to say, "Why America? The only answer is because destiny put her in this place in history at this moment of time and the task is ours to do."

We must take these words to heart and stand with a universal toughness. Democratic institutions continue to spread in the world. They are our true defense against the illegitimate attempts of Islamic fanatics to force their own distorted views of the world.

[From the New York Times, Sept. 28, 2004]

THE INSURGENCY BUSTER

(By David Brooks)

Conditions were horrible when Salvadorans went to the polls on March 28, 1982. The country was in the midst of a civil war that would take 75,000 lives. An insurgent army controlled about a third of the nation's territory. Just before election day, the insurgents stepped up their terror campaign. They at-

tacked the National Palace, staged highway assaults that cut the nation in two and blew up schools that were to be polling places.

Yet voters came out in the hundreds of thousands. In some towns, they had to duck beneath sniper fire to get to the polls. In San Salvador, a bomb went off near a line of people waiting outside a polling station. The people scattered, then the line reformed. "This nation may be falling apart," one voter told *The Christian Science Monitor*, "but by voting we may help to hold it together."

Conditions were scarcely better in 1984, when Salvadorans got to vote again. Nearly a fifth of the municipalities were not able to participate in the elections because they were under guerrilla control. The insurgents mined the roads to cut off bus service to 40 percent of the country. Twenty bombs were planted around the town of San Miguel. Once again, people voted with the sound of howitzers in the background.

Yet these elections proved how resilient democracy is, how even in the most chaotic circumstances, meaningful elections can be held.

They produced a National Assembly, and a president, José Napoleón Duarte. They gave the decent majority a chance to display their own courage and dignity. War, tyranny and occupation sap dignity, but voting restores it.

The elections achieved something else: They undermined the insurgency. El Salvador wasn't transformed overnight. But with each succeeding election into the early '90s, the rebels on the left and the death squads on the right grew weaker, and finally peace was achieved, and the entire hemisphere felt the effects.

I mention this case study because we are approaching election day in Afghanistan on Oct. 9. Six days later, voter registration begins in Iraq. Conditions in both places will be tense and chaotic. And in Washington, a mood of bogus tough-mindedness has swept the political class. As William Raspberry wrote yesterday in *The Washington Post*, "the new consensus seems to be that bringing American-style democracy to Iraq is no longer an achievable goal." We should just settle for what JOHN KERRY calls "stability." We should be satisfied if some strongman comes in who can restore order.

The people who make this argument pat themselves on the back for being hard-headed, but the fact is they are naïve. They've got things exactly backward. The reason we should work for full democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan is not just because it's noble, but because it's practical. It is easier to defeat an insurgency and restore order with elections than without.

As we saw in El Salvador and as Iraqi insurgents understand, elections suck the oxygen from a rebel army. They refute the claim that violence is the best way to change things. Moreover, they produce democratic leaders who are much better equipped to win an insurgency war.

It's hard to beat an illegitimate insurgency with an illegitimate dictatorship. Strongmen have to whip up ethnic nationalism to lure soldiers to their side. They end up inciting blood feuds and reaping the whirlwind.

A democratically elected leader, on the other hand, can do what Duarte did. He can negotiate with rebels, invite them into the political process and co-opt any legitimate grievances. He can rally people on all sides of the political spectrum, who are united by their attachment to the democratic idea. In Iraq, he can exploit the insurgents' greatest weakness: they have no positive agenda.

Of course the situation in El Salvador is not easily compared to the situations in Af-

ghanistan or Iraq. On the other hand, over the past 30-odd years, democracy has spread at the rate of one and a half nations per year. It has spread among violence-racked nations and to 18 that are desperately poor. And it has spread not only because it inspires, but also because it works.

It's simply astounding that in the United States, the home of the greatest and most effective democratic revolution, so many people have come to regard democracy as a luxury-brand vehicle, suited only for the culturally upscale, when it's really a sturdy truck, effective in conditions both rough and smooth.

LITTLE SAFETY IN BAGHDAD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, let me begin on a note of agreement with my predecessor in the well. I do think what we are seeing in Serbia has been very encouraging. And I am glad that President Clinton persevered in doing that over the opposition of a large number of Republicans in this chamber who sought to prevent him from carrying out that policy. But I want to talk now about Iraq.

We went into Iraq, I thought, unwisely and unnecessarily. I believe that my vote against that was the right vote. But even those who voted for it have a hard time dealing with what has been one of the most incompetently executed major national security policies in the history of this country. And one sign of that is the consistently wrong predictions this administration has made.

They said that when we went into Iraq and when they won the war, and the military part was won very easily, despite what President Bush had earlier said, he inherited from President Clinton a superb military regime that won easily the military parts of the efforts in both Afghanistan and Iraq. But we were told that once the military part was over, the people of Iraq would be so welcoming, that it would be fairly easy. Indeed, this administration punished General Shinseki for predicting that it would be a difficult occupation. And, of course, it was a very difficult occupation.

But then we were told, well, when we capture Saddam Hussein that will take the energy out of the resistance and things will get calmer. And we captured Saddam Hussein, fortunately; but unfortunately things did not get better. And then we were told, well, we will turn over the government of Iraq to an Iraqi set of officials and then things will get better. And we turned over the government to an Iraqi set of officials and things have gotten worse.

Now, we are accused by those who do not think debating public policy is appropriate in a democracy. Apparently, they have this very odd idea that the more important the issue, the less appropriate it is to debate it. Democracy