

“The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution nor prohibited by it to the states are reserved to the states respectfully or to the people.”

And, I submit, “the people” in that phrase are parents that have the power, under our Constitution, to decide how to educate their children. It is their responsibility, their right, and their authority. After all, our children do not belong to the government and are not government possessions to be molded as the government or government judges deem fit.

The U.S. Constitution gives liberty to Americans, not enslavement to government. It is a parent's responsibility and right, not the government's, to raise our children. That includes how best to educate our children.

Living in a Nation that was founded on the inalienable right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, means that parents have the right to raise and teach their children in a manner that is consistent with their beliefs and their principles, whether the California appellate judges like it or not.

And that's just the way it is.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4847, UNITED STATES FIRE ADMINISTRATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2008

Ms. SUTTON, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 110-563) on the resolution (H. Res. 1071) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4847) to reauthorize the United States Fire Administration, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

HONORING FORMER REPRESENTATIVE BILL DICKINSON OF ALABAMA

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

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to rise and talk a little bit about a great former member who just passed away, Bill Dickinson of Alabama.

Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues, when I came in in 1981 and campaigned with Ronald Reagan in that great year in which we brought back a policy of peace through strength to the United States Government with respect to foreign policy, I was lucky enough to be placed on the Armed Services Committee and Bill Dickinson was the new ranking Republican member.

In those days, we had 1,000 petty officers a month leaving the U.S. Navy because they couldn't afford to take care of their families on the pay they were making; we had 50 percent of our aircraft or more which were not combat mission capable; we had what was called a hollow Army, that is, an Army

within which skilled people were leaving at an enormous rate. And, under Ronald Reagan's leadership and Bill Dickinson's hard work as the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, along with lots of right-thinking Republicans and Democrats, we reversed that trend. We rebuilt national security.

I will always remember Bill working the budgets that Ronald Reagan brought in his early years, that 12.6 percent pay raise that we brought in early to start moving military families up to scale, the new equipment budgets that we brought in. The decision that we were going to stand up to the Soviet Union, and those decisions that the President made like the one that he made to move ground launch cruise missiles and Pershing 2s into Europe as the Russians were then ringing our allies with SS-20 missiles, and the fact that that helped to bring them to the table, helped to bring them to the point where they picked up the phone and said, “We want to talk.”

I can remember Bill Dickinson standing tall and supporting the President very strongly when, in Central America, we saw the FMLN in El Salvador, the Communist group that was taking arms and materiel from the Soviet Union and trying to establish a Communist beachhead in El Salvador.

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I remember the United States moving in to provide a shield around that fragile new government that was standing up, a democratically elected government. I remember Bill Dickinson, as a ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, spearheading support in Congress for that very important initiative.

Time after time, Bill Dickinson moved to the fore to make sure that we rebuilt America's forces, that we operated under a policy of peace through strength. And he was, indeed, Ronald Reagan's strongest ally with respect to national security in the House of Representatives.

Bill was a wonderful guy, a great guy with a sense of humor, a guy who was elected in a district in Alabama that until 1964 had not been Republican for 100 years. But he kept that district with a good sense of humor, a good sense of touch with the people, being approachable, and having a very strong, conservative peace-through-strength philosophy that resonated not only with his constituents but with the American people.

To Barbara and the children, we express our greatest condolences. We have lost a great former representative, and I have lost a great friend.

ENACT U.S.-COLOMBIA TRADE PROMOTION AGREEMENT

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

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, as Members of Congress, we are entrusted with the responsibility of keeping this Nation's economy strong by enacting policies which keep U.S. companies competitive in the global marketplace, to also support job growth at home, and ensure that the Federal Government operates effectively and efficiently.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the 9,000 U.S. companies who export industrial and consumer goods to our fourth largest trading partner in Latin America face tariffs of up to 35 percent in their exports while most Colombian products imported to the U.S. enter tariff free, tax free.

On February 27, just 5 weeks ago, the House agreed unanimously to extend existing unilateral trade preferences to Colombia and other Andean countries. In May 2007, House leadership publicly committed to passing a full bilateral trade agreement with Colombia, thereby allowing equal access to U.S. businesses in Colombia.

The Colombian government supports lowering these tariffs on U.S. goods, and many Members of Congress have shown time and time again that they support lowering barriers to trade with free nations. Yet the answer so far has been total inaction by the leadership. Inaction on the part of this Congress has levied an unnecessary burden and an uncalled for tax upon American companies, including 8,000 small- and medium-sized businesses, many of which operate in southern Florida.

Furthermore, it has been reported in the press that files recovered from a computer belonging to Raul Reyes, a leader within the terrorist rebel Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces, FARC, link the terrorist organization to the Venezuelan leadership in Caracas. In light of this news, Mr. Speaker, recent threats also made by the reckless and irresponsible leader, Hugo Chavez, and the ongoing attacks by the FARC, the United States needs to be supportive of the Colombian government, which stands up to anti-democratic and anti-American forces in the region.

It is time for the House leadership to follow through on their promises. Enactment of the U.S.-Colombia trade promotion agreement would show our strong support for this democracy while strengthening our own economy by creating greatest access for U.S. companies and creating more jobs in our communities here in the United States.

It would be negligent, irresponsible and unthinkable for this House to not immediately pass a free trade agreement with our closest ally in an otherwise volatile region.

Passage of this agreement will benefit businesses in our communities, create jobs for our constituents, and help strengthen our alliance with that democratically elected government and the people of Colombia. I call upon the House leadership to bring this agreement to the floor for a vote so we can

show the world community that the United States stands with its allies.

COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by associating myself with the very eloquent remarks of my colleague from Miami, Mr. DIAZ-BALART.

Mr. Speaker, you never get a second chance to make a first impression, so the old saying goes that we've all heard. Once first impressions are made, it can be difficult to reinvent oneself. Circumstances may change, but assumptions and perceptions are very stubborn things. Just ask any Colombian.

People became familiar with the country of Colombia in the 1980s and the 1990s as the drug wars exploded. We didn't know much about the place, but we were familiar with the highlights: Bloody drug wars fought in jungles and on the streets of cities like Medellin, Bogota and Cali. And although we probably couldn't name many of the elected officials in Colombia, everyone knew the name of Pablo Escobar, the drug lord.

But over the course of this decade, a dramatic transformation has taken place in Colombia. The rule of gang lords has been replaced by the rule of law. The streets have become safe again. Armed terrorist organizations no longer operate in huge swaths of the country with impunity, and paramilitary groups have been dismantled with their leaders having gone to jail.

Funding for the Colombian Justice Department has nearly doubled, to ensure that criminal cases, old and new, are dealt with professionally and expeditiously, sending a clear signal that the days of impunity are long gone. Poverty has been cut dramatically, while social spending has increased. The Colombia of today is unrecognizable to those who knew it just a decade ago.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege of being there on several occasions and have been amazed by what I have seen. Nowhere is the transformation starker than in the city of Medellin. This city was ground zero for the Escobar drug cartel. Its murder rate rivaled the most dangerous places on the face of the Earth. Terror and violence ruled everyday life.

Today, the city tells an utterly different story. Violence has plummeted. New public transportation projects and schools have given hope to previously blighted neighborhoods. New jobs and development, especially in the apparel industry, have provided a path to that first rung of the economic ladder, and greater upward mobility which was totally unheard of just a few years ago.

Mr. Speaker, fair trade and specialty coffee industries have also provided

new opportunities for well-paying jobs in the area. This thriving community is a shining example of the stunning turnaround that it has made since 2002.

And yet much of the world has failed to take notice. While hostages and explosions make for front-page headlines, the slow and steady work of rebuilding a country is far less flashy. But the very difficult and remarkable work that has been done deserves recognizing. Many of us in Congress are working hard to solidify the gains that have been made through the implication of a free trade agreement. This agreement is strongly supported by the private sector unions of Colombia because they welcome the jobs and opportunity that the agreement will bring.

I hope very much that the free trade agreement will be considered soon for a vote. But as this debate does go forward, I believe it must proceed based on facts, not assumptions, inaccurate perceptions, and outdated figures. When we talk about Colombia in the year 2008, we are not talking about the Colombia of Pablo Escobar. We are talking about a country transformed and on the mend. After the long, difficult struggle of the Colombian people, we owe them a little credit and recognition for the remarkable things that they have accomplished.

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

(Mr. FRANKS of Arizona 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 Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her 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. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California 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 Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MORAN of Kansas 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 New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Ms. WATERS addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. WESTMORELAND 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 New York (Mr. WEINER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

BUDGET SCHOOL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the recognition and I appreciate the opportunity to come and talk about a subject that is near and dear to the heart of every single taxpayer in this Nation. That subject is the Federal budget. It is something that as we debate issues here, we say it affects 10 percent or 20 percent or 50 percent of the population. Our Federal budget, it affects everyone, Mr. Speaker, and I think we should start this second session of budget school with a little bit of perspective.

I have got a copy of the Constitution of the United States, and there is also included in this a Declaration of Independence. Now this copy is small enough to fit into my pocket. I could put it in my jacket pocket and carry it with me all day long.

What is a little bit frightening, Mr. Speaker, is here is the phone book for the news media that covers Washington, D.C. We are one of the most covered places on the face of the Earth, and here is the phone book that covers that.

Well, I also have the Federal budget. As you can see, it is an enormous document. It is much larger. By the time you have the tables and the justifications and the analytical information and go through the appendix and find what you need, it is a huge document. It is much larger in size than the simple documents on which this great Nation was founded.

What we are going to do today is talk a little bit about this budget and talk about what our response should be on behalf of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the time. I am coming to the floor as a