

success, it became clear that the blind were failing to learn, not for lack of intellectual capacity, but because information was not presented to them in a manner that they could perceive. Once information was presented in appropriate ways, primarily through touch and sound, blind students began to achieve.

In the 1830s, residential schools for the blind began to open across the U.S., and eventually almost every State established a school specifically designed to meet the needs of students who were blind and visually impaired. In those early years, each school produced the tactile educational materials that its own students needed. In 1842, Kentucky joined the ranks of these States when Louisville's Kentucky Institution For the Education of the Blind began making tactile materials for its students in a basement facility.

It didn't take long for schools producing these highly specialized materials to realize they were duplicating effort and wasting valuable resources. The idea of developing a national publishing house for accessible materials for people who were blind and visually impaired took hold. Since the facility in Louisville, Kentucky, was centrally located among the existing schools for the blind and had developed an effective distribution system utilizing the Ohio River, our community was selected as the site for the American Printing House of the Blind, which was chartered by the Kentucky legislature on January 23, 1858.

Because the expensive process of printing educational materials in raised letters for a small percentage of the population was not commercially viable, Federal funding was sought to assure a permanent source of revenue to support this important work. In 1879, the 45th Congress of the United States passed, and President Rutherford B. Hayes signed into law, the Act to Promote the Education of the Blind, designating APH as the official source of textbooks and other educational aids for legally blind students below college level.

Since that time, APH has provided adaptive and specially designed educational materials, including textbooks in Braille and large type, tangible teaching devices, educational tests, and special instructional aids and tools essential for the education of students who are blind and visually impaired. As identified needs require, APH utilizes outside expertise by establishing innovative partnerships with publishers of textbooks and testing materials, commercial manufacturers, universities and many other industries.

We in Congress have continued to appropriate funding for APH each year since 1879. As a result, this national, non-profit corporation now serves over 58,000 students into every U.S. State, providing the visually impaired the tools they need to they need to learn and excel.

In addition to textbooks and other academic materials, APH manufacturers and adapts daily living tools and materials. Talking computer software provides access to the wealth of information available via the Internet, and electronic mobility devices assist with safe travel from one place to another. APH has developed tools that help people with low vision learn to utilize the limited vision they have more efficiently, and new technologies are delivering reading materials electronically.

The technology and treatment are impressive, but here is what stands out. In the 1800s, a child born blind had no future. Losing one's sight ended independence and ambition. Today, that is not the case. Sight is no longer a prerequisite for leading a productive, independent and fulfilling life. And that is thanks in large part to APH. For tens of thousands of men and women without sight, APH has provided the keys to live, learn and thrive. People who are blind now work in our communities. Children who are blind pursue the same dreams as children with sight. And mothers who are blind read stories to their kids before putting them to bed.

As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the American Printing House for the Blind, we also recognize the wisdom of the 45th Congress for their initial investment in educational opportunities for our Nation's blind and visually impaired students back in 1879, and I trust that my colleagues and those who follow will continue to support the successful precedent they set.

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

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

THE U.S.-COLOMBIA TRADE AGREEMENT

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

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I stand to once again raise my concern and, frankly, disappointment by the decision of the majority party in this House to turn its back on America's best friend in Latin America. Ladies and gentlemen, the oldest democracy in South America is the Republic of Colombia. Colombia is a thriving democracy, a nation of 42 million citizens, the second largest Spanish-speaking nation in the world. And in Latin America, everyone recognizes the Uribe Government, the democratically elected Government of Colombia, as America's most reliable partner and America's best friend. And this House, with the Democratic majority voting almost

unanimously, voted to turn its back on Colombia, America's best friend.

It is kind of interesting. Look at the progress that has been made in Colombia. President Uribe was elected by the people of Colombia to put an end to a longstanding civil war where narco-trafficking, leftist guerrillas, known as the FARC, ELN and right-wing narco-trafficking paramilitaries known as the Paras, all three of those terrorist groups have attacked the democratically elected government and destabilized the democratically elected government. And President Uribe was elected to put an end to that conflict. And he has made tremendous progress.

In fact, thousands upon thousands of paramilitaries have laid down their arms and agreed to honor the peace process and integrate back into society. Unfortunately, the FARC, which has ties to the government of Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, continues to fight. But the government of President Uribe has made tremendous progress pushing the FARC into the far reaches of the country. And today, villages that have never seen the presence of a national government, certainly not in decades, today enjoy the security provided by the government of President Uribe, tremendous progress.

In fact, violence has dropped so much, cities such as Medellin, which was once known as one of the most dangerous places on the planet, today is safer than the city of Baltimore. In fact, the murder rate of Baltimore is higher than Medellin, Colombia. So it is safer to walk the streets of Medellin than it is to walk the streets of Baltimore. And we want to commend the Uribe Government, the democratically elected Government of Colombia for the progress they have made.

We have an opportunity with the trade promotion agreement to further cement our ties with our best friend, an agreement that is good for American workers. It is good for American farmers. Right now Colombian products enter the United States essentially duty-free. Their agricultural products and their manufactured goods come in without any tariffs. But U.S.-made products such as bulldozers that are made in the district I represent, if they are exported to Colombia, they face tariffs of 10 to 12 percent. Some of our agricultural commodities such as corn face tariffs of 45 percent.

Clearly, those tariff barriers, those taxes, make U.S. products less competitive with Argentine corn or Asian competition for construction equipment. And I would note since this trade promotion agreement was signed between the United States and Colombia, over \$1 billion U.S. in tariffs have been imposed upon American goods, manufactured goods and agricultural products that have been exported to Colombia. And we are waiting to ratify this agreement which would eliminate those tariffs and make U.S. products more competitive.

The bottom line is the trade promotion agreement is good for American workers. It is good for American farmers. It is good for American manufacturers. In fact, the agricultural community will tell you that the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement is the best agreement in our Nation's history with any other nation when it comes to access to products grown in the United States and exported to Colombia. The bottom line is it is a good agreement.

Now my friends on the other side of the aisle, the Democrats, say, well, Colombia hasn't done enough. We need to make them do more. There is still some violence there. And until they eliminated it all, well, gee. Well, the bottom line is that Medellin, which was once the murder capital of the world, is now safer than the city of Baltimore. And some people who oppose this agreement say, well, there has been some labor leaders who have experienced violence. But look at the history they have. But as the Washington Post just pointed out, it is safer to be a labor leader in Colombia than it is to be a regular citizen. In fact, the murder rate of labor leaders is lower than the average murder rate of any other citizen in Colombia. Again, President Uribe has made progress.

Let's honor our Nation's best friend in Latin America. Let's honor our most reliable partner. Let's bring to this floor the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement. Let's bring it up for a vote, because we know it will pass. Let's get it ratified and move forward so we can grow our economy.

VACATING ORDERING OF YEAS AND NAYS ON H. RES. 1247 AND H. CON. RES. 350

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the ordering of the yeas and nays be vacated on House Resolution 1247 and House Concurrent Resolution 350 to the end that the Chair put the questions de novo.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will now resume on certain motions to suspend the rules previously postponed.

COMMENDING THE ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT ON ITS 75TH ANNIVERSARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on suspending the rules and agreeing to the resolution, H. Res. 1199.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1199.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

AN INFORMED CITIZENRY IS THE CORNERSTONE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, an informed citizenry is one of the cornerstones of our American democracy. In order to make the right decisions about our country's policies, Americans must know the facts. That is why every member of the administration and every Member of Congress has the duty to be honest and open with all of us. This is especially true when it comes to decisions about war and about peace, because the lives of our soldiers are actually on the line.

But recent events have reminded us that when it comes to Iraq, we have not always had the information that we need. Earlier this month, the Senate Intelligence Committee issued a bipartisan report on Iraq that actually proved this. It showed that before the invasion began, the American people were told that there was a strong connection between Iraq and terrorist groups like al Qaeda. But the committee found that there was no conclusive intelligence to support such a claim.

Also, the American people have recently had the chance to read the book by a former White House press secretary who acknowledges that propaganda was used to sell the American people on supporting the invasion of Iraq.

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And this House, this House of Representatives, is pretty familiar with the Pentagon's spin operation to get retired military officers to give us a rose-colored view about the situation in Iraq. The House has voted to stop the Pentagon from continuing such a program, and the Pentagon is expected to respect that ban.

Mr. Speaker, the American people deserve better. They need to have a true and accurate picture about what is currently happening in Iraq. That's why every Member of this House should be demanding that the administration give Congress the facts about its current status-of-forces negotiations with the Iraqi Government. I have repeat-

edly demanded that the administration share this information with Congress, including the establishment of permanent bases, because there was an alarming report in the press that the United States may actually be planning nearly 60 permanent bases in Iraq, this happening after the House has voted multiple times to prohibit permanent bases in Iraq.

Over the weekend, senior Iraqi leaders called for a complete exit of all U.S. troops, and they called for this at the expiration of the current U.N. mandate which comes this fall. Imagine their opinion of the United States' permanent bases in their country. Sixty permanent bases are absolutely unacceptable. One permanent base is unacceptable.

This House has voted many times, as I said, against the establishment of permanent bases, and the administration should not try to get around that by making fine, legalistic points about what constitutes a "permanent base." In fact, we must apply the duck test. If it looks like a permanent base, if it walks like a permanent base, it is a permanent base.

Because the economy has replaced Iraq as the top news story of the day, some may be lured into thinking that nothing very important is happening in Iraq these days. Well, one important statistic is, if it has not happened today, we are about to report 5,000 of our troops dead, but nothing could be further from the truth about not being important.

While we aren't paying attention, the administration is negotiating status-of-forces negotiations that could make our country a foreign occupying power in the Middle East for years or for even decades to come. What a grave mistake that would be keeping our troops in harm's way and continuing the best recruiting tool that the terrorists could ask for.

Instead of planning for a permanent occupation, the United States needs to follow a very different path. We should redeploy our troops and military contracts. We should give the Iraqi people back their sovereignty. We should help them rebuild their shattered country. We should work with the international community to bring peace and stability to the region.

Mr. Speaker, Congress must demand to know what is being negotiated in the name of the American people. What deals are being cut? What is going on behind closed doors? What exactly is the administration demanding and why? It is time for the American people to have the facts, and it is time to safely and responsibly bring our troops and independent contractors home and to give Iraq back to the Iraqi people.

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

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