Mr. Speaker, we owe a debt of gratitude to Dana

Milbank at the Washington Post and to Hal Bernton at one of my hometown

newspapers, The Seattle Times. These two journalists, writing almost

exactly 4 years apart, have pierced the veil of secrecy this

administration shamefully uses to hide the painful images of U.S.

casualties in Iraq and the touching and patriotic farewells by loved

ones.

On Sunday, April 18, 2004, Bernton wrote a story called: The Somber

Task of Honoring the Fallen. This poignant story included the first

newspaper pictures of caskets being loaded into a military airplane.

The story, which I will enter into the Record, set off a firestorm,

because the administration did not want anyone to see the grim reality

of war--rows of flag-draped coffins inside a military plane to begin

the last homecoming. And the civilian contractor who took the pictures

was fired for sharing them with the media. They were published at a

time when the administration was doing everything to make people

believe in its May 1, 2003, Mission Accomplished banner.

The administration continues to spin the message from that phony PR

event. To do that, the administration continues to hide the grim

reality of the Iraq war. Last Thursday, Milbank wrote a story in the

Washington Post called: What the Family Would Let You See, the Pentagon

Obstructs. Almost 4 years later after The Seattle Times story, the

American people are still denied access to the truth.

Behind me is a photograph of Lieutenant Colonel Billy Hall from the

Post story. Let me read an excerpt from that story:

``The family of 38-year-old Hall, who leaves behind two young

daughters and two stepsons, gave their permission for the media to

cover his Arlington burial--a decision many grieving families make so

that the nation will learn about their loved ones' sacrifice. But the

military had other ideas, and they arranged the marine's burial

yesterday so that no sound, and few images, would make it into the

public domain.''

They don't want you to see the faces of our fallen heroes, and in my

view that's outrageous. Lieutenant Colonel Hall is the highest ranking

military officer to fall in Iraq. He went to Garfield High School in

Seattle. He deserves to be buried according to the wishes of his

family, not hidden from view, because the people running this war only

want you to see the images that proclaim Mission Accomplished. I will

not accept this disrespect for our soldiers and their families, or the

outright distortion of the truth about the war. To honor our fallen

heroes, I and many of my colleagues here in Washington have easels

outside our congressional offices with pictures and the names of

service men and women who have died in Iraq.

Outside my office, there are three boards with the photographs of 94

soldiers from the State of Washington who have fallen in Iraq. Brave

fallen heroes, including:

Instead of helping to provide closure to these wounded families, the

President's surrogates are deepening the wounds for these families.

They only want to share their grief and the pride in their loved ones.

Who wouldn't be proud of Billy Hall? They want to share that with us.

Today, in full view, let us honor the ultimate sacrifice made by

Lieutenant Colonel Billy Hall and the fallen soldiers from Washington

and across this country.