

Armenia is one of the oldest peoples with a recorded history. According to tradition anchored in the Bible, Armenia is the place where Noah's Ark set down on Mt. Ararat and where life was resurrected on earth. Ultimately, Armenia's is a documented history of one of the oldest nations that has retained distinct political entry for close to three thousand years. In the early 6th Century B.C., Prophet Jeremiah spoke about the "Kingdom of Ararat" as one of the key states that would challenge and ultimately break the dominance of the Babylonian Empire. In the 4th Century B.C., the great Greek commander Xenophon wrote about a distinct political entity called Armenia within the Persian sphere of influence through which he marched his troops on their way back to Greece.

Since the 2nd Century B.C., Armenia constituted the northern tier of imperial advances—initially of the Romans, the Selucids, and the Parthians; and then of all the successor empires. Throughout these times, Armenians have repeatedly tried to assert self-determination against repeated campaigns of empires determined to consolidate dominance over this most important geo-strategic asset. For the next two millennia, Armenia was destined to become a key battleground between the Empires of Eurasia for the control over the geo-strategic road junction between West (Europe) and East (Heart of Asia), North (Russia) and South (Middle East).

Armenia's acceptance of Christianity in the early 4th Century A.D. constitutes a turning point. Armenia was the first country to adopt the socio-political connotations of Christianity, leading King Tiridates to establish an independent state. However, given Armenia's geo-strategic importance, neither the Romans nor the Persians permitted the existence of an independent Armenia. Indeed, by the end of the 4th Century, Armenia was partitioned between the two leading empires of that era—Rome and Persia. Since then, and essentially until the end of the Cold War, Armenia repeatedly succumbed to bigger armies and bigger states or empires—all coveting the geo-strategic key locale that Armenia is.

By the 6th Century, despite Armenia's loss of independence, the Armenian Church separated itself from Rome in order to ensure the people's distinct and unique character. This distinction has since enabled Armenians to endure the prevail even as eastern Christendom succumbed to the advent of Islam and its civilization was lost forever. All this time, Armenian civilization and cultural legacy has been maintained by the Church through the countless invasions, occupations, destructions and mass killings that would impact Armenia until the late 20th Century.

The leit motif in this brief history is simple: a small people steadfastly holding to their land and heritage as their country is repeatedly subjected to occupations because of its unique geo-strategic importance. As Bismarck once said: "Of all the elements that make up history, geography is the one that never changes." We, the U.S. and the West, still need this geo-strategic road junction. But unlike empires of past, we must secure it not through occupation but through the empowerment and support of the true "owners" of this land—the Armenians. They have demonstrated throughout their history their determination to hold to independence against overwhelming odds. It is in our national inter-

est to help the Armenians safeguard their current freedom and independence.

Armenia is now independent as the consequence of the determination, commitment and sacrifices of its own people. Its geo-strategic location remains as important as ever before. And although the tenuous cease-fire with Azerbaijan is holding, Armenia's overall security posture is worsening. The entire Caucasus is now being set aflame by Islamist radicalism. The Islamist leaders of the insurrection in Dagastan have repeatedly vowed to "liberate" and "cleanse" the entire Caucasus of the presence of non-Muslims so that they can establish a unified Muslim state. Moreover, the flames of terrorism and radicalism not only affect Russia—now subject to Islamist terrorism and subversion—but also penetrate and profoundly affect Turkey, an ally and a NATO member. Further more, this eruption has a direct bearing on vital economic interests of the U.S. and its closest allies. The Caucasus is the West's primary gateway to the energy resources of the Caspian Sea basin and Central Asia—a region commonly known as the Persian Gulf of the 21st Century. An Islamist state in the Caucasus is bound to endanger the West's freedom of access to these energy resources.

Hence, it is imperative for the U.S. to have a bulwark of stability in this crucial geo-strategic road junction. The U.S. needs an ally in place that is not susceptible to the lure of, and/or vulnerable to the ruthlessness of, the rising Islamist militancy. Determined to remain a loyal member of the West without forsaking its distinct heritage and culture, independent Armenia is uniquely eligible to be as such a bulwark. Now, on the eve of the next millennium, it is imperative for us to ensure the growth, development and betterment of Armenia so that a strong and free Armenia continues to serve as a source of stability and Judeo-Christian civilization, as well as Western security and economic interests, in this most important and increasingly volatile region. It is therefore, in our national security interest to ensure that Armenia's eighth independence day is just one of many more to come.

THE CAPTIVE ELEPHANT ACCIDENT PREVENTION ACT

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 23, 1999

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Captive Elephant Accident Prevention Act to make circuses more humane for the animals and safer for the spectators. I would like to make it clear that I am not interested in seeing the circus industry unduly hindered or encumbered. My bill is a practical, reasonable one that addresses a fundamental wrong in the entertainment industry.

When an elephant rampages it can injure and kill spectators, not to mention damage property. There is simply no stopping a rampaging elephant until the animal is dead, a tragedy which is obviously a symptom of a larger problem. Because of circuses and elephant rides, we've grown accustomed to seeing elephants perform tricks or being ridden as

if they are domesticated animals such as horses. But these are not domesticated creatures. Elephants are wild animals—animals for whom all the coaxing in the world will not encourage them to let you ride on their backs, or get them to stand on their heads, rear up on their hind legs, walk a balance beam, or any of the other unnatural stunts they perform in circuses.

To get a 5 ton, 10 foot tall animal to perform these stressful, often painful stunts 2 or 3 shows per day, animal trainers use fear and torture. In his arsenal, the elephant trainer has devices such as high-powered electric prods, ancuses, bull hooks (long sharpened metal hook at the end of a handle), and Martingales (heavy chains binding an elephant's tusks to his front feet). To get these giant, willful, wild animals to behave like trained dogs, elephants are brutalized. It is therefore understandable that when they get the chance, they kill people.

Since 1983, at least 28 people have been killed by captive elephants performing in circuses and elephant ride exhibits. More than 70 others have been seriously injured, including at least 50 members of the general public who were spectators at circuses and other elephant exhibits. In fact, 9 states have banned elephants from close contact with the public. This includes giving rides or even photo ops, because of the danger of rampages.

Why do we continue to use taxpayer dollars to murder endangered species in the middle of our major metropolitan areas when we could simply address the problem by removing elephants from these tragedies waiting to happen.

My bill proposes to exclude elephants from traveling shows and to eliminate elephant rides, not to close down circuses. I ask my colleagues to join me as a cosponsor on the Captive Elephant Accident Prevention Act. I also want to thank game show host Bob Barker for coming to Washington, D.C. to support this bill H.R. 2929.

A PROCLAMATION CONGRATULATING DR. EDWARD L. FLORAK

HON. ROBERT W. NEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 23, 1999

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I commend the following proclamation to my colleagues:

Whereas, Dr. Florak served as the President of Jefferson Community College for 13½ years and under his leadership the College expanded its curriculum and aligned itself with major higher education institutions around the country; and,

Whereas, Dr. Florak has represented the College throughout the state in the Ohio Association of Community Colleges; and,

Whereas, Dr. Florak represented JCC and Jefferson County as one of America's Community Heros and carried the Olympic Torch during the ceremonies in June 1999; and,

Whereas, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating Dr. Florak on his lifetime of service to his community as well as the College. I am proud to call him a constituent.

A TRIBUTE TO FRED MARTELLA

HON. CALVIN M. DOOLEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 23, 1999

Mr. DOOLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. Fred Martella, who has been named the 1999 Agriculturist of the Year by the Lemoore Chamber of Commerce and Kings County Farm Bureau.

Mr. Martella was born in Lemoore in 1917, the second of Louis and Elvezia Martella's seven children. He attended Hanford High School before leaving to assist with the family dairy operation. Mr. Martella started milking cows for \$25 a month, and later held positions at numerous sales yards in the San Joaquin Valley.

In 1944, Mr. Martella entered into a dairy partnership, selling the dairy two years later. In 1952, he entered into another partnership with his brother, Art. Throughout his career, Mr. Martella has also been active as a professional auctioneer, and has donated his services to Valley charities on countless occasions.

During his 82 years in the Valley, Mr. Martella has been active in the farming community and the life of Kings County. He served on the Agricultural Kings Fair Board of Directors until 1986, was named Grand Marshall at this year's Kings County Homecoming Parade, and was named Citizen of the Year in 1993.

Mr. Martella is also well-known throughout the Valley as a supporter of Kings County youth. He has been a regular fixture at the Kings County Fair's Youth Auction, helping 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) participants auction off their projects at top prices, and assisting with their annual Lamb Barbecues.

Finally, Mr. Martella is a dedicated family man. He is married to Ann Martella, and has three daughters, two stepdaughters, twelve grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing Fred Martella for his contributions to the agriculture field and to his community. We send our sincere congratulations for the well-deserved honor of being named Agriculturist of the Year.

TRIBUTE TO OPHELIA COLLINS
McFADDEN**HON. JULIAN C. DIXON**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 23, 1999

Mr. DIXON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join with my distinguished colleagues, Representatives HOWARD BERMAN, MAXINE WATERS, LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD, XAVIER BECERRA, and JUANITA MILLENDER-MCDONALD, in paying tribute today to Ophelia Collins McFadden, legendary leader of Local 434 of the Service Employees International Union in Los Angeles, California.

One of labor's most extraordinary and influential leaders, Ophelia is retiring and will be feted at a celebration in her honor in Los Angeles on October 8, 1999. We are, therefore, especially pleased to honor her today and to publicly acknowledge her more than three

decades of outstanding service to the labor movement, to the Los Angeles community, and in particular, to the thousands of working men and women throughout Los Angeles who have achieved greater economic parity because of her steadfast leadership. Indeed, it is impossible to talk about the labor movement or the advances achieved in Los Angeles during the past thirty-plus years, without invoking Ophelia's name.

The story of Ophelia Collins McFadden begins, of course, with her birth in Kendleton, Texas. She attended schools in Conroe, Texas and received her undergraduate degree from Conroe Christian Teachers College. She moved to Los Angeles in 1959 and immediately joined the civil rights movement where she quickly gained a reputation as an indefatigable soldier in the fight to remove the insidious discriminatory barriers that were prevalent throughout this great nation.

In 1968 Ophelia joined local 434 of SEIU as a staff representative. She was promoted to senior staff representative in 1974 and one year later was elevated to Assistant General Manager. On January 1, 1978, she made history in the labor movement with her appointment as General Manager of SEIU Local 434—at the time the third largest County workers union in California. She is the first African American woman Vice President of SEIU, AFL-CIO and the first African American woman to serve on the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor board. Ophelia can lay claim to numerous accomplishments during her long tenure with SEIU, not the least of which is the critical role she played in helping to establish the Los Angeles County Affirmative Action guidelines.

As an activist, Ophelia is a formidable ally to have on your team. She has been involved in every major political race in Los Angeles County for the past thirty-one years. She has worked in voter registration drives throughout the county and was among the first SEIU members to work with former California State Legislators Richard Alatorre and Art Torres in registering voters in the Latino community. She worked on the presidential campaigns of Walter Mondale and TED KENNEDY, and played a vital role in helping Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke capture her first victory for a seat on the Board of Supervisors.

She is a founding member of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, as well as the Coalition of Labor Union Women; Vice President of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and the Western States Conference, SEIU, AFL-CIO; member of the Advisory Board of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Black American Political Association of California (BAPAC); and Chancellor of the Elinor Glenn Joint Council of Unions, Scholarship Trust.

In addition to her enormous responsibilities as the influential head of one of the most important labor locals in Los Angeles County, Ophelia serves as a member of the Conroe College Alumni Association, and is Vice President and a life member of the Los Angeles Branch of the NAACP. She is a member of Praises of Zion Church.

Ophelia Collins McFadden has taken her place on the front lines of every major labor initiative in the Los Angeles community. In 1986 she led the kick-off Homecare campaign and in 1989 was appointed General Manager of the Homecare Workers Union of local 434B.

Each of us paying tribute to her today can, I am sure, offer a personal anecdote of a time when she has prevailed upon us to help her in her tireless fight for the rights of county workers.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud to honor Ophelia Collins McFadden as one of the greatest labor unionists of this century. We are privileged to know her and to thank her for the many contributions she has made to the Los Angeles community, and in particular to the thousands of health care and homecare workers in our respective congressional districts. We salute and commend her and ask that you join us in extending our heartfelt best wishes to her for a long and joyous retirement.

TAX RULES WAIVER EXTENSION

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 23, 1999

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing for myself and Mr. HOUGHTON, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. COYNE, Mrs. JOHNSON (CT), and Mr. MATSUI, legislation to extend for one additional year the temporary waiver of the minimum tax rules that deny many families the full benefit of nonrefundable personal credits, pending enactment of permanent legislation to address this inequity.

This problem is well known. The tax credits for education and children are limited by the alternative minimum tax. Consequently, more and more average Americans who use the dependent care credit, the new child credit, the HOPE credit or the lifelong learning credit, will be forced to fill out the time consuming, complex alternative minimum tax form. Even worse, a growing number of Americans will have all or part of these credits denied because they are part of the AMT base. For families with three or more children, the refundable portion of the child credit is also subject to the AMT cutback, which this bill also fixes for 1999.

The Department of the Treasury estimated that in 1998, without the "one year" waiver that was enacted last year, eight hundred thousand taxpayers who were entitled to the child credit or the education credits would have been denied the full benefit of these credits by the AMT. And although the AMT was enacted into law to ensure that wealthy individuals pay some tax, a large percentage of these new AMT taxpayers will be married couples who earn between \$45,000 and approximately \$100,000.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there is widespread agreement to fix this problem either on a permanent basis, or if that is not possible, for one additional year. The Clinton Administration, the House and Senate, and both parties agree. Yet, it has not been accomplished. We are introducing this bill, which extends last year's waiver for one additional year, to highlight the problem once again and to urge quick action to solve it for tax year 1999. Given the lead time the Internal Revenue Service needs to draft and print tax forms for next year, it is necessary for us to take action early next month. Hopefully, legislation that is acceptable to all of us will be enacted on a bipartisan basis shortly.