

should follow their example and become involved, the opportunities are boundless.

TRIBUTE TO JIM O'CONNOR

HON. ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 28, 1999

Mr. BLAGOJEVICH. Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to a distinguished 1998–99 White House fellow—Jim O'Connor, a resident of my 5th Congressional District in Chicago.

Mr. O'Connor is a management consultant at A.T. Kearney in Chicago. He received his Bachelor's Degree in Government and English, as well as his Juris Doctor, from Georgetown University. Additionally, he received an M.B.A from the J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University, where founded the Kellogg Corps, which sends teams of MBA students to developing communities around the world. Mr. O'Connor served as the first American volunteer teacher at a rural Catholic school in Lebowa, South Africa. He has also founded two organizations—the Field Associates, a group of young adults who promote Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History, and the Associates Board of the Big Shoulders Fund, which involves young adults in advisory and fundraising roles with needy Catholic schools in Chicago's inner city. Mr. O'Connor also finds time to participate on several boards, including the Guild Board of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Chicago Community Trust Young Leader's Fund, and Georgetown University's Governing Board.

Since 1965, the White House Fellowship Program has honored outstanding citizens who demonstrate excellence in community service, leadership, and professional achievements. It is the country's most prestigious fellowship for public service and leadership development. White House Fellows are chosen on the merit of remarkable achievement early in their career and the evidence of growth potential. Every year, 500 to 800 applicants nationwide compete for 11 to 19 fellowships. Mr. O'Connor has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to public service with his involvement in many community-based organizations. His tireless efforts on behalf of the people of Chicago have earned him the honor of participating in this prestigious fellowship.

As a White House Fellow for the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Mr. O'Connor is responsible for assisting the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund in performance-measure development and planning, as well as assisting with a Congressional analysis regarding the Hedge Fund Industry. He also worked on a creation of BusinessLINC, a secretarial initiative created to enhance partnering between woman-owned minority business and larger corporate entities. Other projects include an economic development initiative for Washington, D.C., and an analysis of the emerging trends in electronic commerce.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in saluting Jim O'Connor for a noteworthy record of community service and professional and academic excellence. The people of Chicago are the beneficiaries of Jim O'Connor's hard work and good citizenship.

OUR NATION'S HOUSING CRISIS

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 28, 1999

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, families in America are facing a housing crisis. Unfortunately, at a time of unprecedented economic growth and record unemployment, many are a paycheck away from losing their home.

A report released by Catholic Charities confirms that sad truth. Cardinal Francis George, the Catholic Archbishop of Chicago, has sounded the alarm that, despite being in the midst of an economic boom, the housing needs of low-income families in Chicago and Illinois are unmet.

The report found that 245,000 low-income renters in the Chicago area are competing for 155,000 apartments with affordable rent. More disturbing, the report also found that most of those earning minimum wage spend more than two-thirds of their income on rent.

Using the phrase "housing crisis" too often may blunt its effectiveness, but there is no other way to describe what is happening in our cities and communities. Sadly though, no matter how many times we say it on the House floor, in committee hearings, in community meetings with our constituents and local elected officials, and in news conferences, there are some that choose to turn a deaf ear.

That is why I submit this Chicago Tribune editorial describing the efforts of Cardinal George on behalf of families in Chicago and Illinois. I am hopeful that in addition to his voice, we can break through and find a permanent solution to the housing needs of all families.

THE CARDINAL LEADS ON HOUSING

Unemployment is below 5 percent, new housing starts are at record levels and nearly two-thirds of American families now live in their own homes.

So what's all this talk about a housing crisis?

It's not just talk. It's a growing reality for millions of low- and middle-income working families. For them, the recent boom at the top has meant fewer rooms at the bottom.

To some this may sound like left-liberal cant. (Has there ever not been a crisis in affordable housing?) But the problem will not be so easily dismissed now that it has been described at length by Cardinal Francis George, the Catholic archbishop of Chicago.

By placing his personal stamp on a new report by Catholic Charities here, Cardinal George has sounded a wake-up call to those who thought the economic boom had solved the region's low-income housing squeeze. It has not.

Using data from several official sources, the report estimates there are 245,000 low-income renters in the Chicago area competing for just 115,000 apartments with rents deemed "affordable" (less than 50 percent of a family's monthly income). Statewide, some 400,000 people are in families spending more than half their incomes on rent and utilities. Those earning just the minimum wage routinely spend more than three-quarters of their take-home pay on a typical two-bedroom apartment, leaving precious little for food and other necessities. Catholic Charities says its phone lines are buzzing with calls for emergency assistance and its homeless shelters are at capacity.

Several factors are behind this pinch amid plenty. While low mortgage rates and gen-

erous tax deductions have fueled the upscale market, the economics of rental housing—for both landlord and tenant—remain lackluster by comparison. Then there's galloping gentrification, whereby close-in Chicago neighborhoods are redeveloped for wealthier professionals while less-affluent families go packing. Meanwhile, the Chicago Housing Authority is demolishing its dysfunctional high-rises and sending thousands of impoverished tenants into the private market armed with federal rent vouchers.

Calling the housing squeeze a threat to family stability across the region, Cardinal George is urging action on several fronts. He wants Congress and the Illinois legislature to fully fund proven subsidized housing programs. He wants local municipalities—and not just Chicago—to redouble efforts to include affordable units in their housing mix. And importantly, he wants all Chicagoans, including landlords, to be more accepting of members of racial and cultural minorities moving into their neighborhoods.

Good points all. Their implementation would extend the world's most productive housing market to families that have, so far, been untouched by its bounty.

CONDEMNING THE TERRORIST ATTACK ON ARMENIA'S PARLIAMENT

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 28, 1999

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my sympathy and support for the people of Armenia in the wake of yesterday's tragic attack on the Armenian parliament.

Mr. Speaker, Armenia has been a model of democracy and market reform in the post-Soviet world. This past summer, Armenia held open and competitive national elections. Just this past week, it held exemplary local elections. Prime Minister Vazgen Sarkisian, Parliament Speaker Karen Demirchian, and the six other officials who were slain yesterday were leaders of this transition to democracy. They were also leaders in combating corruption, bolstering the economy, and establishing peace in their troubled region. Their senseless deaths present a tragic loss to Armenia—and to freedom and democracy worldwide.

I urge my colleagues to join me in offering my deepest condolences to the Armenian people, and my strongest support to their ongoing efforts to bring democracy, peace, and stability to their nation.

LEGISLATION REGARDING ZOHREH FARHANG GHAHFAROKHI

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 28, 1999

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am introducing private legislation today that would grant my constituent, Zohreh Farhang Gahfarokhi, permanent residency in the United States.

In 1984, Zohreh Farhang Gahfarokhi's husband, an Iranian citizen, brought her and their young daughter, Shahrzad, on a business trip to the United States. The trip was successful

and Ms. Ghahfarokhi's husband secured a succession of legal business visas to stay in the United States. A second daughter, Sepideh, was born 3 years later in Los Angeles.

In 1994, Ms. Ghahfarokhi's husband filed an application for permanent residency with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) on behalf of himself, his wife, and their daughter, Shahrzad. The family was interviewed at the INS Los Angeles District Office in March 1996 and expected to be issued green cards.

In the summer of 1996, Ms. Ghahfarokhi and her husband obtained advanced parole travel documents from the INS and visited Iran. According to Ms. Ghahfarokhi, their arranged marriage was often strained and, once back in Iran, her husband grew increasingly angry and verbally abusive because she had become more independent than the more traditional women in Iran. She has indicated that her husband confiscated his family's identification cards, his wife's Iranian passport, and the advance parole documents for her and their elder daughter. In addition, Ms. Ghahfarokhi said that he contracted the Iranian Government to formally revoke his permission to allow his wife and daughter to leave the country.

According to Ms. Ghahfarokhi, her husband returned to Los Angeles a week later, intentionally abandoning his family in Iran. She said that she had no identification papers, very little cash, and nowhere to stay in Tehran. She filed a complaint with the Tehran police, whom she said located her husband's brother and required him to secure an apartment for her and the girls and provide them with money for food.

In September 1996, Shahrzad turned 18 and was able to apply for an Iranian passport without her father's permission. She received her passport 2 months later and traveled by herself to the American Embassy in Frankfurt, which issued her an advance parole travel document to return to Los Angeles. According to Ms. Ghahfarokhi, it took another month for her to convince an Iranian judge to override her husband's authority and grant permission for her and her younger daughter to leave Iran. Finally, in December, Ms. Ghahfarokhi and her younger daughter left Iran, obtained advance paroles from the embassy in Frankfurt, and returned to Los Angeles.

According to Ms. Ghahfarokhi, once her husband learned that his wife was back in Los Angeles, he closed their joint bank account. Shahrzad worked full-time to help pay the rent, which prevented her from starting her freshman year at UCLA. Ms. Ghahfarokhi said she believed she had no option but to file for divorce. As part of the divorce proceedings, the judge ordered her husband to pay alimony and child support, which she says he failed to do.

According to Ms. Ghahfarokhi, her husband approached her a few months later to apologize for his behavior in Iran and to try to reconcile with her. He promised to support her and the girls financially and threatened to withdraw their INS application for permanent residency if they divorced. Ms. Ghahfarokhi said she felt trapped because she and her daughters were financially insecure and she and Shahrzad needed legal immigration status. She said for the sake of her daughters, she moved back in with her husband in June 1997 on the conditions that he accompany her to

marital counseling, provide her with financial security by giving her some assets in her own name, and withdraw the revocation of his permission for her to travel in and out of Iran.

In the months that followed, Ms. Ghahfarokhi has indicated that her husband broke each of his promises, and she separated from him in the summer of 1998. Their subsequent divorce was finalized on March 14, 1999, and the court is apparently taking steps to ensure that her ex-husband complies with the agreements on the division of property, alimony, and child support.

According to Ms. Ghahfarokhi, since 1994, she and Shahrzad had been assured by the INS office in Los Angeles that their applications for adjustment of status were moving forward. The INS advised them that it routinely takes 2 to 3 years to process these applications and issue green cards. The INS issued Shahrzad an employment authorization card in March 1998. In July of that year, however, the INS denied her application for advance parole.

Confused by the denial, Shahrzad went to the INS office and was shocked to learn her father had withdrawn the petitions for her and her mother on December 13, 1996. Since that time, the INS had supplied Ms. Ghahfarokhi and Shahrzad with misinformation about their status and issued work authorization cards.

Over the next few months, Ms. Ghahfarokhi said she and Shahrzad met with a number of immigration lawyers, none of whom were able to offer a solution. Current immigration law allows for a battered or abused spouse of a lawful permanent resident to self-petition for legal status, but Ms. Ghahfarokhi was unaware if and when her ex-husband had become a permanent resident. Furthermore, since he had never physically abused her and the worst incidents of mistreatment had occurred in Iran, the lawyers advised her that it would be futile for her to petition on her own behalf.

After Ms. Ghahfarokhi and Shahrzad asked me for assistance, my office contacted the INS, which confirmed that the women are undocumented and out of status. Further, if they were to leave the United States, they would be subject to the 10-year ban on re-entry, as required under the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act. The INS also indicated that there was no administrative remedy available to Ms. Ghahfarokhi and Shahrzad and that private legislation would be necessary for them to receive relief.

Subsequently, in August 1999, Ms. Ghahfarokhi's husband's attorney contacted Shahrzad to advise her that her father regretted removing her from his petition and was willing to re-instate her on the petition if the INS would allow it. Shahrzad accepted her father's offer. The INS approved her father's application on September 15th and hers on her 21st birthday on September 21st. Since that time, however, he has remained estranged from Shahrzad and her family.

While Shahrzad has regained her legal status and can pursue her dreams of finishing college and attending law school, Ms. Ghahfarokhi's situation has not changed, and she and her daughters fear that she will be deported. The legislation I am introducing today would grant Ms. Ghahfarokhi permanent residency in the United States. She and her family have endured a tremendous amount of uncertainty and hardship due to actions outside of their control. I request that my colleagues support this legislation.

THE CRAIG MUNICIPAL EQUITY ACT OF 1999

HON. DON YOUNG

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 28, 1999

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce a bill to solve a unique Alaska problem occurring in the city of Craig, a city located in the far southeastern part of Alaska on Prince of Wales Island, the third largest island in the country. Craig is unlike any other small town or village in Alaska. It has no land base upon which to maintain its local services and no ability to utilize many Federal programs which are dependent upon a large Alaska Native population for eligibility.

Nevertheless, the community has grown from a mostly Native population of 250 in 1971 to over 2,500 residents, most of whom are not Alaska Natives. Despite this change in demographics, the town is surrounded by land selections from two different Alaska Native Village Corporations. In fact, 93 percent of the land within the Craig city limits is owned by these village corporations. Under Federal law passed in 1987, none of the village land is subject to taxation so long as the land is not developed. The city of Craig has only 300 acres of land owned privately by individuals within its city limits to serve as its municipal tax base. It can annex no other land because the entire land base outside its municipal boundaries is owned by the Federal Government as part of the Tongass National Forest or another Alaska Native corporation.

As its population increases and costs rise, Craig's demands for municipal services increase. According to the State of Alaska, Craig is the fastest-growing first class city in the State. Since its large non-Native majority population makes the town and its residents largely ineligible for Federal programs which serve virtually all other ANSCA villages, it has requested a small conveyance of 4,532 acres of Federal land located not far from the town. That land entitlement would permit the city to develop a land base upon which it could support its increasing demand for municipal services.

The land base which is included in this bill has been carefully chosen. It is less than 20 miles from the city and abuts the existing road system. It is the first available land from the city limits not owned by an Alaska Native corporation. The land will complete a sound management system by providing municipal ownership of land adjacent to both existing private and State-owned land. It will be a good use of this land which is nowhere near any environmentally sensitive lands such as wilderness areas. This part of Prince of Wales Island has roads, communities, and other developed sites near it. There will be no land use conflicts created by this conveyance.

My bill provides a fairly simple and very reasonable solution to Craig's dilemma: it provides a direct grant of 4,532 acres to the city. While I reviewed a land exchange, the city has no land to trade. The city received no municipal entitlement because the Forest Service never agreed to any land selection by the State of Alaska in this part of Prince of Wales Island. The only substantial land near Craig besides the actual 300 acres on which Craig sits is owned by the Federal Government in