

prisoners of the Castro dictatorship who continue their historic struggle against the despotic regime of Fidel Castro.

As the organization's constitution expresses, the World Federation of Former Cuban Political Prisoners finds its historic roots in those brave men and women who forged the Cuban nation, and in particular, in the ideological leader of Cuban independence, Jose Marti.

Thousands of Cubans, following Marti's example, have been personal witnesses to the horrors of Castro's political prisons because of their tireless battle for Cuba's independence, national sovereignty and respect for freedom within a democratic political system.

During the closing session of the XVI Annual Congress of this glorious organization, I want my Congressional colleagues to acknowledge with admiration and respect all former and present Cuban political prisoners who have given and continue to give their all for the restoration of freedom in Cuba.

A TRIBUTE TO LA ACTUALIDAD
SPANISH NEWSPAPER

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 1999

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor La Actualidad Spanish Newspaper which was founded 25 years ago by a group of Hispanic businessmen who felt that a newspaper was needed in the Delaware Valley to keep the Hispanic community informed about issues that impacted on their lives.

Since its inception, La Actualidad's mission has been to provide its readers with the most current information on community events, cultural programs, education, business and political issues. The paper also offers a wide array of local, national, and international news and sports that pertain to its Hispanic readers.

Through the years, La Actualidad has become the echo of the Delaware Valley for the Hispanic community. It provides a vital link between the community and local, state and federal governments. It also provides as an important forum for the community to address critical issues.

As it celebrates a quarter of a century, La Actualidad remains committed to continuing as an unifying force in the Hispanic Community and as an advocate for social change.

THE NEED FOR A PRAGMATIC AND
COHERENT SOUTH ASIA POLICY

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 1999

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to recent developments in South Asia, a region of growing importance to U.S. diplomatic, political, security and economic interests.

This past week, the news from the region has been positive. India's Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee personally inaugurated the new bus service with Pakistan. Prime Minister Vajpayee crossed the border into Lahore, Pakistan, where he was greeted by Pakistani

Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif. Their embrace, seen on television sets around the world, was full of powerful symbolism, which we all hope will be matched by progress toward easing tensions between these two South Asian nations.

During 1998, of course, the news from this region was dominated by the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan, which resulted in the automatic imposition of unilateral American sanctions on both countries. The result, particularly in the case of India, has been a set-back in the promising trend towards increased trade and investment we saw during most of the 1990s. Late last year, through bipartisan cooperation between Congress and the Administration, we succeeded in easing some, but far from all, of the sanctions that were imposed.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to outline a new approach, a new pragmatism, that I hope will mark our future relations with India—the world's largest democracy, a country whose population will exceed one billion people in the next decade, a country with enormous potential for trade and cooperation, and a country with legitimate defense concerns that we must recognize and respect.

While we may not necessarily welcome a world with more nuclear powers, I believe that India, in particular, would be a responsible partner in non-proliferation efforts. This would require a major shift in our focus, from simply condemning India for becoming a nuclear power—which, whether we like it or not, is the reality—to adjusting our thinking to this new reality and working to promote peace, security, confidence building and non-proliferation in South Asia.

This will require on our part a greater recognition of India's legitimate security needs and the prospects for greater Indo-U.S. cooperation in responding to the threats posed by another Asian country that must be taken into consideration when we address the India-Pakistan issue. That country is China.

I believe that China is the real threat to India, as well as to U.S. interests and to regional security. It is in this context, India's potential role as a partner for peace and stability should be understood.

In particular, India has legitimate concerns about China's support for Pakistan's nuclear and missile programs, as well as potential Chinese designs on India territory. Since the U.S. must also view China as a potential adversary, there is a growing convergence of American and Indian objectives for responding to China."

Talks between our Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh have shown some progress, but I believe the U.S. needs to do much more to create a framework for cooperation that recognizes the new realities in the region. I believe we have to be more pragmatic and flexible in working with India, including a greater appreciation of the security concerns that prompted India to conduct nuclear tests in the first place.

I would like to draw attention to a recent report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) South Asia program, which noted that India and Pakistan are beginning to define "minimum deterrence" in similar ways.

The U.S. should work to build on this emerging notion of minimum deterrence, com-

bined with a declared policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons.

I also wanted to mention a report that appeared in the January 19, 1999, edition of the newspaper India Abroad, outlining the views of Mr. Tariq Rauf, director of the International Organizations and Non-proliferation Project at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in Monterey, California. Mr. Rauf sees Washington opting for a strategy of greater accommodation in its negotiations with both India and Pakistan, recognizing that neither nation is likely to give up its nuclear weapons. Writing in the latest edition of "The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists," Rauf said India and Pakistan should not only be encouraged, but assisted, to consider a variety of bilateral and multilateral discussions and agreements "to maintain their current tacit non-deployment practices regarding nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles."

Rauf also said both countries should be encouraged to agree "on some measure of sufficiency in terms of weapons-usable fissile material stocks, warheads and weapons systems; to negotiate and implement a package of regional confidence and security-building measures; and to actively contribute to the universalization of current global non-proliferation norms."

Rauf's conclusion: "a nuclear South Asia is here to stay." Thus, he calls on us to help address the security concerns that led both nations to develop nuclear weapons in the first place. He stresses that, "Pragmatic arms control strategies must therefore focus on accommodation, not appeasement or confrontation."

Our goal should be to make India a partner in the American foreign policy goal of minimizing the threat of nuclear war. One way of accomplishing this is to take the long overdue step of accepting India as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The key is to make India a partner for peace, and not to isolate India and further contribute to the perception that India's legitimate security concerns are not receiving adequate attention or respect.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that 1999 will be a better year in U.S.-India relations than 1998 was. Karl Inderfurth, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, recently indicated that President Clinton is hoping to visit India and Pakistan this year, pending progress on the current talks. It's been 20 years since an American President was last in India, Mr. Speaker. I hope we don't have to wait too much longer.

REPRESENTATIVE BARBARA
NOTESTEIN—MILWAUKEE NOW
WOMAN OF THE YEAR

HON. THOMAS M. BARRETT

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 1999

Mr. BARRETT of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, February 27th, Milwaukee National Organization for Women (NOW) will honor Wisconsin Representative Barbara Notestein as the Woman of the Year. I appreciate this opportunity to share with my colleagues my admiration for one of my state's most distinguished leaders.

Barbara Notestein and I were both elected to the Wisconsin Assembly in 1984. We grew

into the job together, and I learned a lot from her empathetic approach to public policy and political leadership. She never forgot that the bills we considered and the policies we crafted affected real people with real families. She always considered how a bill might affect our community's most disadvantaged families, and she often helped and sometimes forced the legislature to see through their eyes.

Barbara's legislative accomplishments reflected this focus. She took the lead in establishing Wisconsin's Children at Risk program and the state's Birth to Three Program, as well as a family leave system and an initiative to even the playing field for under-resourced schools. She also led the fight to fund programs that helped women to start or expand their own businesses, and she established and funded programs to curb sexual harassment and to support the victims of sexual assault.

Barbara Notestein's strong stands on key issues and her ability to forge working coalitions won her a leadership role. She was the first woman elected to serve as the Wisconsin Assembly's Assistant Majority Leader.

As a legislator, I admire Barbara Notestein. She reminds me that, to be an effective public servant, you need heart as much as you need smarts. I admire Barbara as an advocate for the public good. She reminds me that the most compelling way to lead others is by example.

Mr. Speaker, Representative Barbara Notestein has been a clear, strong and consistent voice for women and women's issues in the Wisconsin Legislature. I commend Milwaukee NOW on a perfect choice for Woman of the Year, and I warmly congratulate Barbara Notestein on her remarkable career of public service.

PRIVATE ACTIVITY BOND EXPANSION

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 1999

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, today Representative HOUGHTON and I are introducing the State and Local Investment Opportunity Act of 1999. This legislation would raise the annual limit on states' authority to issue their own tax-exempt private activity bonds to the greater of \$75 times population or \$225 million, and index the limit to inflation.

Tax-exempt private activity bonds finance affordable single and multifamily housing, manufacturing facilities, environmental, energy and utility projects, redevelopment of blighted areas, and student loans, in every state. The bond volume cap was set in 1986, and is adjusted only by growth in state population. Since 1986, inflation has cut the purchasing power of these bonds by almost 50 percent. In 1997 the demand for this bond authority exceeded supply by almost 50 percent, according to the National Council of State Housing Agencies.

In my own state, the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency has financed first-time homes for more than 37,000 working families with mortgage revenue bonds, as well as financing more than 55,000 affordable apartments with multifamily housing bonds, both subject to the cap.

Since 1979, 5,241 loans resulting from the sale of mortgage revenue bonds have been made to my constituents, representing \$313 million of mortgage financing. And multifamily housing bonds account for 40 developments in my district, making 5,399 apartments available for low and moderate income workers.

Nationwide, mortgage revenue bonds have helped more than two million working families achieve the American Dream of home ownership. Many more families still need this help to achieve this Dream—help we can provide through this program.

Last year the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, BILL ARCHER, recognized the importance of this program and included an increase in the bond volume cap as part of the tax section of the Omnibus Consolidated and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act. This was an important step forward. However, the current bond volume cap remains in place until 2003 at which time the increase begins to phase in, becoming fully effective in 2007. The phase-in provision makes clear the importance of making this adjustment to the bond volume cap, and reduces the revenue costs. Now I hope we can complete the job in this session of Congress by making the expansion of the bond volume cap effective this year, and by indexing the cap for inflation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to cosponsor the State and Local Investment Opportunity Act of 1999, so their states can continue making vital investments in their citizens and communities.

INTRODUCTION OF THE URBAN ASTHMA REDUCTION ACT OF 1999

HON. BOBBY L. RUSH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 1999

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to join with several of my colleagues upon the introduction of The Urban Asthma Reduction Act of 1999.

My bill takes an important step towards increasing the federal commitment to reducing the high rate of asthma-related illnesses and hospitalizations of inner city children who suffer from asthma and who also are allergic to cockroach allergen. In 1997, the National Institutes of Health (National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases) reported conclusively that asthmatic children who were both allergic to cockroaches, and exposed to high cockroach allergen levels, were hospitalized 3.3 times more often than children who were either only exposed or allergic.

The link between asthma and allergy to cockroaches is a serious public health concern. In light of the NIH findings, there should be increased federal assistance to communities to address this problem.

Asthma is on the rise, especially in inner cities. Last year, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention reported that more than 15 million Americans suffer from asthma—an increase of 75 percent between 1980 and 1994.

Asthma is a growing concern for the poor and minority communities, especially African-American and Latinos. In 1993, among children and adults, African Americans were 3 to 4 times more likely to die from asthma.

The social and economic costs are high. These children are more likely to miss school more often, go to the doctor or emergency room more frequently, and lose sleep. Consequently, the adults who care for these children may have to miss work to care for them. According to the Washington Post (April 24, 1998) the Centers for Disease Control reported that costs related to asthma were estimated to be \$6.2 billion in 1990, and expected to more than double by the year 2000.

The Urban Asthma Reduction Act of 1999 asks for action. The bill proposes to amend the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant Program, authorized by the Public Health Service Act, by adding integrated cockroach management to rodent control as an eligible activity for funding.

Integrated cockroach management is a multi-faceted approach to controlling the prevalence of cockroaches while minimizing pesticide use. It involves a range of techniques that include building cleaning and maintenance, and using pesticides as a means of last resort. The funds could be used for structural rehabilitation of buildings. This includes patching holes or open pipes that allow cockroaches entry; caulking cracks in walls; moving bushes away from buildings so cockroaches do not have easy access; and ensuring that all windows are properly screened.

The Urban Asthma Reduction Act creates new possibilities for communities that are serious about making integrated pest management a component of a comprehensive public health policy. My hope is that the Urban Asthma Reduction Act of 1999 will prove a viable tool for urban communities to improve the quality and life of all residents, but especially children who suffer from asthma.

A TRIBUTE TO TAYLOR COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE

HON. ALLEN BOYD

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 1999

Mr. BOYD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Taylor County Fire Rescue Department, for their courage and devotion in the face of disaster.

This past summer, the Florida Gas Transmission Company's Perry Gas Compressor exploded. Flames raged for nearly seven hours, injuring five people and leveling six homes in the area. Taylor County Fire Rescue responded first, with firefighters from other areas offering assistance.

Taylor County Rescue Chief Ashley Newell, firefighter Lt. Peter Bishop, firefighter Danny Hunter and volunteer Sonny Buckhalter demonstrated considerable courage under pressure. While fighting the fire from the first explosion, a secondary explosion caught the men off guard, trapping them near advancing flames. Only hasty action on their part prevented injuries from becoming fatalities. Their quick decisions saved the lives of several citizens and averted extensive property damage.

Mr. Speaker, It is with great honor that I pay tribute to Taylor County Fire Rescue Department. By placing their lives in danger, these firefighters have shown great courage and devotion to the protection of their community.