

solemn obligation to accomplish two purposes: (1) help secure damages for a loss that can never be repaid, and (2) help see that no such accident occurs again.

We reintroduce the bill today spurred on by the vigilance of the families who lost their loved ones in the crash and who are intent on preventing other such tragedies. Since the last introduction of the bill on April 15, 1997, the families have been invaluable allies in helping us gain cosponsors and in keeping this bill alive. Just last week, members of the families met with congressional staff from the offices of cosponsors and me in a valuable strategy session. One result of that meeting and of further consultations with the families is the reintroduction of the Ron Brown tort Equality Act of 1999 today.

The families deserve more than the official funerals, the much deserved tributes, and our continuing grief. They deserve more than the insult to their injury that would remain if the law are not altered in light of the tragedy and families are not fully compensated. I believe that the Congress eventually will do the right thing and that the President will sign the right bill.

The Air Force Accident Investigation Board report was honest and forthcoming. It concluded that the accident resulted from the negligence of federal employees involving three independent causes, "any one of which had it not existed would have prevented the accident." The command gave authorization to flight procedures that had not been properly reviewed and approved; the aircrew made errors in planning and executing the flight; and the approach to the airport was improperly designated. In addition, inadequate training was a substantial contributing factor. When negligence is this pronounced, compensating the victims also has a deterrent effect on those responsible for assuring that such serious negligence is not repeated.

Thus far, however, there have been few indications that federal authorities are serious about assuring that no such tragedy occurs again. Two Article 15 disciplinary actions, two letters of reprimand, and 12 other actions were taken against particular officers. Is this all that our government can do? Following the shocking crash in Croatia, is this the extent of the federal obligation?

First, for the families of civilian federal employees, there is the obligation to do more than grant a few thousand dollars through the Federal Employee Compensation program. Our obligation is to amend the law to reach the very few instances of gross negligence, like this horrendous crash, that may occur. The bill would allow federal civilian employees or their families to sue the federal government but only for gross negligence by its officers or employees. Because there will be few instances where gross negligence can be shown, this is a small change in our law. This change will allow the families of federal employees to seek the compensation they have every right to expect while leaving the integrity of the federal government's worker compensation system intact.

There also were non-federal employees on that fated plane for whom no compensation is possible today. Astonishingly, federal law does not allow compensation when private citizens are killed or injured overseas. The failure of the Federal Tort Claims Act to allow for any compensation for civilians is either callous or

an oversight in the law, and I believe that it is in need of correction. After all, private citizens can sue under the Act for the same injuries when they occur in this country. My bill would allow individuals who do not work for the federal government, or their families, to sue the United States for negligent or wrongful acts or omissions that occur in a foreign country.

We also introduce the bill because we know our government would want to deter such accidents in the future. We especially introduce this bill today for the families of those killed with Ron Brown on April 3, 1996, and I urge the Congress to pass this bill this session. The families who lost their loved ones deserve nothing less.

TRIBUTE TO VIRGIL G. LOVITT

HON. ROB PORTMAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 12, 1999

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, on March 24, 1999, the city of Sharonville, Ohio, lost one of its finest citizens. Virgil G. Lovitt, a leader in the business world as well as the community, passed away at the age of 63. A great friend to many people, myself included, he did more for Sharonville quietly from behind the scenes than most people will ever know.

A very successful businessman, Mr. Lovitt founded a State Farm insurance agency in 1957. In 1985, he represented Ohio for the annual agents field planning conference at the home office in Bloomington, Illinois. He was a State Farm Millionaire Life agent over 20 times. He was one of the first State Farm agents in Ohio to receive the series 6 security license. At the time of his death, he was national director and a member of Insurance Risk Management and a committee member of the Family Motor Coach Association.

However, when people think of Virgil Lovitt, most will remember his willingness to serve and his desire to improve the lives of those around him. As a result of his commitment to serve the public, he spent 1963–1975 as President of the Sharonville City Council. He was Sharonville's ward chairman for over 20 years. Mr. Lovitt was also a member of the Hamilton County Republican Central Committee and Executive Committee, chairman of the Hamilton County Tax Incentive Review Board and member of the Sharonville Chamber of Commerce.

Remarkably, he made time to be involved in the civic world as well. He was a past President and Secretary of the Sharonville Kiwanis Club and started its annual Halloween party. He was honored as the Kiwanian of the year as well as Kiwanian of the year for Spiritual Aims. Mr. Lovitt was active in the Sharonville arts and crafts show for 22 years.

Even more important to Virgil was his family. He was married to his wife Marilyn for 44 years and they had two children. Their son Virgil is the mayor of Sharonville, and is married to Tracey; they have three children—Amanda, Glen and Amberly. Their daughter, Vickey Sasser, is married to Dennis and they have two children—Andrea and Andrew. Virgil was a devoted husband, father and grandfather and will be missed the most by his beloved family.

Mr. Speaker, Virgil Lovitt's drive to serve his fellow man can stand as an inspiration to us

all. He was a true community leader and his life's work will stand as a constant reminder to me and all who knew him that service to others is a noble call to be answered.

GROUND TROOPS IN KOSOVO

HON. WILLIAM F. GOODLING

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 12, 1999

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing a bill that will prohibit the use of Department of Defense funds for the deployment of U.S. ground troops into Kosovo unless authorized by law and approved by Congress. The intent is to require the Executive Branch to seek the advice and consent of Congress before sending our troops into harms way within the borders of Kosovo. It is vital that the will of the American people be heard on this important matter through a formal debate and vote in the United States Congress.

While the President continues to state his intent not to send ground troops to Kosovo saying air strikes are our best option, he is also indicating that troops would only be sent into a "permissive environment." Meanwhile, military experts are questioning whether NATO can realistically end this crisis in Kosovo without sending in ground troops. Others are saying it may be too late to send troops. This confusion and uncertainty is reason enough to have a well thought out, studied and deliberate debate and vote on a decision to deploy troops into a combat area.

The deployment of ground troops dramatically changes the dynamics of this crisis because it places our armed forces directly in the middle of a civil war. We should all be mindful of what our nation went through the last time we intervened in a civil war in the 1960's—a war that tore our nation apart both politically and socially, and resulted in the loss of over 58,000 American lives.

Congress must not be derelict in its duty to have a say in this matter. The President must seek the advice of Congress, and Congress must vote up or down on whether to send U.S. ground troops to Kosovo. Our sons and daughters in the military deserve no less.

Many issues demand further discussion. What is Congress' role and authority on the issue of deploying ground troops? Do we have vital national security interests in Yugoslavia? Is this war worth risking American lives? If so, how many? Based on the President's stated goals, it is a winnable war? How many bombs and missiles does it take to significantly "degrade" the military capabilities of the Yugoslavian military forces.

How long will U.S. troops be stationed in this region? Do we have the resources to place our troops in this region for an extended period of time at the expense of more vital and real security threats—including East Asia? As a result of military downsizing, do we still have the manpower and weapons supply to fight a three front war should the event arise in the Middle East, Asia, and the Balkans? How will this mission affect the morale of our armed forces? Is the role of our military a peacekeeping and nation building force or a defense against attack on the United States, its interests, and its citizens?

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues to support this measure. We must consider the "powderkeg" we are getting ourselves into. Let us not enter the 21st Century in the same way we began the 20th Century by getting ourselves involved in a centuries old Balkan conflict for which we cannot and will not resolve now by the introduction of U.S. ground troops.

TRIBUTE TO BRITTON CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN RECOGNITION OF 150 YEARS OF SERVICE

HON. NICK SMITH

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 12, 1999

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Britton Congregational Christian Church, of Britton, MI. It is my pleasure to pay tribute to the fine example its teaching of strong values and simple directness has provided to our District.

On March 28, 1999, Britton Congregational Church, the oldest Christian Union church in Michigan, celebrated its 150th anniversary. The church took its fundamental character from the efforts of its first pastor, Elder Samuel Bradshaw, who stressed the utmost importance of strong family values.

The church completed building its first chapel on January 28, 1850. The congregation moved to a new location in 1880 where it meets today, but the emphasis on family values remained the same. Rev. David Welcome, the current pastor, describes the family atmosphere: "every person is a part of our extended family, with each member helping another when family is needed."

The fact that Britton Congregational Church endures to this day after a century and a half of changing times and surroundings, testifies to the commitment the church has maintained to traditional family values and concern for its members.

I am inspired by this legacy of commitment to the values it was founded upon, and I hold up its long history as a model for other institutions within and outside the district. Congratulations Britton Congregational Christian Church on 150 years of service and dedication. I wish you the opportunity to continue pursuing these ideals for many more years to come.

TRIBUTE TO CHRISTOPH MEILI

HON. JAMES H. MALONEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 12, 1999

Mr. MALONEY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, one of the great privileges afforded Members of Congress is the opportunity to come to the floor of the House of Representatives to relay to not just our colleagues, but to the entire country, significant contributions made to our society by our fellow Americans. I have that privilege and want to pay tribute to Mr. Christoph Meili, currently of West Orange, New Jersey.

In 1997, Mr. Meili, then 29 years of age, was employed as a bank guard in the Union

Bank of Switzerland. While performing his appointed duties, he discovered one day several boxes of bank documents that not only dated back to the Holocaust era, but directly related to financial holdings of individuals at that time. These documents were about to be shredded and lost forever. Mr. Meili had recently viewed the epic tale, *Schindler's List*. Drawing inspiration from that film, he removed as many of the documents from the bank as possible, and delivered them to a Jewish organization in Zurich that then gave them to local police.

Mr. Meili's discovery and subsequent removal of the documents created wide controversy—as well as significant embarrassment of Switzerland's largest bank, which had first denied even the relevance of the documents. Upon intense investigation and international scrutiny, the bank not only confirmed that the documents were, indeed, Holocaust related, but that other similar documents had been previously shredded. This investigation further indicated that many of the documents were central to the research of an international panel of historians investigating Switzerland's dealing with the Nazis.

As a result of the brave actions of Christoph Meili, a \$1.25 billion settlement was made to Holocaust survivors, their families and Jewish organizations.

Regrettably, Mr. Meili paid a high price for doing the right thing. He and his wife lost their jobs in Switzerland and received multiple death threats, forcing them and their children to flee to the United States where they were granted political asylum by President Clinton. Since coming to America, Mr. Meili has testified before the Senate Banking Committee detailing his important actions of conscience.

Mr. Speaker, today, April 12, 1999, Mr. Meili will be honored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Waterbury and Northwest Connecticut, Inc. during a community-wide Yom HaShoah Commemoration (Commemoration of the Holocaust). As a Member of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets, I commend Mr. Christoph Meili for his courageous actions, and recognize and thank him for the sacrifices both he and his family have made in the name justice. He is a hero to people of conscience everywhere.

THE ASSASSINATION OF SLAVKO CURUVIJA

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 12, 1999

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, yesterday Serbia lost a courageous citizen—one committed to an open society, to a free press, to reporting the truth. Slavko Curuvija was gunned down in front of his Belgrade apartment on Sunday by two men, dressed in black with black face masks. Branka Prpa, who was with him at the time, said that the murderers were certainly professionals. I extend my deepest condolences to her and to all of Slavko's family and friends.

Slavko Curuvija was editor of the independent Serbian newspaper, The Daily Telegraph, as well as the news magazine called The European. Though he had ties with Serbia's establishment, this last year he sought his own independent course, and became a leading critic of the Milosevic regime.

Mr. Speaker, last December Slavko Curuvija testified before the Helsinki Commission which I chair. In his testimony, he said:

I come from a country where there is no rule of law . . . By making an example out of me, the regime sends a message to all who would oppose it, intimidating and bullying all the independent media in the process . . . The crackdown on my publications and other media organizations has jeopardized the right to free speech in Serbia. The crackdown on the universities jeopardizes another basic human right, freedom of thought. Belgrade University has been deprived of autonomy, its professors have been sacked for failing to sign loyalty oaths, its students jailed for protecting . . . After all his other wars, Slobodan Milosevic appears to be preparing to wage war against his own people in Serbia and Montenegro.

More recently, on March 8, Slavko Curuvija, was sentenced along with two of his journalists to five months in prison by a Belgrade court for "spreading false reports with an intention to endanger public order," dictatorship for telling the truth. The three remained free on appeal. When Milosevic used NATO's action against his forces as an excuse to eliminate any remaining independent media, Curuvija chose to shut down operations rather than succumb to state censorship. A week ago, according to today's Washington Post, a pro-regime newspaper accused Curuvija of supporting NATO bombing and said that "people like him" will neither be "forgiven nor forgotten."

People like Slavko Curuvija, who act upon their rights and freedoms and promote the protection of those rights, have fought for what is best for their country. Their patriotism is expressed in their opposition to a regime which does not want any independent voice, nor criticism. They see that Serbia only has a future if it becomes a democracy.

I ask the people of Serbia, and Serbs in this country and around the world, to think hard about what has just happened. If this Milosevic regime is willing to do this to an independent thinker in Belgrade, a Serb, why is it not possible that this same regime can be responsible for the genocides in Bosnia and now in Kosovo? Is it worth rallying around Milosevic, who is President of Yugoslavia only through ruthlessly undemocratic means and who brought this upon Serbia? Can't you see that Milosevic, not Curuvija, wants Serbia to be bombed, because he believes this will enhance his power and somehow justify getting rid of those who advocate freedom? I ask the people of Serbia to take a close look around you. Who has isolated you from a Europe more free and united than ever before? Who has caused your living conditions to be so much less than they had been, or could be? The answer should be clear—Slobodan Milosevic. You must no longer allow his propaganda to succeed in convincing you otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, while we may have differences regarding what the U.S. role should be in stopping the genocide in Kosovo, we should be able to agree on one central point: Slobodan Milosevic is the problem, and he must account for his crimes. In my view, the cold-blooded murder of an independent journalist, Slavko Curuvija, is the latest crime to add to the list.