

from Puerto Rico (Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN).

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3063, a bill to amend the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 with respect to limitations upon the amount of acreage an entity may hold within any one State. This bill would grant discretion to the Secretary of the Interior to raise the statutory limitation upon the amount of acreage a company may hold on a statewide basis for sodium leases and permits.

Mr. Speaker, the current limit was established by a 1948 amendment to the Mineral Leasing Act and was set at 15,360 acres, a reasonable size at that time during mining. But, Mr. Speaker, a modern operation requires a mine-plant complex which may cost well over \$300 million to build.

Like other industries today, consolidation to achieve higher efficiency is taking place in this soda ash business. H.R. 3063 before us today would give the Secretary of the Interior the authority to raise the now too low acreage limit, after he has, in due course, determined it would not be anticompetitive to do so. Otherwise, Federal lessees may need to surrender mined-out leases before backfilling underground voids with tailings currently stored on the surface, a method which the Bureau of Land Management would like to see remain available.

Also, solution mining of the underground pillars left in place cannot occur if the leases are returned to the Government prematurely. From a royalty flow viewpoint, it is desirable for our domestic industry to have these options available.

The administration testified last month before the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources in support of H.R. 3063.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3063 would amend the Mineral Leasing Act to grant the Secretary of the Interior the discretion to increase a number of Federal leases which may be held by any one producer in a single State.

The present acreage limitation for sodium leases of 15,360 acres has been in place for 5 decades. The bill would increase the limitation to 30,720 acres per producer.

The U.S. soda ash producers, four of which are in Wyoming, are competitive with one another for a share of their relatively flat domestic market. They are also faced with strong inter-

national competition. Wyoming generates approximately 2 million tons of soda ash per year. Other countries, including China and India, with vast supplies of Trona have erected tariff and nontariff barriers to support their own less efficient producers, making it difficult to export U.S. soda ash.

The gentlewoman from Wyoming (Mrs. CUBIN) believes that giving the Secretary of Interior the discretion to raise acreage limitations will have a beneficial effect on the industry's ability to remain competitive.

Congress set forth acreage limits in the Mineral Leasing Act to ensure that no single entity held too much of any single mineral reserve. The lease limitation ensures that there is sufficient competition while providing an incentive for development of these reserves and ensuring a reasonable rate of return to the Federal and State treasuries.

We expect any future Secretary of the Interior who uses this discretionary authority to raise acreage limitations for sodium leases to include a finding that raising an acreage for a producer would not have a negative effect on either Federal royalty revenues or competition.

The Clinton administration testified in favor of this bill. We have no objections on passing this under the suspension of the House rules.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers on this, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TRAFICANT).

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, I support the current bill.

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3063.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 222.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

CONDEMNING ARMENIAN ASSASSINATIONS

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 222) condemning the assassination of Armenian Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsian and other officials of the Armenian Government and expressing the sense of the Congress in mourning this tragic loss of the duly elected leadership of Armenia.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 222

Whereas on October 27, 1999, several armed individuals broke into Armenia's Parliament and assassinated the Prime Minister of Armenia, Vazgen Sargsian, the Chairman of the Armenian Parliament, Karen Demirchian, the Deputy Chairman of the Armenian Parliament, Yuri Bakhshian, the Minister of Operative Issues, Leonard Petrossian, and other members of the Armenian Government;

Whereas Armenia is working toward democracy, the rule of law, and a viable free market economy since obtaining its freedom from Soviet rule in 1991; and

Whereas all nations of the world mourn the loss suffered by Armenia on October 27, 1999; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) deplores the slaying of the Prime Minister of Armenia, Vazgen Sargsian, the Chairman of the Armenian Parliament, Karen Demirchian, the Deputy Chairman of the Armenian Parliament, Yuri Bakhshian, the Minister of Operative Issues, Leonard Petrossian, and other members of the Armenian Government struck down in this violent attack;

(2) strongly shares the determination of the Armenian people that the perpetrators of these vile acts will be swiftly brought to justice so that Armenia may demonstrate its resolute opposition to acts of terror;

(3) commends the efforts of the late Prime Minister and the Armenian Government for their commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and for supporting free market movements internationally; and

(4) continues to cherish the strong friendship between Armenia and the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 222.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I support the motion to suspend the rules and pass this concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 222, introduced by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROGAN), which is identical to the language of a

There was no objection.

resolution introduced by a bipartisan group of Members of the Senate. It is hoped that this will have the support of my colleagues in the House as well.

The killings that took place in Yerevan, Armenia, on October 27 were deplorable. While the perpetrators claimed to be acting on behalf of the Armenian people, their means of acting, the murders of top officials, are certainly not the way to build a true democracy of Armenia or another such struggling countries.

This resolution properly calls for the trial of those accused of these murders. We hope that the process of fair trial and judgment can help Armenians better understand the motive behind these murders. This process should be as much a part of democracy in Armenia as it is here. True democracy cannot be created by senseless murders.

Armenia faces serious difficulties, not just the economic and political difficulties that face all the States in the former Soviet Union, but the need for a peaceful resolution of a conflict with neighboring Azerbaijan that has been merely suspended by cease-fire for the past 5 years.

The murders of top officials in Armenia certainly did not help that small nation to resolve their serious problems, but the adoption of this concurrent resolution by the House may be helpful by making it clear to the Armenian people that our Nation continues to support democracy and their nation and opposes such acts of terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, I fully support the motion to suspend the rules and pass this concurrent resolution, and I invite my colleagues to join in support.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution. The original version of this legislation was cosponsored by 50 Members of this House from both sides of the aisle, evidence of the widespread sense of sadness felt by all of us over the tragic events in Armenia on Wednesday, October 27.

On that day, Prime Minister Vazgen Sarksian was assassinated in an attack by four gunmen who stormed into Parliament while it was in session of the Armenian capital of Yerevan. Other lawmakers and government officials were killed in the attack in the parliament chamber, including the chairman of the National Assembly, in effect the Speaker of Parliament, Karen Demirchian.

While we mourn the loss of all of these dedicated public servants, I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, that democracy in Armenia is strong. The commitment on the part of Armenia's elected government leaders and the vast majority of Armenia's people to democracy, to the orderly transfer of power, to peace and stability within Armenia and in the region, all remain as strong as ever.

Clearly, Armenia is still reeling from the shock of recent events. But I think

special praise and recognition is appropriate for the way Armenia's president, Robert Kocharian, and the entire Armenian government have moved swiftly to restore stability to the political leadership.

A special session of Parliament recently elected a new speaker and two deputy speakers. President Kocharian appointed Aram Sarksian, the 36-year-old brother of the slain prime minister, to the post of prime minister. The new prime minister is a relative new-comer to politics, although he has been active in a major veterans' organization.

As President Kocharian stated during a special session of Parliament, "Our state structure is stable and has proved to be able to deal with such crisis." The Parliament's choices for the new leadership posts will help ensure stability, since they come from the ruling coalition that enjoys a majority under the Unity banner. The new Speaker of Parliament, Armen Khachadrian, said, "All programs that were envisioned will be implemented."

Mr. Speaker, the events of 3 weeks ago have been a source of shock and sadness for all the friends of Armenia in this Congress and for all the American friends of Armenia, including more than 1 million Americans of Armenian descent. But our sadness is tempered by the knowledge that Armenia will continue to move forward with the political and economic reforms it began when it won its independence more than 8 years ago.

For me and many of my colleagues here, there was a particularly haunting and poignant feeling when we heard of the death of Prime Minister Sarksian. The prime minister was our guest in this very Capitol building just a few weeks ago, on September 30. More than 30 Members of Congress, and many of our staff, had the opportunity to hear the prime minister give a very strong speech in which he stressed his commitment to continuing with economic reforms while working for a settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict and greater integration between Armenia and her neighbors. We also had the opportunity to chat with the prime minister on an informal basis.

Vazgen Sarksian had only been prime minister since May of this year, following nationwide elections for the National Assembly. His party was the Unity Federation. Prior to becoming prime minister, he served as defense minister from 1995 to 1999.

□ 1300

And like many political figures in Armenia, his involvement in politics began in 1988 as the Soviet Union was collapsing. That year he joined the National Liberation Movement for the Independence of Armenia and Constitutional Self-Determination of Nagorno Karabagh. Also, like many of the political leaders of today's Armenia, Prime Minister Sarksian was quite young. He was only 40 years old, and had an extremely bright future ahead of him as the leader of his country.

Prime Minister Sarksian was committed to the goal of reform, rebuilding the Nation after decades of Soviet domination. He supported integration of Armenia's economy with the region and the world, and he sought to promote a society that protects private property with a stable currency and a balanced budget, while providing social protections to its citizens. During his visit to Washington, he had the opportunity to meet also with Vice President GORE as well as other Members of Congress.

I wanted to say also, Mr. Speaker, that Speaker Demirchian had been the leader of Armenia during Soviet times, but in the post-Soviet Armenia had emerged as a champion of reform. I had the opportunity to meet with him during a congressional delegation to Armenia that I participated in this summer with four of my colleagues, and I know the sponsor of this resolution, the gentleman from California, also had the opportunity to travel to Armenia this summer to meet with the Prime Minister and the Speaker.

I think I can take the liberty of characterizing all of my colleagues as being as impressed as I was with the new leadership, a sort of triumvirate of President Kocharian, Prime Minister Sarksian, and Speaker Demirchian, to represent an extremely strong team poised to lead Armenia into a new era of economic prosperity and peace. While I am sure President Kocharian will work to continue that legacy, he has lost two valuable partners; Armenia and the world have lost fine leaders.

I also wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, that as elected Members of our Nation's legislative branch, we are particularly horrified that elected representatives, our counterparts in Armenia, were attacked while conducting the people's business. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families, friends, and colleagues; and we hope and pray for the complete recovery of those who were wounded in this deplorable act of violence.

I also want to take this opportunity to commend President Kocharian for his decisive leadership during the actual crisis, for bringing it to a peaceful conclusion with no further bloodshed. The effective response of Armenia's government, its security forces, help to maintain calm in Yerevan and throughout the Nation. Given the potentially destabilizing nature of this attack, it was imperative for the government to assure the Armenian people and the rest of the world that this isolated act of violence did not represent a fundamental threat to Armenia's democracy.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important week for Armenia and the surrounding region. Later this week, in Istanbul, Turkey, President Clinton will join with a number of other heads of state and government for the annual summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The President

will meet with both President Kocharian and the President of Armenia's neighbor, President Aliyev. A group of us in the House are currently circulating a letter to President Clinton urging that these meetings be an opportunity for the U.S. to strengthen our ongoing effort to conclude the Nagorno Karabagh peace process as well as to enhance opportunities for regional cooperation.

In addition, we are strongly encouraging President Clinton to extend President Kocharian an official invitation to Washington. While his counterparts in Azerbaijan and Georgia have paid official visits to the U.S. in the past, President Kocharian has not had the same opportunity; and we believe that such a visit will further strengthen the U.S.-Armenia relationship and is long overdue.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the upcoming summit is taking place in Turkey, Armenia's neighbor to the west, is particularly significant. Turkish-Armenian relations have been difficult for, among other reasons, the hostile blockade that Turkey still maintains against Armenia. There have been, however, some potentially hopeful signs of a trend towards better relations. This summer when I traveled to Armenia with a bipartisan group of my colleagues, we saw firsthand evidence of moves towards a new cross-border relationship between the Armenian city of Gyumri and the Turkish city of Kars. Also, I was very encouraged to see that Turkey sent a delegation to Prime Minister Sarksian's funeral last month. I encourage President Clinton to use the considerable U.S. clout with Turkey to urge that country to improve its relation with Armenia and also to persuade Turkey to use its influence with Azerbaijan to promote increased cooperation with Armenia.

Despite our grief, we want to take this opportunity to emphasize our belief in Armenia's commitment to democracy, economic reform, peace, and stability within Armenia and throughout the region. We take this opportunity to reiterate our full confidence that this commitment is deeply held by the government and by the majority of the Armenia people. Armenia has been cruelly deprived of gifted politicians and statesmen who were leading it into a new millennium. While we mourn their loss, we encourage President Kocharian to redouble their efforts to keep Armenia free and strong. And as Members of the U.S. Congress, we stand ready to assist in any way that we can.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER).

(Mr. SOUDER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise as a member of the Armenia Caucus in strong support of this resolution condemning the violence against Arme-

nia's Prime Minister and Speaker and mourning their loss, along with other members of the democratically-elected Armenian government. Armenians have suffered for many years not only from the Turkish genocide, but persecution throughout this world. This sad incident was a setback in what has been an increasingly stable role towards stability in Armenia.

My good friend from Fort Wayne, Zorhab Tazian, had just had the opportunity to join the victims in Armenia to discuss the current political situation. Zorhab's clear impression at that meeting was that all the participants shared increasing optimism that the government would continue its successes in expanding the Armenian democracy and developing a healthy economy. It is a tragedy that their leadership was cut short in such an untimely and ugly way.

Our best memorial to the victims of the Armenian violence is to help continue their work. We cannot and will not allow acts of political violence to deter us from our support to the course of freedom and the opportunity that has so promisingly begun in Armenia. I commend President Kocharian's strong response to this incident and swift efforts to ensure the stability of Armenia's government.

I hope my colleagues will continue to support the causes of democracy, stability, and a free market economy in Armenia. We can do so through supporting economic assistance to promote privatization and tax reform, capital market development, legal reform, and other steps critical to continuing progress on advancing the Armenia economy. We can also continue to help Armenia by supporting it on the issue of Nagorno Karabagh, including our vigilance over providing American aid to Azerbaijan in light of its continued blockades.

Although it is a sad and difficult time in Armenia, we should also view it as a time of continued optimism for the great potential that lies in Armenia's future. We should let nothing deter us in our continued progress together towards peace and freedom, and I am confident Armenia's great people will continue to move ahead in building a great nation. There can be no more or better fitting tribute to the fallen Armenian heroes.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise in strong support of this resolution.

A few weeks ago, the Armenia people suffered a tragic loss. A group of armed terrorists broke into Armenia's parliament and assassinated eight political leaders, including Armenia's prime minister. These political leaders were killed in the midst of exercising their duty as elected political representatives.

This resolution before the House today deplores these outrageous assassinations and expresses the sense of the House that the perpetrators of these

vile acts must be brought swiftly to justice. Our resolution also commends the efforts of the late prime minister and the Armenian government for their deep commitment to democracy, to the rule of law, and to their support of free market reforms.

As a result of the late prime minister's leadership, Mr. Speaker, Armenia is considered today one of the most politically stable countries in the region and one of the most market oriented. Armenia has approved the most liberal trade legislation among the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. Unfortunately, Armenia's economic development has been severely impeded by the protracted conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh, the Armenian populated autonomous enclave in neighboring Azerbaijan.

The war has taken a heavy toll on both sides of the conflict, Mr. Speaker, but in recent months there has been some movement on the possible settlement of this conflict. All of us in this body earnestly hope that progress will continue despite these horrible assassinations.

Mr. Speaker, the brother of Armenia's late prime minister has been selected to replace him, and I want the new prime minister to know that the United States stands ready to continue to assist Armenia as it develops its economy and attempts to bring peace and stability to the region.

Now, these recent assassinations in Armenia have been particularly difficult on our fellow citizens of Armenian-American ancestry. Armenian-Americans must know that the United States Congress is not only following developments closely, but we will remain actively engaged in helping the people of Armenia to achieve the peace and prosperity they have fought for so long and that they so richly deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROGAN).

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, it is with a great heaviness in my heart that I rise and ask my colleagues to join me in supporting House Concurrent Resolution 222, honoring the victims of the recent terrorist attack in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia.

Armenian Prime Minister Vazgen Sarksian, Chairman of the Armenian Parliament Karen Demirchian, Deputy Chairman of the Armenian Parliament Yuri Bakhshian, Deputy Speaker of Parliament Rouben Miroyan, Minister of Operative Issues Leonard Petrossian, and Members of the Armenian Parliament Mikael Kotanyan, Henrik Abrahamyan and Armenak Armenakyan were murdered by terrorists in the parliament building in Yerevan.

I came to know the late Prime Minister during my recent trip to Armenia

and Nagorno Karabagh, which was organized by the Armenian Assembly. I again met with the Prime Minister here in Washington just three weeks before his death. He and his slain colleagues were moving their country forward by dealing with economic reform, the rule of law, seeking a resolution of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict, and regional cooperation.

Armenia has taken great strides since gaining independence over eight years ago. Then Armenia was a captive nation, struggling to preserve its centuries-old traditions and customs. Today, the Republic of Armenia is an independent, freedom-loving nation and a friend to the United States and to the democratic world.

As evidence of this progress, communities throughout Armenia recently held local elections that were deemed free and fair by the European Community. This signaled to the world the accomplishments of Prime Minister Sarkisian and his slain colleagues. It also signaled that the future of Armenia, even after the loss of these men, is a bright one that bodes well for the advancement of democracy. As a testament to Prime Minister Sarkisian and the other slain officials' patriotism and leadership, well over 100,000 Armenians paid their respects when they were laid to rest.

On a more personal note, the loss of these Armenian martyrs has deeply affected my district, which is home to nearly 100,000 Armenian-Americans. As Armenia now turns toward the task of rebuilding its government, I trust the Congress will join me in expressing continued friendship with Armenia and with Nagorno Karabagh.

Additionally, we must express our support for a just and speedy resolution to the Nagorno Karabagh conflict, and that all economic blockades in the region will be speedily lifted so that prosperity and peace will be enjoyed by all.

In honor of the great sacrifice made by Armenia's leaders, and in recognition of their commitment to pursuing democracy, I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this important resolution.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. SWEENEY).

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. ROGAN) for introducing this resolution condemning the assassination of Vazgen Sarkisian.

I, being one of only two Members of the House and Senate of Armenian descent, feel compelled to come to the floor today and voice my support very strongly for this resolution.

There has been a lot of comment and discussion about this resolution and about the horror of this unprecedented attack.

Let me just say this: knowing the Armenian spirit as I do, I believe Armenia is going to continue to move forward,

will not be deterred towards establishing itself as a strong democracy and a strong ally of our great country.

I say this primarily because and out of recognition of my own grandfather's history and his past. My grandfather came to this country, Mr. Speaker, before World War I and returned to his homeland to fight against tyranny and fascism, earning two Russian medals of honor. He came back to this country and made a life for his family and for us.

I know the Armenian spirit is strong; and I know that, with our proper support, as this resolution will provide, Armenia will prevail.

And I like most others demand that the men who committed these vile acts be brought to justice. I was appalled to see this horror take place in my own grandfather's homeland. The assassination of Prime Minister Vazgen Sarkisian, as well as several other duly-elected officials is a tragedy beyond words. As Armenia moves forward with its strong commitment to the ideals of democracy, after a history filled with so much tragedy, these incomprehensible acts of terror might seem to make it more difficult to move toward self rule but I currently believe that it will not deter the Armenian spirit. Armenia has shown itself to be a valued ally of the United States, and of the world. Further, this tragic loss comes at a time when we should be praising Armenia's strength and determination in working toward democracy, the rule of law, and a viable free market economy since obtaining its freedom from Soviet rule in 1991. Not only would I like to express my most deep and heartfelt sympathies to the people of Armenia, but I would like to commend them for continuing the drive toward democracy, even in the face of great adversity.

I am proud to share a common heritage with the Armenian people. My own grandfather was a native Armenian, raised in a land ravaged by hate, and a witness to the genocide of his people. The experiences of his childhood fueled his desire for freedom for his homeland in the First World War, so he returned there, where he was awarded two Russian Medals of Honor for his bravery in the fight against fascism.

Mr. Speaker, my grandfather is a singular example of the *esprit de corps* that lies deep in the heart of every Armenian. This determination to be free continues today and was clearly shown through the life's work of the late Prime Minister Sarkisian. I share in the Armenian people's loss of a great leader, but take comfort in knowing that they shall overcome this loss and move toward greater things, as they have so many times before.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this resolution and join my colleagues in condemning the assassination of Armenian Prime Minister Sargsian and other officials of the Armenian Government, and I appreciate the opportunity to express my sorrow at the loss of the duly elected leadership of Armenia. On October 27th of this year, Armenian Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsian, his ally, Parliamentary Speaker Karen Demirchyan, Deputy Parliamentary Speakers Yuri Bakhshyan and Ruben Miroian, Operative Issues Minister Leonard Petrossian, and other members of the Armenian Government, including a senior economic official, Mi-

chael Kutanian, were killed when gunmen burst into the Parliament Chamber in Yerevan, Armenia.

The purported leader of the gunmen claimed they were targeting Sargsian and were launching a coup to quote—unquote "restore democracy" and end poverty. Mr. Speaker, I fail to see how assassinating and holding hostage members of a democratically elected government will accomplish that goal. I have met Prime Minister Sargsian personally and have witnessed first-hand his commitment to a peaceful, economically successful, democratic Armenia. I am shocked and saddened by this terrible act of violence. My thoughts and prayers are with the people of Armenia and with the families and friends of those who were killed. This deplorable attack, however, must not deter Armenia and the United States from pursuing our mutual goals of democracy, open markets, and peace in the Southern Caucasus. We cannot allow the very small minority of individuals who oppose the peace process to thwart the valiant efforts made by all parties involved. Significant progress has been made in recent months in Armenia's transition from a socialist republic to a democratic, free-market country. Free and fair local elections were held in Armenia earlier during the week of the attack. In addition, recent meetings between Armenian President Kocharian and Azerbaijan's President Aliyev have produced positive signs in negotiations over the Nagorno-Karabagh peace process.

At this difficult time we must remain focused on supporting the people of Armenia and the Armenian government. Now we must reaffirm our commitment to assist Armenia in its continued progress toward a proud, democratic nation.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 222, condemning the assassination of Armenian Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsian and other Armenian Government officials. A total of nine people were killed—in addition to the Prime Minister, Speaker of Parliament Karen Demirchyan was shot, as were two deputy speakers of parliament. Indeed, it seemed as if much of Armenia's political elite, except for President Robert Kocharian, had been removed in one surreal afternoon. The horrifying events of October 27 were all the more shocking considering that Armenia appeared to have established a framework for political stability and efficient government. After the May 1999 parliamentary elections, President Kocharian, Prime Minister Sargsian and Speaker Demirchyan constituted the legs of a troika uniting the three most influential politicians in Armenia. They had practically reached agreement on the budget, one of the most pressing problems facing Armenia. Perhaps most important, President Kocharian apparently had the support of his Prime Minister and Speaker of Parliament, as well as other Armenian political leaders, in his bilateral negotiations on Nagorno-Karabakh with Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev. Those talks, which began this spring, have been the most promising development in the long road to resolving the conflict. In short, there was reason for cautious optimism on any number of fronts in the South Caucasus.

Alas, the murder of the Prime Minister, the Speaker and others has set back the talks on Nagorno-Karabakh. Judging by public statements in Baku and Yerevan last week, instead

of an agreement, which many had been hoping for, only a general statement of principles might be signed this week at the OSCE Summit in Istanbul. But, Mr. Speaker, I trust that despite the tragedy of October 27, Presidents Kocharian and Aliev will continue their efforts to find a solution to this knottiest of problems. There is some consolation, at this time of sober reflection and mourning, in that these two leaders obviously understand that peace is in the best interest of their peoples.

Mr. Speaker, the perpetrators are in custody and the investigation into the events of October 27 continues. Many questions remain unanswered about their motives and the possible involvement of other conspirators. In the last week, Armenian authorities have arrested several more people, including a member of parliament. It is imperative to get to the bottom of this matter, and the United States should offer any assistance Yerevan may request to accelerate and facilitate the inquiry. It is important to show the Armenian public, Armenia's neighbors, and all the world that despite the tragedy of October 27, Armenia is a stable country—able and willing to address its problems, to pursue peace with its neighbors and to take its rightful place in the international community.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution. The tragedy that occurred in Yerevan on October 27th was deplorable. It has become clear that the gunmen involved in this incident were acting alone and not part of a larger group. President Kocharian's personal intervention in ending the stand-off with the gunmen and containing the potential repercussions of this event were very admirable. I encourage him to remain strong and continue to rebuild the leadership of the government and bring stability back to Armenia.

Armenia has made important progress on many domestic and foreign policy fronts, and this tragedy should not hamper the continuation of these developments. To be sure that progress in Armenia continues, it is critical that the U.S. continue to strongly support President Kocharian, his government and the people of Armenia.

I extend my condolences to the families, friends and colleagues of those that were slain. To properly honor these individuals, it is imperative that Armenia not waiver in the policies it is pursing. None is more important than the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

I have followed very closely the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. For the first time in many years, significant progress is in the making. President Kocharian and his Cabinet officials have spent many hours with their counterparts in Azerbaijan developing the terms for an agreement. I am hopeful that they are continuing their work and will have some resolution to present at the OSCE Summit that is scheduled to begin in Istanbul next week. President Kocharian should not let this progress be sidelined by the tragedy in Parliament. Peace in Nagorno-Karabagh is imperative for long term prosperity in the region and there is a real opportunity for such a resolution.

I will continue to strongly support President Kocharian, his government and the people of Armenia as they struggle to cope with the deaths of their elected officials. I encourage all of my colleagues in Congress to do the same.

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 222 with great sorrow

for the losses that gave rise to this legislation and the tragedy it decries.

On October 27th, a small group of terrorists stormed the Armenian Parliament building murdering the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Parliament, and seven other members of the Armenian government.

This bill condemns their assassinations and expresses the sense of the Congress in mourning the tragic loss of the duly elected leadership of Armenia.

The loss and bloodshed is tragic but Armenia's government and its people have not and will not allow this event to destabilize the country. Their remarkable spirit continues in Armenia, showing the worldwide community of their dedication to democracy, to the rule of law, and to the importance of peace.

After separating from the Soviet Union in 1989, many wondered if the newly established nation would be able to survive.

The Republic of Armenia has not only done that, but has also built a democratic nation for its people during unsettled and difficult times.

Prime Minister Sargsian has fought for reforms to bring Armenia into the next century with a market economy and strong democratic traditions. This will not end with the tragedy that occurred.

The efforts of President Kocharian are to be applauded to bring the recent tragedy to a peaceful resolution as he leads Armenia forward during this arduous time.

Let us reaffirm America's strong support for and renew our commitment to Armenia by supporting H. Con. Res. 222 today.

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the victims of the terrorist attack in Yerevan last month. Like many of my colleagues, I was shocked and deeply saddened by the fatal shootings in the Armenian Parliament.

For this reason, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 222 to denounce the terrorist attack and express our sympathies in mourning this devastating loss of the leadership in the Armenian government.

When a tragedy as horrific as this one occurs, it is important to extend our support for the families of the victims as well as the people and leaders of Armenia. We must encourage them to follow the beliefs and ideals practiced by those who were victims of this tragedy.

Since its independence over eight years ago, Armenia has struggled to promote democracy for its people. These important strides must not be forgotten during this time of mourning and great loss. It is my hope that the people of Armenia will continue build upon the principles of freedom they have worked so hard to achieve.

For this reason, I commend my colleague and friend from California (Representative JAMES ROGAN) for introducing this resolution to condemn the attack and commend the leaders of Armenia for their commitment to democracy.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 222 condemning the assassination of Armenian Prime Minister Sargsian, the Chairman of the Armenian Parliament, Karen Demirchian and other Government officials and Members of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I had the honor of leading a Congressional delegation to the caucus region

earlier this year. During this trip I had the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Sargsian and Chairman Demirchyan and was very impressed by their dedication to the well-being of the country and its people. They repeatedly articulated their deep sense of commitment to bringing peace and prosperity to the region. Their loss will be acutely felt—and even more so because of the real strides that have been made to establish an open and democratic Armenia and in seeking a meaningful and lasting peace with Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

Prime Minister Sargsian addressed the people of Armenia in late July, shortly before our Congressional delegation arrived in Yerevan. During this television broadcast he articulated the window of opportunity that Armenia had for the peace process as well as the opportunities to increase international trade. He also squarely addressed the problem of corruption, the need to prevent it and his vision for transparency and openness in the government. He received tremendous applause because it was indeed a very courageous and heartfelt speech. He will be greatly missed.

Mr. Speaker, when speaking of courage, President Kocharian must also be commended for his decisive leadership in responding to this tragedy and in bringing it to a conclusion without further loss of life.

Regrettably, it seems that acts of violence are becoming all too common. However, may the deeds of these brave men who lost their lives far overshadow this senseless act.

This tragedy must not be permitted to deter Armenia's resolve and commitment to democracy, the rule of law, economic reform, peace and stability.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support for this resolution.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for H. Con. Res. 222. This important resolution deplores the slayings of the Prime Minister of Armenia, Vazgen Sargsian; the chairman of the Armenian Parliament, Karen Demirchian; the deputy chairman of the Armenian Parliament, Yuri Bakhshian; the minister of operative issues, Leonard Petrossian; and other members of the Armenian government struck down in a violent attack on Parliament on October 27, 1999.

This important resolution demonstrates to our friends in Armenia that we support them in this time of great tragedy for their nation. While condemning these violent acts, this resolution also shares the determination of the Armenian people that the perpetrators of these acts be swiftly brought to justice. The bill also commends the efforts of the late prime minister and the Armenian government for their commitment to democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a cosponsor of H. Con. Res. 216, the initial legislation which H. Con. Res. 222 is based upon. I want to express my support for this resolution and urge the adoption of this important measure.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, we have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. Speaker, we have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BALLENGER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 222.

The question was taken.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1315

EXPRESSING SUPPORT OF CONGRESS FOR RECENT ELECTIONS IN REPUBLIC OF INDIA

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 211) expressing the strong support of the Congress for the recently concluded elections in the Republic of India and urging the President to travel to India.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 211

Whereas the Republic of India is a long-standing parliamentary democracy where citizens may freely change their government;

Whereas India has a thriving multiparty system where a broad spectrum of political views are represented;

Whereas India recently conducted a successful round of elections, involving over 650,000,000 registered voters and resulting in a 60 percent voter turnout and re-election of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee;

Whereas India and the United States share a special relationship as the world's most populous democracy and the world's oldest democracy, respectively, and have a shared commitment to upholding the will of the people and the rule of law;

Whereas the President has expressed his continued desire to travel to South Asia; and

Whereas India continues to be a shining example of democracy for all of Asia to follow: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) congratulates the people of the Republic of India on the successful conclusion of their recent national elections;

(2) congratulates Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his re-election;

(3) calls on the President to travel to India as part of any trip to South Asia; and

(4) urges the President to broaden our special relationship with India into a strategic partnership.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BALLENGER). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 211.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BALLENGER). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for just a brief comment on the importance of this resolution to recognize

the remarkable achievements of the largest democracy in the world, to recognize the recent election in India and the importance of ending the remaining sanctions of an economic nature that were imposed so that relations with India can continue to improve for the benefit of our country.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER), the subcommittee chairman.

(Mr. BEREUTER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, H. Con. Res. 211 was considered by the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific on October 27 and was unanimously approved. It is introduced by the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN), the gentleman from New York (Chairman GILMAN), and others.

The resolution rightly congratulates the people of India on a successful election where over 350 million voters cast their ballots.

The reelection of Prime Minister Vajpayee reflects a vibrant multiparty system where parties with strongly differing views can compete in a way that is uniquely Indian. We certainly wish the BJP party and its ruling coalition well as it prepares to continue to lead the country.

The resolution rightly alludes to the strategic relationship between the United States of America and India. We certainly have such a strategic relationship with India, just as we have a strategic relationship with many other countries in the region.

I urge adoption of the resolution.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise in strong support of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, first I want to commend my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN), for introducing this resolution, as well as my colleagues on the other side, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), the chairman of the committee; the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER), the chairman of the subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific; and my good friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL).

I also want to commend the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON), the ranking Democrat on the committee, for his efforts in bringing this legislation before the body.

Our resolution, Mr. Speaker, expresses our strong support and admiration for the recently concluded elections in India. It is not easy to have a society with over 650 million registered voters, many of them living in conditions of dire poverty, to undertake this monumental democratic effort. But the Indian government got the job done by stretching the elections out over a pe-

riod of a month, by mobilizing civil servants, students, and other volunteers to ensure that the elections are fair, professional, and accurate.

Often, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the Subcontinent, we immediately focus on the relationship between India and Pakistan; and this is not an inappropriate moment to focus on that relationship.

While India undertook this monumental free and democratic election, there was a military coup in Pakistan where the democratically elected government was thrown out of office and its leaders imprisoned.

I think it is important for all of us, Members of Congress and presidential candidates, to understand that a military coup is not something that should be applauded by the American people or Members of our Congress or any political figure.

One of the most important relationships we have is the relationship with the world's largest political democracy, India.

For a long time, Mr. Speaker, people were making comparisons between China and India, pointing out how effective China's leadership has been in bringing economic progress, even though they maintain their police state and their dictatorship.

In recent years, we have come to see with great pleasure that India was not only able to maintain its political democracy but was able to make tremendous strides in the economic field.

The resolution before us today commends the Indians on their recent elections, congratulates Prime Minister Vajpayee on his reelection, and calls on our President to visit India as part of his scheduled South Asia trip and urges the President to further broaden and strengthen our relations with our fellow democracy, India.

I urge my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 211.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON), the distinguished ranking member of the Committee on International Relations.

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I want to join my colleagues, particularly the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), in his articulate support for the resolution commending India on its election.

India stands in stark contrast to almost all of its neighbors from Burma and over to China, obviously, and the very sad situation recently with the coup in Pakistan.

What we see is India, which is among the poorer countries in the world, having an incredibly vibrant democracy. Oftentimes we think there is a certain fundamental level of economic strength before countries can have democratic institutions. India continues to build its democratic institutions, its economic reform package will