

want to take this opportunity to highlight, praise and congratulate our Catholic schools in my home state of New Mexico.

A whole host of events and presentations are planned for this annual observance of the significant role that Catholic elementary and secondary schools play in educating our young people. This is also an occasion to observe the high standard of excellence and the quality of education available in these institutions.

Mr. Speaker, whatever our religious affiliations, we can all admit that for many generations our parochial schools have achieved outstanding results in providing an excellent education. Even non-Catholic parents have turned to the parochial schools to educate their children.

I especially wish to acknowledge Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. His strong leadership is an example to all of us. On Sunday, April 25, 1999, an editorial by Archbishop Sheehan appeared in the *Albuquerque Journal*. As he eloquently stated, "Learning takes place in the home and in the classroom. To improve academic performance, we have to have students who are willing and ready to learn, competent teachers who care about children and who have high expectations of students, and parents and extended families who also care and have high expectations of their children." Indeed, Archbishop Sheehan has captured the essence of education.

I urge all my colleagues to join with me and salute the fine people that make the Catholic schools in New Mexico a reality. It is in the spirit of this wonderful celebration that I wish to recognize and pay tribute to Catholic Schools Week.

RESPONSIBLE DEBT RELIEF AND
DEMOCRACY REFORM ACT

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, today I am reintroducing the Responsible Debt Relief and Democracy Reform Act. This legislation, which I first introduced in the 106th Congress, is intended to provide debt relief to poor countries that have an insurmountable debt burden and to encourage these same countries to implement reforms for sound democracy and the maintenance of a civil society.

Having just returned from a trip to Central Africa where I visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and Sudan, I am convinced that responsibly provided debt relief to the poorest countries of the world is one of the best ways to help the poor and the suffering.

The countries I recently visited are among the poorest of the world. Life in those countries and throughout Africa is not easy. Death, famine, disease and pain are a constant as millions struggle to survive another day. A recent report by the United Nations says that 180 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are undernourished. Some children go days without a meal. Malnourishment lowers immune systems and horrible diseases take hold.

The AIDS virus is reaching epidemic proportions. Seventy percent of the world's AIDS

cases are in Africa where more than 16,000 people a day are infected. More than 2 million Africans died of AIDS in 2000. There are 16 African countries where more than 10 percent of the adult population is infected with AIDS.

Hunger and disease lead the list as the major crises facing the poorest countries of the world. But there are also other similar characteristics: most of these countries struggle with democracy or with bad governance; they also are caught in a downward spiral of debt, causing difficult and uncertain futures.

Many of the poorest countries must spend an exorbitant amount of their budgets simply to make their debt payments. The rock singer, Bono, a vocal advocate for providing debt relief to heavily indebted poor countries, says, "A country like Niger, with a life expectancy of 47 years, spends more paying off their debts than on health and education combined."

Indeed, a country like Niger is not alone. Debt payments can consume as much as 30–40 percent of a poor country's revenue. The chances of these countries ever paying back their loans is slim to none. Realistically, none of their debt is going to be repaid.

The poor countries of the world have an alarmingly low life expectancy rate, with reports indicating that the average person in Sierra Leone only lives for 27 years. Canceling or reducing the debt of the poorest countries of the world is an opportunity for the U.S. to alleviate the suffering that these people face. Unfortunately, many of these poor countries facing insurmountable debt and needing democratic reform are in Africa.

The new Bush Administration has a unique opportunity to make a difference in Africa. Throughout my trip, the constant refrain I heard was that the United States just needed to show it cared. No one asked for American troops to be deployed. They just want America to send a signal that it will begin to focus on the plight of Africa before another generation of young people is lost to civil war, famine, disease and AIDS.

The U.S. can help provide hope and opportunity for those who may be hopeless. Providing debt relief to the poorest governments of the world, if done in the right way, can free these governments to better address the needs of their own people.

But simply canceling a country's debt doesn't necessarily pave the way to good government. The governments of poor countries are often part of the problem. For a variety of reasons, poorly run governments frequently stand in the way of alleviating poverty or sickness or of providing hope and opportunity to the poorest of the poor.

That is why the legislation I propose today will provide incentives to countries to reform their governments, to institute needed democratic reforms and basic structures of a civil society such as, respect for human rights, promoting religious freedom, freedom of the press, and freedom of association.

The legislation says that debt by the U.S. will be provided to countries that meet the following requirements, as determined by the President of the U.S.:

Freedom of the press.

Freedom of association.

An independent and non-discriminatory judiciary.

Reduction or elimination of corruption relating to public officials, including the promulgation of laws prohibiting bribery of public officials

and disclosure of assets by such officials; the establishment of an independent anti-corruption commission; the establishment of an independent agency to audit financial activities of public officials.

Free and fair elections.

Practice of internationally recognized human rights.

Opposition to international terrorism as determined by the Secretary of State.

The President may waive one or more of these requirements for emergency humanitarian relief purposes, if the President determines and certifies to Congress that it is in the national security interests of the U.S., or if the President determines that a recipient country is making demonstrable progress in the aforementioned areas.

The President is to notify Congress of the justification for the determination of the countries that will receive a cancellation or reduction of debt according to the conditions in this legislation.

Finally, this legislation conveys the sense of Congress that the President should instruct the U.S. director at each international financial institution to which the U.S. is a member to use the voice, vote, and influence of the U.S. to urge the cancellation or reduction of debt owed to the institution by a country only if the country meets the same requirements applicable in this legislation.

We need to help the poorest countries overcome their debt burdens but it must be done responsibly. We must ensure that a dictator's pockets are not lined as a result of debt relief. That is why this legislation sets up a framework to help the poorest nations of the world in their struggle toward democracy, rather than just simply writing off their debt. This legislation says progress in democratic reforms, honoring human rights, and opposition to terrorism are important for developing our poor countries. It says that one of the ways to help the poor is to give them opportunities created by engendering democracy, transparency, and much needed relief from their country's overwhelming debt burden. Lastly it says that if those goals are met, the U.S. will help those countries struggling to help their citizens to a better, more prosperous life.

Mr. Speaker, while this legislation may not be the perfect answer, I am hopeful it will provide the foundation for discussion on how to help the poor and give them opportunities so that the 107th Congress and the Bush Administration can deal with this important issue. I urge my colleagues to join me in co-sponsoring this bill.

H.R.—

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Responsible Debt Relief and Democracy Reform Act".

SEC. 2. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CANCELLATION OR REDUCTION OF DEBT OWED TO THE UNITED STATES.

The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"PART VI—ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CANCELLATION OR REDUCTION OF DEBT OWED TO THE UNITED STATES

"SEC. 901 CANCELLATION OR REDUCTION OF DEBT.

"Beginning on and after the date of the enactment of this part, the President may cancel or reduce amounts owed to the United

States (or any agency of the United States) by foreign countries as a result of concessional or nonconcessional loans made, guarantees issued, or credits extended under any other provision of law only if, in addition to the requirements contained under the applicable provisions of law providing authority for the debt cancellation or reduction, the requirements contained in section 902 are satisfied.

“SEC. 902 ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—A foreign country shall be eligible for cancellation or reduction of debt under any other provision of law only if the government of the country—

- “(1) ensures freedom of the press;
- “(2) ensures freedom of association;
- “(3) has established an independent and non-discriminatory judiciary;
- “(4) provides for the reduction or elimination of corruption relating to public officials, including—
 - “(A) the promulgation of laws to prohibit bribery of and by public officials, including disclosure of assets by such officials upon taking office, periodically while in office, and upon leaving office;
 - “(B) the establishment of an independent anti-corruption commission—
 - “(i) to receive and verify the disclosure of assets by public officials in accordance with subparagraph (A); and
 - “(ii) to investigate allegations or corruption or misconduct by public officials and to make all findings available to the appropriate administrative or judicial entries; and
 - “(C) the establishment of an independent agency—
 - “(i) to audit the financial activities of public officials and agencies; and
 - “(ii) to make all audits under clause (i) available to the appropriate administrative or judicial entities;
- “(5) is elected through free and fair elections;
- “(6) does not engage in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights; and
- “(7) does not repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism, as determined by the Secretary of State under section 6(j)(1) of the Export Administration Act of 1979 (50 U.S.C. App. 2405(j)(1)) or section 620A(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2371(a)).

“(b) EXCEPTIONS.—The President may waive the application of 1 or more of the re-

quirements of subsection (a) with respect to the cancellation or reduction of debt owed to the United States by a foreign country—

“(1) for emergency humanitarian relief purposes;

“(2) if the President determines that it is in the national security interests of the United States to do so or

“(3) if the President determines that the foreign country is making demonstrable progress in meeting the requirements of paragraphs (1) through (7) of subsection (a) by adopting appropriate legal and other related reforms.

“(c) CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION.—Not later than 7 days prior to the cancellation or reduction of debt in accordance with section 901, the President shall transmit to the Congress a report that contains a justification for the determination by the President that—

“(1) the requirements contained in each of paragraphs (1) through (7) of subsection (a) have been satisfied with respect to the foreign country involved; or

“(2) the requirement of paragraph (1), (2), or (3) of subsection (b) has been satisfied with respect to the foreign country involved.”.

SEC. 3. SENSE OF THE CONGRESS RELATING TO CANCELLATION OR REDUCTION OF MULTILATERAL DEBT.

It is the sense of the Congress of the President should instruct the United States Executive Director at each international financial institution to which the United States is a member to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United States to urge that the cancellation or reduction of debt owed to the institution by a country may be provided only if the country meets the same requirements applicable to the cancellation or reduction of amounts owed to the United States under paragraphs (1) through (7) of section 902(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (as added by section 2).

**COMMITTEE JURISDICTION
RELATING TO H. CON. RES. 15**

HON. HENRY J. HYDE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I insert into the RECORD, a letter from Chairman OXLEY, con-

cerning his committee's jurisdiction over H. Con. Res. 15 and his willingness to waive that committees referral of the bill, to permit us to proceed to its consideration.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES,
Washington, DC, January 31, 2001.

Hon. HENRY J. HYDE,
Chairman, Committee on International Relations, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR HENRY: I understand that you intend to bring H. Con. Res. 15, a resolution expressing sympathy for the victims of the Indian earthquake, to the floor today for consideration under the suspension calendar. As you know, the Committee on Financial Services was granted an additional referral upon the resolution's introduction pursuant to the Committee's jurisdiction over international financial and monetary organizations under Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

Because of the importance of this matter, I recognize your desire to bring this legislation before the House in an expeditious manner and will waive consideration of the resolution by the Financial Services Committee. By agreeing to waive its consideration of the resolution, the Financial Services Committee does not waive its jurisdiction over H. Con. Res. 15. In addition, the Committee on Financial Services reserves its authority to seek conferees on any provisions of the resolution that are within the Financial Services Committee's jurisdiction during any House-Senate conference that may be convened on this legislation. I ask your commitment to support any request by the Committee on Financial Services for conferees on H. Con. Res. 15 or related legislation.

I request that you include this letter and your response as part of the Record during consideration of the legislation on the House floor.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL G. OXLEY,
Chairman.