

(Mr. BILIRAKIS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DEBT RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight to address the issue of debt relief for Africa, particularly as we are on the cusp of considering the fiscal year 2002 foreign operations appropriations bill.

There are many reasons why debt relief is important and critical to the United States. I believe we not only have a moral obligation but an economic impetus to ensure that we share a world that is economically prosperous, educated and healthy. As we have seen in recent years, health and financial problems are not constrained by regional boundaries. That is why I, and many of my colleagues, worked to increase funding in the foreign operations bill for HIV/AIDS and infectious disease programs, debt relief, basic education, child survival, and micro-enterprise programs, among others.

Although details have not been provided, I am pleased to note that President Bush is thinking about innovative ways to address the issue of poverty and debt relief. It was reported he intends to push the World Bank to extend more grants instead of loans to developing countries as a way to reduce their debt burden. I believe this effort is a step in the right direction. However, it demands we remain committed in word and deed to ensuring that additional resources are provided to assist in any effort to provide debt relief to countries most in need.

Mr. Speaker, I am a strong advocate for providing resources to developing countries so that the residents will be afforded the same opportunities that we have here in America. Unfortunately, despite our efforts to provide development assistance and debt relief, many countries are crushed under the weight of debt burdens, a burden that profoundly affects the everyday health care and education needs of millions of families and children.

It is heartbreaking to know that approximately seven million children die each year as a result of the debt crisis. Further, more than 2.5 million children died in the year 2000 because debt repayments have diverted money away from investment in basic lifesaving health care. According to a recent report released by Oxfam International entitled "G-8: Failing the World's Children," poor countries are saving \$1 billion a year for schools and education, but 16 of the countries that get debt relief still spend more on debt than on health care for their citizens.

The report further emphasizes the role debt burdens have played in exacerbating the education crisis in developing countries, particularly in sub-Sa-

haran Africa. Of the 22 countries who have received debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative, over half will spend more on debt than on primary education; and two-thirds will spend more servicing their debt than they spend on basic health care.

The report also highlighted the problem in Tanzania, where high school fees are preventing primary aged students from attending school. Although the country would like to get rid of the school fees and provide free universal primary education, they are hindered by their debt.

That is why I am pleased to be here to show my support and emphasize the change that can take place if my colleagues in Congress support the effort of the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) to implement reforms to reverse this devastating trend. Her bill, H.R. 1642, Debt Cancellation for the New Millennium Act, urges the President to work within the international financial and multilateral institutions to modify the HIPC initiative.

Specifically, the bill will work to ensure that the amount of debt relief provided by the IMF and World Bank under the initiative cancels 100 of the HIPC's debt burden, and to ensure that the provision of relief cannot be conditioned on a country's implementation of a structural adjustment or stabilization program of the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility of the IMF, which has had a history of further siphoning away funds from investments in health care and education.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being afforded this opportunity to speak on this very important issue. I look forward to seeing this bill move through the House so that the positive changes can be made. As such, I urge my colleagues to support the economic livelihood and social well-being of our world's families and children.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HUNTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

LAUNCH OF THE SPACE SHUTTLE "ATLANTIS"

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, soon after I was appointed the only freshman member of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics of the Committee on Science, I determined to tour the Kennedy Space Center and witness the launch of a manned mission to space.

Just before dawn on Thursday, July 12, I fulfilled that goal and was left not only with a profound sense of appreciation for those who make our space program work, but also with an enhanced sense of pride in being an American.

We arrived at Cape Canaveral at midnight in the company of 9-year veteran NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin. On the way to the launch site, our group of seven Members of Congress and their staffs was confronted with the sight of the Shuttle *Atlantis*, just one mile away. The shuttle and booster rockets stood straight up, steaming in the darkness, illuminated by billion-watt searchlights.

With its 18 million pounds of hardware, fuel, and payload, the bright white craft stood, as Astronaut Edward Lu told me that evening, "creaking and steaming like an animal waiting to leap into space."

Moments later, shortly after 1 a.m., an attack helicopter appeared, Mr. Speaker, flying low, search lights and guns sweeping the road between the astronauts' residence building and the 1 A launch site.

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After the gunship completed its reconnaissance, the bus carrying the five brave astronauts of STS-104 sped past our group. With all the enthusiasm of schoolchildren seeing Santa at the Macy's Parade, seven Members of Congress frantically waved as the bus conveying the crew sped past on its way to the launch tower.

From the launch area, we traveled to the Apollo Center where the viewing stands were already filled with family members and friends of the crew, anxiously milling about in nervous conversation. We took our seats.

With the 4:30 a.m. announcement that we were "go for launch" booming over the public address system, the clock began to run.

At 5 minutes to launch, the "Star Spangled Banner" blared out of the speakers at the viewing stand, and all those in attendance solemnly rose to their feet.

Mr. Speaker, the phrase "the rockets' red glare" froze in those morning hours in my mind as I listened to our

national anthem. I thought of another night sky some 150 years ago by the light of rockets of a different sort when Francis Scott Key penned those magnificent lines about the United States of America.

The rocket cleared the tower. Moments after, a burst of light appeared before the gantry way. The moment the main orbiter engines reached the top of the tower, Mr. Speaker, the humid Florida night sky turned as bright as day. The same instant, the sound with all its earthshaking force struck our location like a hurricane. The Earth shook and an explosion of hot air rushed past. I felt as if the wind had been knocked out of me, the sound only becoming louder as the rocket climbed in the early morning sky.

Mr. Speaker, it was as though the Earth gave birth to a piece of sun and was sending it home. *Atlantis* seemed almost lazy in its rate of ascent. As the ship climbed, the light from the rocket which had, at first, shone dimly like the dawn, turned to midday brightness, revealing a blue sky and leaving shadows on the landscape.

I turned to look at my wife. Karen stood with wet eyes in that other worldly brilliance. I was nearly overcome with emotion. But there was still serious work to be done.

The shuttle climbed, leaving in its wake a sycamore-like column of smoke that seemed a pillar holding heaven itself. When the vehicle jettisoned its temporary booster rockets the crowd broke out into applause, but NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin would have none of it. His demeanor remained silent and stern. He explained that he did not celebrate launches until 8 minutes and 30 seconds into the launch. At that time the main engine cutoff occurred and the astronauts safely reached orbit.

As the light faded and the sky returned to the darkness of night, *Atlantis* appeared as a red dot disappearing into the Northeast sky. Still visible 160 miles away, we heard the words "main engine cutoff" on the public address system. The entire crowd broke into applause, relief and tears.

Later that morning I had the honor of speaking to over 100 mission specialists in the Firing Room. I would have called it mission control, but I learned that title belongs in Houston.

I made a few comments to those Purdue graduates on hand and then told all the heroes wearing headsets how the words of the national anthem that morning had struck me. I thanked them for their professionalism, for another safe launch, and for the inspiration which their teamwork and their spirit of exploration continues to provide to all Americans.

After sharing a meal of beans and cornbread with the crew, which is a traditional post-launch fare at NASA, we boarded a plane to Washington. As I drifted off to sleep, Mr. Speaker, the words of our national anthem rang in my ears, and I became more convinced

than ever that the rockets' red glare still gives proof in the air that this is the land of the free and the home of the brave.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLAKE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DIVERSE COMMUNITY GROUPS OPPOSE H.R. 7, COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS ACT OF 2001

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, today the House was scheduled to vote on H.R. 7, the so-called Charitable Choice Act. However, the House Republican leadership had to delay the vote because of objections from both Republicans and Democrats alike that this bill would allow discrimination in job hiring based on a person's religious faith when using Federal funds.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is that we all support the good work of thousands of faith-based charities across this country. But the truth is also that, as more Members of Congress and more American citizens learn about what is actually in H.R. 7, the support for this bill is faltering badly.

Over 1,000 religious leaders, pastors, priests and rabbis have signed a petition urging this Congress tomorrow to oppose the President's faith-based charity bill.

Why? Because it would harm religion, not help religion.

Why? Because it would not only allow discrimination in job hiring using Federal dollars, it would actually subsidize such discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, let me mention some of the diverse religious and education and civic groups and civil rights groups that stand firmly opposed to the passage of H.R. 7: The American Association of School Administrators; the American Association of University Women; the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees; the American Federation of Teachers; the American Jewish Committee. The Anti-Defamation League opposes this bill, along with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the National Education Association, and the National PTA.

Mr. Speaker, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. opposes this bill, along with the Episcopal Church U.S.A., the Interfaith Alliance and the United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society, along with many other religious and civic groups strongly oppose the passage of this bill on the floor of the House tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, let me talk about what is wrong with this bill. Let me empha-

size three points: First, the bill is unnecessary. It is unnecessary. Under long-standing law in this country, the Federal Government has been able to support faith-based groups under several conditions and several proper conditions. First, that they not be directly churches or houses of worship. That if churches want to do faith-based work with Federal dollars, they should set up a separate 501(c)(3) secular organization. Then those groups cannot proselytize with tax dollars, and they cannot discriminate in job hiring with those tax dollars.

Under those limited but important conditions, for decades faith-based groups such as Catholic Charities and Lutheran Social Services have received Federal dollars to help social work causes without obliterating the wall of separation between church and State. So the bill is simply a solution in search of a problem.

Secondly, as I mentioned, this bill not only allows discrimination against American citizens based on their religion, it subsidizes it. Let me be specific. If this bill were to become law and a church associated with Bob Jones University were to receive a Federal grant under the program, that church could use our tax dollars to put out a sign that says no Catholic need apply here for a federally funded job. Mr. Speaker, that is wrong.

In the year 2001, over 200 years after the passage of the Bill of Rights, no American citizen should have to pass someone else's religious test to qualify for a federally funded job. No American citizen, not one, should be fired from a federally funded job simply and solely because of that person's religious faith.

Next, I would point out that this bill basically is built on a foundation of a false premise, the false premise that somehow if the Federal tax dollars of this government are not going directly to our houses of worship and our synagogues and mosques, that is somehow discrimination against religion. I think Mr. Madison and Mr. Jefferson would be shocked by that suggestion of discrimination against religion. I think they would have argued that the Bill of Rights for 200 years has not discriminated against religion. The Bill of Rights has put religion on a pedestal above the long arm and reach of the Federal Government, both Federal funding and the Federal regulations that follow.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 7 is a bad bill for our churches, our religion, our faith and our country. I urge a "no" vote tomorrow.

PASS PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS FOR MEANINGFUL HMO REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLAKE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, this evening I want to spend the time with