

be arrested has committed or is committing such felony.”.

SEC. 3. INTERFERENCE WITH PROTECTIVE FUNCTIONS.

(a) **GENERALLY.**—Chapter 7 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“§ 117. Interference with protective functions

“(a) Whoever knowingly and willfully obstructs, resists, or interferes with a Federal law enforcement agent engaged in the performance of the protective functions authorized by section 37 of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2709) shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than one year, or both.

“(e) Whoever engages in any conduct—

“(1) directed against an individual entitled to protection under section 37 of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2709), and

“(2) which would constitute a violation of section 112 or 878 if such individual were a foreign official, an official guest, or an internationally protected person, shall be subject to the same penalties as are provided for such conduct directed against an individual subject to protection under such section.”.

(b) **CLERICAL AMENDMENT.**—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 7 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“117. Interference with protective functions.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITFIELD). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2541, the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of H.R. 2541, a bill to enhance the authorities of the Diplomatic Security Service agents at the U.S. Department of State.

The measure before us includes an amendment that was recommended by the Committee on the Judiciary. The bill was drafted in consultation with the State Department. I want to thank and congratulate the author of the bill, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), the chairman of the Committee on International Relations, and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), the ranking democrat and member of the committee, who was a principal cosponsor of the legislation.

The provisions clarify and expand the circumstances in which subpoena and arrest authority is available for State Department diplomatic security officers who often find themselves on the front line of defense against terrorism and other threats to our national security.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2541 authorizes diplomatic security special agents to obtain and execute search warrants, subpoenas or summonses as those relate to their protective duties and to passport and visa fraud investigations. It also permits agents, in the course of conducting their investigative or protective duties, to make arrests without warrant for offenses committed in their presence or in certain other compelling circumstances, just as other Federal law enforcement officers are now empowered to do.

The bill also allows diplomatic security agents to make misdemeanor arrests of persons obstructing or impeding agents in the performance of their protective functions.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2541 fixes a disconnect in current law in which the Secretary of State may authorize protection of distinguished visitors, but where it does not make it a Federal crime to attack such visitors. Current law only criminalizes attacks on distinguished visitors protected by the Diplomatic Security Services when they are “official” visitors.

There are occasions in which such protective services may appropriately be authorized for visitors who are technically official, such as, for instance, the Dalai Lama or Salman Rushdie. So this legislation ensures that diplomatic security officers will be empowered to arrest people who assault anyone who is lawfully under their protection.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to support this bill.

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

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I might consume, and I rise in strong support of this bill.

I want to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) for introducing this legislation, which provides expanded authority to the agents of the Department of State’s diplomatic service to enable them to carry out their protective functions more effectively.

These authorities are being requested by the administration, Mr. Speaker. In the current situation, when we are fighting a global war against terrorism, it is absolutely crucial that the State Department have all the authority it needs for the protective and law enforcement functions of the diplomatic service agents.

The agents in our diplomatic service in the Department of State regularly risk life and limb to protect not only our diplomatic facilities both here and abroad, the men and women who work in them, but also foreign officials and important guests of the United States.

The Diplomatic Security Service, Mr. Speaker, is also at the front line of our homeland security efforts as they conduct visa and passport fraud investigations. Our bill provides them with all the authority that they need to effectively carry out these functions.

Mr. Speaker, we have embarked on a new kind of conflict since September

11, 2001. We need to provide all the authorities and all the support not only for our men and women in uniform but also to our diplomats and other government officials who are working actively to make sure that we prevail in this conflict.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. 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 New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2541, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

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.

COMMENDING DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI ON THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF HER RECEIVING THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 211) commending Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the 10th anniversary of her receiving the Nobel Peace Prize and expressing the sense of the Congress with respect to the Government of Burma, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 211

Whereas since 1962, the people of Burma have lived under a repressive military regime;

Whereas in 1988, the people of Burma rose up in massive prodemocracy demonstrations;

Whereas in response to this call for change, the Burmese military brutally suppressed these demonstrations;

Whereas opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest after these demonstrations;

Whereas in the 1990 Burmese elections, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi led the National League for Democracy and affiliated parties to a landslide victory, winning 80 percent of the parliamentary seats;

Whereas the ruling military regime rejected this election and proceeded to arrest hundreds of members of the National League for Democracy;

Whereas Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s freedom of speech was restricted by the military regime;

Whereas in recognition of her efforts to bring democracy to Burma, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on October 14, 1991;

Whereas Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remained under unlawful house arrest until 1995;

Whereas even after her release, the Burmese military regime, known as the State

Peace and Development Council (SPDC), has continued to ignore the basic human rights of 48,000,000 Burmese citizens and has brutally suppressed any opposition to its authority;

Whereas according to the State Department, the SPDC has made no significant progress toward stopping the practice of human trafficking, whereby thousands of people have been sent to Thailand for the purpose of factory and household work and for sexual exploitation;

Whereas the SPDC has forced civilians to work in industrial, military, and infrastructure construction operations throughout Burma, and on a large-scale basis has targeted ethnic and religious minorities for this work;

Whereas a Department of Labor report in 2000 described the human rights abuses of forced laborers, including beating, torture, starvation, and summary executions;

Whereas the worldwide scourge of heroin and methamphetamines is significantly aggravated by large-scale cultivation and production of these drugs in Burma;

Whereas the Drug Enforcement Agency has reported that Burma is the world's second largest producer of opium and opiate-based drugs;

Whereas officials in Thailand have estimated that as many as 800 million tablets of methamphetamine will be smuggled into their country this year, contributing to the growing methamphetamine problem in Thailand;

Whereas there are as many as a million internally displaced persons in Burma;

Whereas the SPDC has severely restricted Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's political activities;

Whereas in September 2000, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest when she attempted to visit a National League for Democracy party office on the outskirts of Rangoon, and again when she attempted to travel by train to Mandalay;

Whereas Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has recently begun talks with the SPDC which are welcomed by the international community, although the slow pace of the talks reflects on the SPDC's sincerity to move toward national reconciliation;

Whereas the SPDC has recently allowed the National League for Democracy to open some political offices, and has released some political prisoners, although over 1,800 such prisoners are believed to remain imprisoned;

Whereas with the exception of these positive developments the SPDC has made little progress in improving human rights conditions and restoring democracy to the country;

Whereas the SPDC has continued to restrict the political power of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy;

Whereas Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's struggle to assert the rights of her people has spread beyond politics and into popular culture, as evidenced by others championing her cause, most notably the rock group U2 in their song "Walk On", which is banned in Burma; and

Whereas, in the face of oppression, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has remained an outspoken champion of democracy and freedom; Now, therefore, be it

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

(1) the Congress commends and congratulates Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the 10th anniversary of her receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, and recognizes her remarkable contributions and tireless work toward bringing peace and democracy to Burma;

(2) it is the sense of the Congress that the President and Secretary of State should continue to encourage the Government of Burma to restore basic human rights to the

Burmese people, to eliminate the practice of human trafficking, to address the manufacture of heroin and methamphetamines, to continue the process of releasing political prisoners, to recognize the results of the 1990 democratic elections, and to allow Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy to enjoy unfettered freedom of speech and freedom of movement; and

(3) it is the sense of the Congress that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi should be invited to address a joint meeting of the Congress at such time and under such circumstances as will, in the judgment of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, advance rather than endanger her continued ability to work within Burma for the rights of the Burmese people.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the concurrent resolution now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I urge a unanimous vote in favor of this important resolution which makes clear that continued strong support of Congress for freedom and democracy in Burma and for the struggle of Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League of Democracy to assert the fundamental rights of the Burmese people.

I want to thank and congratulate the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) and the 35 bipartisan cosponsors of this timely and important resolution.

Mr. Speaker, the manager's amendment, which is included in the text, now makes technical and drafting changes and has been agreed to by the chairman and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) on the Democratic side of the aisle.

Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago this month, the Nobel Committee recognized what the whole world knew, that the only way to restore peace and prosperity to the once-proud nation of Burma was to restore legitimacy. Burma is different from most other countries in which power is wielded by a totalitarian dictatorship, in that we do not have to theorize what would they do if they had the opportunity. The people had the opportunity, and they chose to govern themselves.

Eleven years ago, the military dictatorship did allow an election, which they figured they would be able to win by fraud and by dividing and conquering the different ethnic groups that comprise the nation of Burma; but to their shock, dismay and surprise,

the reformers won with an overwhelming support from all ethnic groups in all parts of the country. So the dictatorship simply canceled the results of the election.

Nevertheless, it laid to rest any doubt about the desire of the Burmese people, the earnest desire for freedom and democracy and about the fundamental illegitimacy of the military junta that has continued to govern Burma.

This resolution commends and rightfully commends Aung San Suu Kyi on the 10th anniversary of her receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. She is a great leader. That anniversary occurred on October 14 of this year. The resolution also describes the suppression of freedom and democracy by the Burmese military junta and the continuing struggle of Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy to assert the rights, legitimate rights, of the Burmese people.

It declares the sense of the Congress that the U.S. Government should continue to encourage the government of Burma to restore basic human rights to the Burmese people; to eliminate the practice of human trafficking; to address the manufacture of heroin; and to continue the process of releasing political prisoners; to recognize the result of the 1990 elections; and to allow Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy to enjoy unfettered freedom of speech and freedom of movement.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this resolution declares a sense of Congress that Aung San Suu Kyi should be invited to address a joint meeting of the Congress. It is my hope that this meeting will occur when Aung San Suu Kyi has taken her rightful place as the leader of a free and democratic Burma.

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

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume, and I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 211.

First, I would like to commend my friend and colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING), for introducing this important legislation and my good friend the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), who has not only been a champion of human rights in Burma but across the globe.

Mr. Speaker, when visitors arrive in my office, they are greeted by a picture of one of the world's most inspirational figures, Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. Suu Kyi's picture is a daily reminder to all who come to my office of her ongoing struggle for freedom and democracy in Burma.

As we all know, Aung San Suu Kyi led the National League for Democracy to a landslide victory in the 1990s election in Burma. Instead of accepting results of this election, Burma's brutal totalitarian regime rejected the results of the election, placed Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest and arrested hundreds of members of her political movement.

Mr. Speaker, it would have been very easy and convenient for Aung San Suu Kyi to leave Burma and live her life in exile. When her husband was extremely ill in Great Britain and the Burmese Government refused to allow him to come to Burma to see her one more time, she could have left; but she chose to stay.

Facing enormous restrictions on her personal and political freedom, this courageous woman has continued the fight for freedom and democracy in Burma during the 10 years since she won the Nobel Peace Prize.

As Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela found out, nonviolent struggle can take decades to succeed; and the struggle can be very lonely at times. This is all the more reason for the international community and for the United States to continue to stand with Aung San Suu Kyi in her struggle for freedom and democracy and all the values we share.

Aung San Suu Kyi recently began a dialogue with the Burmese Government, and I certainly hope that it will bear fruit; but we must keep the pressure on that dictatorial regime until democracy prevails in Burma.

To that end, I have introduced legislation which prohibits Burmese imports into the United States until the President determines that the Burmese Government has made progress in reversing its gross violations of internationally recognized human rights and worker rights, implementing democratic government and cooperating with the United States in our counternarcotics efforts. It is my earnest hope that the Committee on Ways and Means will expeditiously consider this legislation.

The resolution before us today, Mr. Speaker, will keep the pressure on the Burmese Government. By continuing to spotlight Aung San Suu Kyi's struggle in Burma and calling on our administration to encourage Burma to change its repressive and destructive policies, we build a stronger international coalition for positive change in Burma.

Before concluding, I also want to acknowledge our colleague, the gentleman from Oregon's (Mr. BLUMENAUER) helpful comments regarding this legislation. The gentleman has suggested that Aung San Suu Kyi could be invited to address a joint session of Congress by video conference. I think this is a creative idea, and we should give it serious thought.

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

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

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank Chairman HYDE for bringing to the floor H. Con. Res. 211, a resolution Commending Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the 10th anniversary of her receiving the Nobel Peace Prize and expressing the sense of the Congress with respect to the Government of Burma. I want to commend the gentleman from New York, Congressman KING, for drafting this important resolution.

Daw Suu was under house arrest from 1989 to 1995 after winning a democratic election in 1990 and leading her party, the National League for Democracy, to a landslide victory, winning 80 percent of the parliamentary seats. However, she was rearrested a year ago and has once again been under house arrest since then.

One year ago talks began between her party the National League for Democracy and the military government. Since then we have seen the release of 2180 political prisoners and the opening of approximately 30 NLD offices. While we welcome these actions, Amnesty International reports that there are close to 1800 political prisoners still being held in Burma and at that pace it could be another 10 years before we see them all freed. This is not acceptable.

Human rights abuses continue, narcotics production and trafficking continue and the NLD and ethnic supporters of the democracy movement are not allowed to freely associate or express their views. Just two weeks ago the State Department issued its report on international religious freedom once again citing Burma as a country of concern for religious persecution.

Accordingly Mr. Speaker, I strongly support H. Con. Res. 211 and urge my colleague to support this bill.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the resolution to honor Ms. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, a political activist currently under house arrest in Burma. Ms. Suu Kyi has devoted her life to furthering the democratic cause in her native land, in opposition to the brutal military regime now in power.

The government in Burma acts with an overt disrespect for the human rights of the Burmese people. Human trafficking is a very real problem, which the military dictatorship makes no significant effort to curtail. And thanks to the government's involvement, the country ranks second only to Afghanistan in the production of heroin and methamphetamines. All publications, broadcast media, and even artwork are heavily censored. Freedoms of expression and assembly are ignored. The United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other groups have routinely reported massacres, torture, rape, detention without trial, massive forced relocations, and forced labor.

This is the government that Ms. Suu Kyi has been fighting for the past thirteen years. For seven of those years she has been under house arrest, subject to a law that permits detention without charge or trial. Yet she continues to advocate non-violent means of restoring democracy to her country. Because of her efforts she has become an international symbol of the fight against oppression and human rights abuses.

In 1991, Ms. Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. It is on the tenth anniversary of this occasion that we seek to honor her by recognizing her achievements and expressing our support of her endeavor to free Burma from the repressive and murderous dictatorship under which it suffers.

As many of my constituents already know, I have been following human rights abuses in Burma quite closely. On March 13, 2001, Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, hosted an Inaugural Human Rights Program Awards Ceremony which called attention to three teachers being held as political prisoners in

Burma. This program is believed to be the only undergraduate interdisciplinary human rights program in the United States, and is under the skillful direction of its Director, Maryam Elahi.

Eight months ago, a number of the members of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus joined me in writing to the State Peace and Development Council of Burma requesting the immediate release of the three educators who were imprisoned after unfair trials. Neither they nor their lawyers were permitted to speak in court, in a blatant violation of international human rights norms. We have not yet received a response to our letter.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to again stand with me in denouncing the human rights abuses perpetrated by the Burmese government and in commemorating the non-violent and pro-democratic efforts of Ms. Suu Kyi by voting for this resolution.

Mr. KING. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman HYDE and the ranking member, the gentleman from California, Mr. LANTOS, for not only their longstanding commitment to democracy in Burma but their assistance in moving this resolution to the floor of the House. I also want to thank Joseph Rees, Peter Yeo and Jamie McCormick on the International Relations Committee for all their hard work and assistance.

Mr. Speaker, this past October 14th marked the 10th anniversary of Aung San Suu Kyi receiving the Nobel Peace Prize yet, today she remains under house arrest. Barricades surround her residence, her telephone number is cut off and Western journalists face detention if they go within 200 yards. Obviously the suppression of democracy continues in Burma.

The ruling military junta continues to abuse human rights and authorities continue to assist in the drug trade. Human trafficking and the displacement of peoples are persistent and growing problems. Burma's democratically elected government is still being denied the right to take office.

Through it all, Aung San Suu Kyi has been a paragon of personal and political strength. It is my hope that the U.S. Congress and the American people continue to recognize the personal and national struggle for freedom in Burma.

It is imperative that the United States continue to recognize and give hope to those who sacrifice so much in the name of freedom and democracy.

Certainly, Aung San Suu Kyi has inspired so many and given so much—that it would be a travesty for democratic nations to ignore and walk away from the oppression and military control that has become her way of life.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution and continue their efforts to maintain pressure on the military junta in Burma.

□ 1430

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITFIELD). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 211, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of

those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. 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.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT PRESIDENT ISSUE PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING A NATIONAL LAO-HMONG RECOGNITION DAY

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 88) expressing the sense of the Congress that the President should issue a proclamation recognizing a National Lao-Hmong Recognition Day, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 88

Whereas the Lao-Hmong, which means "free people", are Laotian members of the Hmong tribe and are noted for their warrior tradition, loyalty, and bravery;

Whereas beginning in 1960 the United States recruited thousands of the Lao-Hmong to fight against the Communist Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese Army regulars in Laos;

Whereas the United States relied heavily on the Lao-Hmong Special Guerrilla Units to engage in direct combat with North Vietnamese troops from 1960 to 1975;

Whereas the Lao-Hmong conducted tactical guerrilla actions, flew thousands of deadly combat missions in support of the Armed Forces and the Central Intelligence Agency, and fought in conventional and guerrilla combat clashes with extreme casualties;

Whereas the Lao-Hmong, although outnumbered, fought against enemy forces to disrupt the flow of troops and war supplies along the Ho Chi Minh Trail;

Whereas the Lao-Hmong protected United States personnel, guarded United States Air Force radar installations, gathered critical intelligence about enemy operations, and undertook rescue missions to save the lives of downed United States pilots;

Whereas more than 35,000 of the Lao-Hmong lost their lives defending the democratic way of life, and many more were seriously injured and disabled;

Whereas thousands of Lao-Hmong suffered grievous injuries and permanent disabilities, and thousands more were captured and sent to Communist concentration camps;

Whereas after the conclusion of the war, many Lao-Hmong soldiers were the victims of acts of retribution and atrocities by the Pathet Lao, causing many of the Lao-Hmong to flee to neighboring Thailand and become refugees; and

Whereas beginning with the City Council of Golden, Colorado, in 1995, various State and local governments have issued proclamations declaring July 22 as Lao-Hmong Recognition Day, and the issuance of a Presidential proclamation supporting the goals of Lao-Hmong Recognition Day would recognize the bravery, sacrifice, and loyalty to the United States exhibited by the Lao-Hmong in Southeast Asia; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of the Congress that the President should issue a proclamation—

(1) supporting the goals of Lao-Hmong Recognition Day; and

(2) calling on the people of the United States to recognize the service and sacrifice of the men and women of the Lao-Hmong with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. 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. 88.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 88, and I commend the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) for introducing this important measure.

This resolution expresses congressional support for the goals of Lao-Hmong Recognition Day. It asks the President to issue an appropriate proclamation. That proclamation should recognize the contributions of the Lao-Hmong in defending freedom and democracy. And it should call on Americans to recognize the service and the sacrifice of the Lao-Hmong with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

The Lao-Hmong fought valiantly against the Communist Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese Army regulars in Laos during the Vietnam War. The United States relied heavily on the Lao-Hmong Special Guerrilla Units to engage in direct combat with North Vietnamese troops from 1960 to 1975. They conducted tactical guerrilla actions. The Lao-Hmong flew thousands of deadly combat missions to support our Armed Forces and the CIA. And they also fought in conventional and guerrilla combat clashes, suffering extreme casualties.

Although outnumbered, the Lao-Hmong fought against enemy forces to disrupt the flow of troops and war supplies along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They protected United States personnel, guarded our Air Force installations, gathered critical intelligence about enemy operations, and undertook rescue missions to save the lives of our downed pilots.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution notes that "Lao-Hmong" means "free people." The brave and loyal members of the Hmong tribe paid a steep price for defending their freedom and the democratic way of life. More than 35,000 were killed. Thousands more were seriously injured. Thousands were captured and sent to Communist concentration camps.

The suffering of the Lao-Hmong did not end with the war, because after the war, the Pathet Lao retaliated against the many Lao-Hmong soldiers, committing many atrocities against them. Many became refugees when they were driven from native Laos. About 170,000 or more Hmong now live here with us in the United States.

In 1995, the city council of Golden, Colorado, first established a special day to recognize the contributions of the Lao-Hmong. Since then, a number of State and local governments have also declared July 22 as Lao-Hmong Recognition Day. The Federal Government should recognize and support these efforts as well.

Mr. Speaker, my husband is a decorated Vietnam veteran. He was wounded in that war, so I come to this floor with a special gratitude for the sacrifices and the suffering that the Lao-Hmong endured because they supported the men and women of our military forces in Southeast Asia. As a Cuban American, I feel a special empathy for the pain inflicted on them because they fought against communism.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge all Members to support this important resolution.

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join with the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) in support of this resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the President should issue a proclamation recognizing a National Lao-Hmong Recognition Day.

Mr. Speaker, in the late 1960s, a Central Intelligence Agency agent known only as Colonel Billy, went into Laos to look for Vang Pao, a Hmong military leader. By the age of 18, Vang Pao had led two raids against the North Vietnamese forces that had penetrated into northern Laos. When Colonel Billy found Vang Pao, he asked him if the Hmong would be willing to help stop the Communist advance in Laos. It is reported that Vang Pao said, "For me, I cannot live with communism. I must either leave or fight. I prefer to fight."

Like Vang Pao, thousands of the Lao-Hmong fought against the Communist Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese Army in Laos. Known for their warrior tradition, loyalty and bravery, the Lao-Hmong Special Guerrilla Units engaged in direct combat with North Vietnamese troops from 1960 to 1975.

The Lao-Hmong conducted tactical guerrilla actions, flew thousands of deadly combat missions in support of the Armed Forces and the CIA, and fought in conventional and guerrilla combat clashes with extreme casualties.

Although outnumbered, the Lao-Hmong fought against enemy forces to disrupt the flow of troops and war supplies along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The Lao-Hmong protected United States