

The Department of Veterans Affairs is the second largest federal agency in terms of employees, with over 220,000 dedicated men and women providing a range of vital benefits and services for veterans around the country. The VA operates the largest integrated health network in the world, comprised of 163 medical centers, over 800 Community Based Outpatient Clinics, 135 nursing homes, 43 domiciliarys and 73 comprehensive home-care programs. The VA continues to provide quality care to millions of veterans, their families and their survivors.

In addition, the VA operates one of the most important medical research programs in the world, with more than 15,000 research projects at 115 VA medical centers. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is on the cutting edge of research on matters ranging from brain trauma to hepatitis C to Alzheimer's disease. The VHA also pays particular attention to the wounds and illnesses of soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen, and recently opened two new Centers for the Study of War-Related Illnesses, one in Washington, DC, and the other in my home state of New Jersey.

The Department of Veterans Affairs maintains a national network of veterans' cemeteries for our nation's veterans, consisting of 119 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico and also administers six life insurance programs with 2.2 million policies in force having a face value of \$22 billion.

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), created as part of the new Department of Veterans Affairs, oversees a myriad of benefits programs for veterans, including disability compensation, education and training, job placement, home loans, and life insurance. Over 2.7 million veterans receive disability compensation payments for wounds or illnesses resulting from their service to our nation, and an additional 570,000 widows, children and surviving parents of deceased veterans also receive monthly benefit payments.

Mr. Speaker, the VA also operates the GI Bill program, which has provided college education and training to more than 20 million veterans since its creation in 1944. This historic program not only changed the way America looked at veterans benefits, it also changed the nature of higher education and helped to create the modern middle class. In addition, the VA operates the veterans home loan program, which has helped over 16 million former servicemen and women buy their own homes.

Since the creation of the original Veterans Administration in 1930, our nation has recognized the unique contributions and sacrifices of the men and women who have defended our freedom at home and abroad. Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs, ably led by Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi, continues to provide the benefits and services that our nations veterans have earned.

On the wall outside the VA's main office in Washington, DC, the words of President Abraham Lincoln are engraved on the building: "To care for him who have borne the battle, and his widow and his orphan." This is the mission that draws so many committed men and women to the VA.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor for me to work on behalf of our nation's veterans and I want to pay tribute to the Department of Veterans Affairs, and especially all of their gifted and dedicated employees, on the 13th anniversary

of their becoming a full Cabinet Department of the federal government.

GIRL SCOUTS

HON. HEATHER WILSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 14, 2002

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of a world-class organization that has achieved world-class results.

Founded in 1912 on the simple belief that all girls should be given the opportunity to develop physically, mentally, and spiritually, Juliette Gordon Low assembled a meeting of 18 girls in Savannah, GA. Today, the Girl Scouts of the USA has grown into an organization with membership numbering 3.8 million, far and away the largest organization for girls in the world.

I would especially like to praise the Girl Scouts of Chaparral Council, the local Girl Scout troop from my home district. Chartered in 1958 and serving over 6,000 girls and 2,000 adult volunteers, the Girl Scouts of Chaparral Council have been teaching girls in my district the ideals of character, conduct, and patriotism for almost 45 years. Organizations like the Girl Scouts of Chaparral Council that make me proud to represent the citizens of the first district of New Mexico.

The Girl Scouts of the USA is the world's preeminent organization dedicated solely to girls, where in a positive, nurturing environment, girls build character and skills for success in the real world. In partnership with committed adult volunteers, girls develop qualities such as strong moral values, leadership, a social conscience, and conviction about their own potential and self worth—values that will serve them well the rest of their lives.

Being involved with Girl Scouts enables girls to develop self-confidence and expertise, take on responsibility, think creatively, and act with integrity. Girl Scouts learn the characteristics essential being good citizens and great leaders.

The U.S. Congress chartered the Girl Scouts of the USA on March 16th, 1950, and at present, there is a "Troop Capitol Hill" made up entirely of Congresswomen who are honorary members.

For 90 years, Girl Scouts of the USA has had a proven track record of empowering girls to become leaders, helping adults become positive role models and mentors for children, and helping to build strong communities. Girl Scouts of the USA truly is a place "where girls grow strong!"

EVIDENCE IN CHITHISINGPHORA FAKED, GOVERNMENT ADMITS

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 14, 2002

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, back in March 2000, just before former President Clinton visited India, 35 Sikhs were massacred in the village of Chithisingphora in Kashmir.

At the time, many people accused the Indian government of this atrocity while the Indian government laid the blame on Pakistani-sponsored militants. A study by the Movement Against State Repression (MASR) and the Punjab Human Rights Organization (PHRO) showed that the Indian government's own forces had killed these innocent Sikhs, a conclusion confirmed by a study from the international Human Rights Organization (IHRO) and by an article in the New York Times Magazine by Barry Bearak. Yet the Indian government maintained the fiction that Pakistanis carried out the massacre. They killed five young Kashmiris, claiming they were responsible, then were force to admit that they were not. Then five other Kashmiris were arrested and charged with the crime.

On March 8, Reuters news service reported that the chief minister of Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah, admitted that the evidence against these Kashmiris was faked. That's right, Mr. Speaker, the "world's largest democracy" faked evidence to falsely convict some Kashmiris of the massacre of these Sikhs in order to set these two minorities against each other. Fortunately, it has not worked. Last year, some Indian troops were caught red-handed trying to set fire to a Gurdwara and some Sikh homes in Kashmir and they were overwhelmed by Sikh and Muslim villagers.

Remember also, Mr. Speaker, that the ruling BJP is part of a militant Hindu nationalist organization the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), which published a booklet last year on how to implicate minorities in false criminal cases.

Given the government's admission of fraud in this case, how many other cases have they faked? They admit to holding 52,268 Sikhs as political prisoners, according to a MASR report. Amnesty International says that tens of thousands of other minorities are also being held as political prisoners in "the world's largest democracy." How many cases have been faked against these prisoners?

Mr. Speaker, it is shameful that the evidence in the Chithisingphora massacre was faked, and it is shameful that it needed to be. However, the people who carry out atrocities like this massacre are rarely if ever punished. Instead, the state either finds scapegoats like the five Kashmiris it is currently holding or it does nothing. It has found a scapegoat in the killing of Graham Staines, even though every report at the time reported that a mob of people chanting Hindu slogans burned Mr. Staines and his two sons. No one has been punished in the murder of former Akal Takht Jathedar Gurdev Singh Kaunke or in the kidnapping and murder of Jaswant Singh Khalar, who was killed in police custody.

I call on the Indian government to punish those who tampered with the evidence in this case immediately. I also call on the United States to cut off aid with India until they allow people to enjoy basic human rights and a fair, impartial system of justice. We should also press for a free and fair plebiscite on independence for the people of Khalistan, Kashmir, Nagaland, and the other countries seeking their freedom. That is only way to protect their rights and end this kind of abuse.

KASHMIR GOVT. SAYS SIKH MASSACRE
SAMPLES FAKED

(By Ashok Pahalan)

JAMMU, India (Reuters).—The state government of Kashmir admitted on Friday that forensic samples taken in an attempt to confirm the guilt of five young men blamed for a Sikh massacre two years ago were faked. The killing of 36 Sikhs in remote Chitisingpora village in the violence-racked state of Jammu and Kashmir in March 2000 occurred hours before a visit by U.S. President Bill Clinton to India and drew strong condemnation from him. Indian newspapers have alleged that soon after the massacre security forces picked up five innocent youths, killed them in a stage-managed gun battle, burned their bodies and then claimed they were "foreign militants" responsible for the Sikhs' deaths. The bodies of the five youths were exhumed and forensic samples taken only after massive demonstrations in Kashmir by protesters. Kashmir state chief minister Farooq Abdullah told the legislature on Friday "it appears fake samples were sent" to laboratories and apologized for "the injustice done to the people for which I feel ashamed". "We strongly suggest those responsible for collecting and sending the samples had something to hide," he added, promising an investigation into the tampering. India had identified the five youths blamed for the Sikh killings as belonging to the militant separatist groups Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbul Mujahideen.

Both groups denied responsibility and, with Pakistan, blamed India for the massacre which they said was aimed at discrediting the Kashmiri independence cause during Clinton's visit. The laboratories to which the samples were sent to establish the youths' identity said they were mislabeled and showed serious discrepancies. Abdullah said a judge would lead the probe, which would take two months. He also said fresh test samples would be taken under the supervision of police and doctors. The Times of India, one of the newspapers which investigated reports that the samples had been falsified, accused the state in an editorial on Friday of a "brazen" cover-up. "From knowingly foisting the charge of terrorism on innocents to eliminating them in a fake encounter . . . (it) is an example of the worst kind of state high-handedness," it said in an editorial. More than 33,000 people have been killed since 1989 when Islamic guerrillas seeking either independence or union with neighboring Pakistan launched a revolt in Kashmir.

Human rights groups have frequently accused Indian security forces of abuses such as summary killings and torture. India has always denied systematic human rights abuses and said that any allegations are investigated and the guilty punished.

IN HONOR OF DR. STEPHEN
LIPMAN, SENIOR PASTORIAL
COUNSELOR FOR HOSPICE OF
PALM BEACH COUNTY

HON. MARK FOLEY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 14, 2002

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a man who has been a true asset to his community. His caring and guidance have touched many families and friends in need of support.

I speak of Dr. Stephen Lipman, Senior Pastoral Counselor for Hospice of Palm Beach

County for the past 19 years. Fortunately, Steve is not retiring, but is offering his services as the Pastor of the Jupiter Medical Center.

We all know of the fine work Hospice offers and what kind of a person it takes to counsel the individuals and their families whose loved ones are in the transition for their final stages of life.

Dr. Lipman's services have gone beyond that: whether it is counseling young children, lending kindness to the terminally ill or simply offering a smiling face, you can always count on Steve. He exemplifies all that is good in a individual.

I would like to join the communities of South Florida and thank Dr. Lipman for his sincere dedication and years of service.

Mr. Speaker, please let the record reflect the 107th Congress' appreciation for all he has done.

HONORING MOLLIE TAYLOR STEVENSON, SR. AND MOLLIE TAYLOR STEVENSON, JR.

HON. KEN BENTSEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 14, 2002

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Mollie Taylor Stevenson, Sr., and her daughter, Mollie Taylor Stevenson, Jr., who are the first living African-American women and native Houstonians to be inducted into the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame. The organization honors and documents the lives of women who have distinguished themselves by exemplifying the pioneering spirit of the American West. The Stevensons were inducted during a ceremony at the Renaissance Worthington Hotel in Ft. Worth, Texas, on November 9, 2001.

Friends and family know them as "Mollie" and "Lil Mollie". The 89-year-old Mollie, Sr. and the fifty something, Mollie, Jr., reside on their family-owned Taylor-Stevenson Ranch within the city limits of Houston. These women possess grit and determination inherited from Mollie, Sr.'s grandmother, Ann Taylor, who was purchased in 1856 as a 21-year-old slave by Edward W. Taylor. Ann and the owner's son fell in love and because laws of the day forbade interracial marriage, they lived together and reared six children and sent them to college.

Mollie, Sr., the first born child of Major and Hester Taylor, not only inherited her parent's love for the land, but the tradition of pursuing higher education. In 1934, Mollie, Sr. graduated from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, majoring in music and classical piano studies. After graduation, she traveled with the Fisk Jubilee Singers and was a regular guest pianist at Houston's historic Rice Hotel. It was at Fisk where Mollie, Sr. met the love of her life, Benjamin "Big Ben" Stevenson, a seven-time All American from Tuskegee Institute, who earned a B.S. in agriculture and animal husbandry in 1931. They were married in a lavish lawn wedding in 1937.

Mollie, Sr. spent most of her adult years fending off attempts to wrest oil-producing property from her through lawsuits, theft, or crafty persuasion. After the death of Mollie Sr.'s grandfather in 1929, relatives, both white

and African-American, began to make claims on the oil-rich land. With the death of her father in 1949 and her mother in 1950, the struggle to preserve her birthright escalated and was much like the ranch wars seen in the old westerns. Cattle were stolen and attempts to acquire the valuable oil leases became a frequent occurrence. Mollie took on challengers in and out of court and preserved for her descendants their right to the Taylor-Stevenson lands.

During segregation, Mollie, Sr., and her husband, "Big Ben", created a haven for African-American children barred from all but one of the city's parks. At the Stevenson ranch children could ride horses, play with the ranch animals, eat farm-fresh meals, and spend weekends and summers on the ranch. The Stevensons became well known for their philanthropy and generous spirits. Believing that education was very important, they not only educated their own children, but countless others with food, books, tuition payments and entire college educations. There are regularly scheduled field trips to the ranch and museum, which provides an opportunity to those who would not otherwise have a chance to experience the true nature of a working ranch.

Mollie, Jr., worked as a professional model in Houston, Kansas City and New York, but she was drawn back home where she worked side by side with her mother to preserve their legacy. She established the American Cowboy Museum, a 501(c)(3) organization in 1987. It honors the contributions to Western culture of African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and women. Mollie Jr. has been featured on radio and television and in articles in Ebony, Essence, Texas Highways, Horse Talk and many local newspapers. She has been honored by numerous schools as a motivational speaker and event coordinator. Mollie, Jr. is also a journalist and an active volunteer with the Sugar Shack Trailride and various other rodeo trail ride associations. She is also a member of the Speakers and Black Go Texan Committee of the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, the Professional Black Cowboy & Cowgirl Association, the Landowners of Texas, and her favorite, the Diamond L Riding & Roping Club. To acquaint a new generation with this rich history, Mollie offers school tours, leather crafts for visiting children, lectures, a traveling exhibit with quilt display, horseback riding, a mobile petting zoo, and living history presentations. She also encourages young people to consider careers in agribusiness and land ownership and sponsors FFA and 4-H students.

The Taylor-Stevenson Ranch is a treasure that seven generations of the family have fought hard to preserve and on which they still live or maintain various areas. The 150-year-old working ranch is one of the oldest Black-owned ranches in the United States, complete with an assortment of livestock. In the shadows of the 4th largest city in the country, the Stevensons have carved out a legacy that can provide a momentary escape from the hurried pace of the city. About 100 tours and field trips are conducted each year. Heritage tours and family reunions are also a part of the activities arranged by the ranch. During the 1940s and early 50s, the ranch was home to Sky Ranch, an aviation school operated by Tuskegee graduates who were mechanics for the famed World War II Tuskegee Airmen. The property is also officially listed as a Texas