

heavily regulated industries in America. However, as George Kaufman, the John Smith Professor of Banking and Finance at Loyola University in Chicago, and co-chair of the Shadow Financial Regulatory Committee, pointed out in a study for the CATO Institutes, the FDIC's history of poor management exacerbated the banking crisis of the eighties and nineties. Professor Kaufman properly identifies a key reason for the FDIC's poor track record in protecting individual depositors: regulators have incentives to downplay or even cover-up problems in the financial system such as banking facilities. Banking failures are black marks on the regulators' records. In addition, regulators may be subject to political pressure to delay imposing sanctions on failing institutions, thus increasing the magnitude of the loss.

Immediately after a problem in the banking industry comes to light, the media and Congress will inevitably blame it on regulators who were "asleep at the switch." Yet, most politicians continue to believe that giving the very regulators whose incompetence (or worst) either caused or contributed to the problem will somehow prevent future crises!

The presence of deposit insurance and government regulations removes incentives for individuals to act on their own to protect their deposits or even inquire as to the health of their financial institutions. After all, why should individuals be concerned with the health of their financial institutions when the federal government is insuring banks following sound practices and has insured their deposits?

Finally, I would remind my colleagues that the federal deposit insurance program lacks constitutional authority. Congress' only mandate in the area of money, and banking is to maintain the value of the money. Unfortunately, Congress abdicated its responsibility over monetary policy with the passage of the Federal Reserve Act of 1913, which allows the federal government to erode the value of the currency at the will of the central bank. Congress' embrace of fiat money is directly responsible for the instability in the banking system that created the justification for deposit insurance.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3717 imposes new taxes on financial institutions, forces sound institutions to pay for the mistakes of their reckless competitors, increases the chances of taxpayers being forced to bail out unsound financial institutions, reduces individual depositors' incentives to take action to protect their deposits, and exceeds Congress's constitutional authority. I therefore urge my colleagues to reject this bill. Instead of extending this federal program, Congress should work to prevent the crises which justify government programs like deposit insurance, by fulfilling our constitutional responsibility to pursue sound monetary policies.

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3717, the "Federal Deposit Insurance Reform Act of 2002."

I want to commend my colleagues, MIKE OXLEY, the chairman of the House Financial Services Committee and SPENCER BACHUS, the chairman of the House Financial Institutions Subcommittee, for crafting sound legislation to improve the federal deposit insurance system. This bill will reform the FDIC so that it can continue to provide the stability that Americans have depended on for years.

Last year, I introduced H.R. 1293, the "Deposit Insurance Stabilization Act." This bipar-

tisan piece of legislation addressed three of the most pressing needs of the deposit insurance system. My legislation merged the Bank Insurance Fund and the Savings Association Insurance Fund into a single sounder deposit insurance fund. My legislation also eliminated the 23 basis point cliff facing FDIC-insured institutions if the deposit insurance fund were required by law to be recapitalized. I am pleased that both of these provisions are included in the bill before us today.

My legislation included a third important component, commonly referred to as the "free rider" provision. This provision would give the FDIC statutory authority to assess a special premium on any insured institution with excessive net deposit growth. It was drafted to address the possible dilution of the deposit insurance fund by a handful of institutions. It was not meant to serve as a penalty or impediment to legitimate growth, but rather as an equitable to ensure that the cost of doing the business of deposit insurance is borne by those who benefit from that business.

I was pleased that the Ney free rider provision was included as part of this bill, as reported by the Financial Services Committee. It represented a good faith effort to fairly resolve a problem first brought to my attention by bankers in my state and across the country.

Unfortunately, because of the controversy it generated, this provision is not part of the managers' amendment before us today. While other provisions of the managers' amendment address the free rider problem, the absence of statutory authority for the FDIC to deal with prospective free riding could remain a problem. I am anxious to work with my colleagues in Congress and organizations like America's Community Bankers to adequately address this problem as this bill moves forward.

Again, I would like to commend the sponsors of this bill for addressing the challenges facing the federal deposit insurance system, and urge my colleagues to support this bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3717, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have not voted in the affirmative.

Mr. BACHUS. 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.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3448, PUBLIC HEALTH SECURITY AND BIOTERRORISM PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE ACT OF 2002

Mr. TAUZIN (during consideration of H.R. 3717) submitted the following conference report and statement on the bill (H.R. 3448) to improve the ability of the United States to prevent, prepare for, and respond to bioterrorism and other public health emergencies.

See pages H2691 of the RECORD of May 21, 2002

PAYING TRIBUTE TO WORKERS IN NEW YORK CITY FOR RESCUE, RECOVERY, AND CLEAN-UP EFFORTS AT SITE OF WORLD TRADE CENTER

Mr. OSE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 424) paying tribute to the workers in New York City for their rescue, recovery, and clean-up efforts at the site of the World Trade Center.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 424

Whereas on September 11, 2001, terrorists hijacked four civilian aircraft, crashing two of them into the towers of the World Trade Center in New York City;

Whereas these attacks were by far the deadliest terrorist attacks ever launched against the United States, claiming the lives of more than 3,000 innocent people;

Whereas in the aftermath of the attacks, without showing any hesitation, public safety officers, steel workers, electricians, construction workers, and thousands of skilled workers and volunteers spent endless days and nights, many without sleep for over 36 hours, risking their own lives to assist in the search for and rescue of anyone that might have survived the devastation at the site of the World Trade Center, which has come to be known as "Ground Zero";

Whereas the resolve of our nation was strengthened by the courage of the thousands of brave rescue and recovery workers who used their own hands in the hours and days after September 11th to this day to remove rubble from the site to locate those trapped and buried beneath the debris of the World Trade Center;

Whereas these workers inspired the American people with their extraordinary bravery and heroism, often risking their own life and limb to help find the remains of those who perished on September 11th;

Whereas many rescue and recovery workers were not just searching for a stranger but rather their lost son, daughter, aunt, uncle, brother, sister, husband, wife, mother, father, lifelong friend, or co-worker; each of these workers were helping to clear the debris just hoping to come across any one of their loved ones;

Whereas people, not only in New York but across the nation, worked to supply Ground Zero workers with such things as food and water, clothing, and medical supplies, surmounted numerous challenges and difficulties in securing and distributing these goods, and made it happen within hours and continuing still today, never once looked at how difficult it might be to get supplies, but rather went out and did whatever it took to ensure that the needs for those supplies were met;

Whereas local businesses, churches, and citizens opened their doors to police, fire, and other workers with places to sleep, eat, or even simply pray;

Whereas the selflessness displayed by the rescue and recovery workers helped unify our nation, bringing together good people to demonstrate to the forces of terror that good would triumph over evil;

Whereas all involved in the efforts at Ground Zero were working unselfishly beyond the point of exhaustion without regard for food, water, or sleep, simply to save and recover anyone and everyone possible; and

Whereas the recovery effort will conclude after more than nine months of hard work, removing over 1.6 million tons of debris while at the same time taking great care to collect all victims' remains, thereby allowing more than 1,000 families to lay their loved ones to rest: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives pays tribute to the workers in New York City for their rescue, recovery, and clean-up efforts at the site of the World Trade Center, which was destroyed by the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. OSE) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) each will control 20 minutes.

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OSE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 424.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. OSE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from New York (Mr. FOSSELLA) be permitted to control the time on House Concurrent Resolution 424.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), and I join, I think, with the entire country to introduce a House resolution to pay tribute to the hundreds, if not thousands, of workers who have responded to the World Trade Center since that fateful day on September 11.

As a Nation, we need not be reminded, but in a way we always need to be reminded, of what happened that day; of the loss of life, of those who lost loved ones, aunts, uncles, sons, daughters who were lost, fathers, mothers. We know the tragedy, and it will forever be written of. But out of that tragedy really came a resilience and strength in this country, and some of that was demonstrated by the workers who reported immediately to ground zero and have been there almost every day since.

Believe it or not, Mr. Speaker, the recovery and ultimate redevelopment of the World Trade Center, which just a few months ago was thought to be almost impossible, will be coming to a close. In just the next few short days there will be a ceremony in New York City to honor and to pay tribute to those who have responded.

For someone who was there on September 11, I can tell my colleagues that the dedication and the commitment of these individuals has been unbelievable. But with all that, all the work that they have done, the 1.6 million tons of debris, some of it, sadly, trag-

ically, containing the remains of those who perished in the Trade Center, a lot of it ending up on Staten Island, so it hits close to home for all of us, I cannot tell you how proud we should be of them. They responded. They give their time, sometimes working 16, 18, 20 hours a day, many of them looking for their loved ones.

You can just read the papers. Take the time necessary and see of those fathers who responded day in and day out hoping to find their sons, or those hoping to find a sister or a wife. Perhaps as we look back, this will be one of the darkest, if not the darkest, spot in American history. But if we look for a silver lining to it, it is the fundamental belief that there were those who responded heroically, with honor, with a sense of purpose to rebuild this country.

When we were attacked on September 11 at the Trade Center, we began the process of rebuilding almost immediately, all with the sense of honor to those who lost their life.

I can only tell my colleagues, as someone who lost almost 300 people from the district that I am very privileged to represent, and I think I can speak for a lot of those families, that each one of those individuals who have been at the Trade Center, Ground Zero as it has become known, we say thank you.

□ 2045

I think the entire Congress of this country has said thank you. Everybody across this country has responded wonderfully, Members on both sides. All 50 States have offered their advice, guidance, support, financial, emotional, spiritual, and it is not underappreciated. But this is the way we formally say thank you.

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

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I am very pleased to join with the gentleman from New York (Mr. FOSSELLA) in support of this very important resolution. I also would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues in Congress for their support of New York, for voting for the \$20 billion to help us restore our site, and for all of their support that continues each day in this Congress for our constituents and for our city.

I rise in support of this important resolution in praise of the workers at Ground Zero. After many months of around-the-clock work, the clearing of debris from the attacks on the World Trade Center has neared completion. The cleanup efforts in response to the attacks on the World Trade Center involved unprecedented, selfless acts of heroism by thousands of men and women from the construction and building trades who worked in an extremely dangerous atmosphere as they cleared the disaster site. In total they have cleared more than 1.6 million tons of debris in 8 months.

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, volunteers from the construction unions, iron and steelworkers and many others, toiled alongside firefighters and police officers and volunteers digging tunnels and gaining access to victims by operating cranes, burning steel, driving trucks, and moving debris by hand as part of the famous Bucket Brigade. Over the many months, the workers completed the cleanup of Ground Zero in an atmosphere which was filled with danger and in the midst of still burning fires and deadly debris. They completed their work ahead of schedule and with safety as an ultimate concern. I think that it is remarkable that they toiled in such dangerous conditions, yet there was not one serious injury of the volunteers and the construction workers who worked at the site.

Despite these dangerous conditions, the contracting firms themselves began the rescue and cleanup of the site without any government guarantee that they would be compensated for legal liability that they might incur during the cleanup. Nevertheless, the workers of Ground Zero and the contracting companies embraced this unprecedented and perilous challenge. Their actions personified the enduring determination to get New York back on its feet and to restore Lower Manhattan's majesty.

Throughout this heartbreaking cleanup, they worked tirelessly, many times away from their families for days. Of all of the things that I remember the most about Ground Zero, having gone there that night and the next day on September 12 and many other days, was the absolute silence at the site, the hushed silence at the site which lasted for many days after the bombing. It reflected an appreciation for the magnitude of the horror and the fact that they were working on the surface of a mass grave.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to the Tully Construction Company who at my request preserved a segment of the ruins to be transformed into a national monument at an appropriate time in the future. We all remember the images of steel fragments from the towers that plunged upright into the pavement like arrows into the hearts of all New Yorkers, and I would say all citizens of America, and nearby fire trucks that were partially submerged and ruined in the rubble.

Thanks to the care and respect that workers have demonstrated in dismantling and removing the wreckage, these images will be preserved in honor of those who were lost, and in remembrance of a black Tuesday that this Nation must never forget. The scores of companies, organizations and union members who have cooperated in clearing the site with extraordinary speed, efficiency and safety include, but are not limited to, a special team of the New York City Office of Emergency Management and the New York City Department of Design and Construction; with main contractors Turner

Construction, Plaza Construction, Bovis Construction, Amec Construction and Tully Construction; and dozens of subcontractors, including Thornton-Tomasette Engineering, LZA Engineering, New York Crane, Bay Crane, Cranes Inc., Slattery Association, Grace Industries, Big Apple Demolition, Regional Scaffolding & Hoisting, Atlantic-Heydt Scaffolding, York Scaffolding, Weeks Marine and Bechtel Corp.

Mr. Speaker, many Members of Congress and the Senate have gone to Ground Zero. They have seen the devastation but also resilience and redemption in the work that is being done there. I know I speak for this entire body in expressing our country's deep appreciation for the risks taken and sacrifices made by the unsung heroes at Ground Zero who have reminded us what the American spirit is all about.

We will be having a ceremony soon that will mark the completion of the cleanup. I join my colleagues tonight in honoring all that participated, the police, the fire, the emergency medical, the volunteers and the construction trades who toiled selflessly to help our city and this country.

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

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

I thank the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) for really articulating, I think, the sentiments of many. As we saw those firefighters rush in or the police officers, the Port Authority police officers or the construction trades, the ironworkers, the steelworkers, the carpenters, as she has indicated, selflessly, without fear for their own life in an attempt to help others, they have been there since day one. There is no question that this was a terrible, terrible moment. There is no question that so many lives were lost and that we need to honor them every day. There is also no question that we need to pay tribute as so many Americans really have come to Ground Zero to pay their respects, to really offer a helping hand to the good people of New York, New York City. This is one way really Congress just does it formally.

To the local businesses that had opened their doors to those volunteers to sleep on cots or on the floor, to have a meal, or to get something to drink or just simply to sit and pray, we say thank you to them. I thank my colleagues on both sides for being so supportive of New York financially, in helping us to rebuild, and also paying honor to those at the Fresh Kills Landfill on Staten Island where so much of this, of the trade center, is sent on a daily basis and continues to be sent on a daily basis, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We have hundreds of professionals and volunteers going through with the utmost delicacy and utmost respect for the human beings that were lost on that fateful day. They should be honored as well.

But tonight we pay tribute to those at the trade center. As we have indicated, there will be a ceremony and they will know that the United States House of Representatives says thank you.

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

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I join my colleagues in thanking the gentleman from New York (Mr. FOSSELLA). We have stood in this well practically every day to thank our colleagues for their support, for their aid, for their friendship, for their concern. We can never say thank you enough for being there for New Yorkers in our time of greatest need. We appreciate so much the actions of this body. We appreciate the honorable work of all that were involved in the cleanup and in saving lives.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the resolution offered by my friend and colleague from Staten Island, VITO FOSSELLA, in honor of all of the people who served at Ground Zero, whether looking for survivors to aid, helping to locate remains that would allow a family some closure, or rebuilding our City.

After September 11, the terrorists responsible thought they could scare America into submission, but the faces of the people working at Ground Zero—the public safety officers, the volunteers, the contractors, clean-up crews and union members—everyone there proved them wrong. In the face of the worst of humanity, New York displayed the best of humanity. America witnessed the bravery of its people that day as thousands of people rushed to the scene to help find survivors. Not just our brave firefighters, police and emergency medical technicians who were working that day, but office workers, students, construction workers, vendors, tourists and off-duty public safety officers.

There were so many but I would like to highlight one, Michael Weinberg of Maspeth, Queens. He was a 34-year-old firefighter who was off duty on September 11 and engaging in his passion—golf. It was on the course that he first learned of the news at the World Trade Center. Concerned for the people in the building, including his older sister Patricia, he rushed to his station house where he joined Fire Department Chaplain Rev. Mychal Judge and Capt. Daniel Brethel to go to the Towers. As the towers collapsed, all three perished in the building trying to aid victims.

His sister, who did escape safely from the Tower, remembered him with the simple but telling phrase "He loved to help people." This was a phrase used to describe so many people that day.

Our City was overwhelmed with offers of support from all over the Country, from people like Michael Weinberg who loved to help other people. Such as the welders who came to Manhattan from all over the area—not just the City or the State but all over; they jumped in their trucks to help at Ground Zero. Police and Fire fighters had to be convinced to take time off—even just a few minutes—from the rescue and recovery efforts; people who had been working for several days straight whether on duty or not. So many people rushed to the

scene to join our firefighters, police, emergency medical technicians, court officers and Port Authority Police among so many already there to help.

Many of us remember the horribly tragic sight of seeing families waving pictures of missing loved ones on posters, or photos of the missing on telephone polls and windows in the City. What we didn't see were the people who tried to help find these people—we salute them today.

Blood banks had lines going for blocks from those citizens who couldn't go down to Ground Zero and help, but felt the need to contribute to the effort. People opened their wallets for the Twin Towers Fund and other relief charities for the families.

But this sense of volunteerism did not end after a few days—workers toiled day and night at Ground Zero—and still do. The fires at the World Trade Center could not be completely extinguished until December, with firefighters battling them daily; with police combing the wreckage; and with construction workers starting the clean-up and rebuilding process. They worked in some of the most horrible conditions known to humans—conditions that are unfathomable to all those except the few who were down there.

It was these workers that voiced the initial anger in the attacks and the pride in our nation shortly after that day when President Bush visited Ground Zero. People like that construction workers at Ground Zero, who shouted that he could not hear the President. At which the President responded with the memorable and inspirational line that while he may not be heard by all of those at Ground Zero, the people at Ground Zero were being heard by him, by the American people and soon by the terrorists that knocked those buildings down.

We honor their work today—work that took them into the most gruesome place imaginable. They are the people who make our country work and have helped us restore our sense of being—and showed the world what it is to be an American.

But while we salute our workers at Ground Zero, we must also work to remember their courage and their work everyday. The crowds that saluted and cheered our firefighters, are no longer there, but our respect and admiration for them must continue—both through encouraging words and also through support and assistance. All of the people who went to Ground Zero and worked there are a true inspiration for all of us.

This is a timely resolution and I am pleased it will coincide with the events being held next week, by Mayor Bloomberg to honor those at Ground Zero who worked to clean up the rubble and helped repair a broken City. They have removed almost 2 million tons of debris in less time than expected. They worked for us and we owe them a debt of gratitude. While the terrorists may have broken buildings we will never be a broken people.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. OSE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 424.

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. FOSSELLA. 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.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

HONORING THE 61st ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF CRETE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 61st anniversary of the Battle of Crete. This is a historic event with direct significance to the allies' victory of World War II.

On May 20, 1941, thousands of German paratroopers and gliders began landing on the island of Crete. Both the allies and Nazis wanted Crete because of its strategic location. At the time the British controlled the island. It was a very strong point on the lifeline to India and protected both Palestine and Egypt. The Nazi invasion force included the elite German paratroopers and glider troops. Hitler felt that this would be an easy victory. Yet he is quoted to have said shortly after the invasion, "France fell in 8 days. Why is Crete free?"

The invasion of Crete lasted 11 days. It resulted in more than 6,000 German troopers listed as killed, wounded or missing in action. The losses to the elite 7th parachute division were felt so hard by the German military, it signified the end of large scale airborne operations. They did not have another parachute division invasion in the rest of the war. This valiant fight by the Cretan people began in the first hour of the Nazi airborne invasion, in contrast to the European underground movements that took a year or more after being invaded to activate. Young boys, old men and women displayed breathtaking bravery in defending their Crete. German soldiers never got used to Cretan women fighting against them. They would tear the dress from the shoulder of suspected women to find bruises from the recoil of the rifle. The penalty was death.

The London Times of July 28, 1941 reported, and I quote, that "500 Cretan women have been deported to Germany for taking part in the defense of their native island."

Another surprise for the German soldiers who invaded Crete was the heroic

resistance of the clergy. A priest leading his parishioners into battle was not what the Germans anticipated. At Paleochora, Father Stylianos Frantzeskis, hearing of the German airborne invasion, rushed to his church, sounded the bell, took his rifle and marched his volunteers toward Maleme to write history. This struggle became an example for all Europe to follow in defying German occupation and aggression.

The price paid by the Cretans for their valiant resistance to Nazi forces was extremely high. Thousands of civilians died from random executions, starvation and imprisonment.

□ 2100

Entire communities were burned and destroyed by the Germans as punishment for the Cretan resistance movement. Yet this resistance lasted for 4 years.

The Battle of Crete was to change the final outcome of World War II. The Battle of Crete significantly contributed in delaying Hitler's plan to invade Russia. The invasion was delayed from April to June of 1941. The 2-month delay in the invasion made Hitler's forces face the harsh Russian winter. The Russian snow storms and the sub-zero temperatures eventually stalled the Nazi invasion before they could take Moscow or Leningrad. This was the beginning of the downfall of the Nazi reign of terror.

This significant battle and the heroic drive of the Cretan people must always be remembered and honored. Democracy came from Greece, and the Cretan heroes exemplify the courage that it takes to preserve it.

Today, the courage of the Cretan people is seen in the Members of the Pancretan Association of America and the Cretan Association "Omonoia" which is located in Astoria-Queens, which I have the honor of representing.

The Pancretan Association officers are Theodore Panagiotakis, president; Michael Papoutsakis, vice president; John Stavroulakis, secretary; and Emmanuel Kavrakis, treasurer. They are assisted by outstanding board members George Bassias, George Bombolakis, Nikos Chartzoulakis, George Fradelakis, George Kokonas, George Malandrakis, and Vassilis Manrangoudakis.

The Cretan people fought a seen enemy. Today we need the courage they displayed to fight the unseen enemy that struck on 9-11 and that continues to threaten our freedom and democracy.

I request my colleagues to join me in honoring the Cretans in the United States, Greece and the Diaspora.

THE SIXTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE HEROIC BATTLE OF CRETE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLAKE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida

(Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I too rise proudly to celebrate the 61st anniversary of the Battle of Crete, a World War II event that had a profound impact on the ultimate result of the war.

Amidst the cataclysm that had engulfed the countries of Europe at the time, it seems now preposterous that a small island dared to stand up to such a powerful enemy. For the benefit of future generations, I will share a brief account of these events as they unfolded.

In early April 1941, Greece was invaded by the German Army rushing to the aid of their defeated and humiliated ally, Italy. Following a valiant struggle against overwhelmingly superior German forces in and among the mountains to the north, Greek forces had been pushed entirely off the continent and were forced to take refuge on the Island of Crete.

The German Army then looked across the sea to Crete because of the British airfields on the island, which could be used by the allies for air strikes against the oil fields of Romania, thereby denying this vital war commodity to Hitler's forces. If captured, it would also provide air and sea bases from which the Nazis could dominate the eastern Mediterranean and launch air attacks against Allied forces in northern Africa. In fact, the Nazi high command envisioned the capture of Crete to be the first of a series of assaults leading to the Suez Canal.

Finally, as a result of the battle, Hitler's master plan to invade Russia before the coming of winter had to be postponed, thus directly resulting in the deaths of many of their troops as a consequence of not being properly prepared to survive the harsh Russian winter.

On May 20, 1941, Crete became the theater of the largest German airborne operation of the war, code named Operation Mercury. On that day, more than 8,000 paratroopers were dropped on the island. They were met with ferocious resistance by the Allied troops waiting for them and by the Cretan population.

Cretans fought bravely with whatever was at hand during the invasion. Even though the Allied forces had decided not to arm them, old men, women and children used whatever makeshift weapons they could find. They pointed their rusty guns at the descending German paratroopers. They used sticks, sickles and even their bare hands to fight those soldiers already on the ground. Most of them were illiterate villagers, but their intuition led them to fight with courage and bravery. "Aim for the legs and you will get them in the heart" was the popular motto that summarized their hastily acquired battle experience.

Although a tactical victory for the Germans, the Battle of Crete proved to be rather costly to them in terms of casualties and loss of aircraft. Of the 8,100 paratroopers involved in this operation, close to 4,000 were killed and