

HONORING SERGEANT DORIS
HIGGINS

HON. CHRISTOPHER COX

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2003

Mr. COX. Mr. Speaker, on July 6, 2003, the Laguna Beach Police Department will say farewell to retiring Sergeant Doris Higgins.

Sergeant Higgins began her career with the Laguna Beach Police Department on June 29, 1970, as a police dispatcher. Seven years later, she became a full-time officer assigned to the field services division of the department, where she worked until 5 years ago, when she was assigned to the traffic division.

What makes Sergeant Doris Higgins stand apart from other officers is the fact that she began serving her community as a police officer when women were just beginning to make inroads in the profession.

She has been a role model for women looking to break into the profession. She has guided many employees as they have begun and ended their law enforcement career. She has been a noticeable strength of the local law enforcement community. Now, the Laguna Beach Police Department must say goodbye after 33 years.

Today, I ask my colleagues to join with me in congratulating Sergeant Higgins on her retirement and thanking her for years of dedication to the citizens of Laguna Beach.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2003

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to cast votes on June 11 because I was attending a very important meeting involving healthcare with the President of the United States in my district in Chicago, Illinois. If I was present for rollcall votes for the following bills:

Rollcall 258 on agreeing to the resolution H.R. 2115, Flight 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act;

Rollcall 259 on motion to suspend the rules and agree to Expressing Support for the Goals and Ideals of Human Genome Month and DNA Day;

Rollcall 260 on motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amend the Commercial Spectrum Enhancement Act;

Rollcall 261 on motion to suspend the rules and pass the Welfare Reform Extension Act;

I would have voted Yeas to all of these bills.

TORTURE DEATHS IN UZBEKISTAN REVEAL LACK OF PROGRESS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, in March 2002, the United States and Uzbekistan signed a declaration proclaiming a "Strategic Partnership" between our countries. This

former Soviet republic, with the largest population of the five Central Asian countries, has played an important role in assisting the United States after 9/11, and I am grateful for that.

At the same time, as Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I have deep concerns about the human rights situation in Uzbekistan, where no political opposition, no freedom of speech nor freedom of association are permitted. As a result of this situation, Congress has conditioned the release of financial assistance to Uzbekistan upon a determination by the Secretary of State that Tashkent is making "substantial and continuing progress" in meeting commitments specified in the March 2002 bilateral declaration, including in the field of human rights. The Secretary has twice—on August 26, 2002 and May 14, 2003—made such a determination.

Regrettably, there has been no "substantial and continuing progress" in the field of human rights in Uzbekistan. True, a human rights group has been registered, censorship has formally been lifted, and there have been amnesties, but these are largely token deliverables meant to give the appearance of progress. Uzbekistan has also admitted the U.N.'s Special Rapporteur on Torture. But all these gestures are more cosmetic than substantial. In fact, the U.N. Special Rapporteur concluded that torture is "systematic" in Uzbekistan. Instead of claiming credit for allowing him into the country at all, President Karimov should renounce this barbaric practice and Tashkent should take urgent measures to prevent and punish acts of torture.

Unfortunately, thus far President Karimov has refused to take even the simple step of acknowledging and renouncing torture. More to the point, just after the Secretary's most recent determination last month, Orif Ershanov and Otamaza Gafarov joined the unconscionably long list of individuals who have died as a result of torture or other abuse inflicted by Uzbek officials.

Once again, Uzbek officials maintain that these most recent deaths in custody were the result of "natural causes." But the country's deplorable record undermines the credibility of such assertions. Frankly, I am surprised by Tashkent's claims; last year, there were two cases when Uzbek policemen who tortured prisoners, in some cases to death, received long prison terms. Their sentences constituted a sad form of progress in Uzbekistan, allowing observers to hope that law enforcement officials would have reason to fear serious consequences for mistreating people in their care. The latest assertions about "natural causes" signal clear regression to old positions that damage Uzbekistan's government and should be an embarrassment to the United States.

Particularly with respect to torture, Tashkent should immediately take several steps to demonstrate to the international community a serious commitment to make meaningful progress.

First, the Government of Uzbekistan should provide immediate access, organized by the OSCE, for independent medical experts to examine the bodies of Ershanov and Gafarov. Unfortunately, we have received indications that Uzbekistan is balking at admitting independent forensic specialists. Furthermore, Tashkent should establish a system of access for independent experts to investigate all cases of alleged torture and should act on the

recommendations of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture.

It is equally important that Uzbekistan unconditionally release those who have been jailed because of their political opposition or religious affiliation. I have repeatedly urged Uzbek officials, including President Karimov during his visit to Washington in March of last year, to release the writer Mamadali Makhmudov, for example. One of the Bekjanov brothers has indeed been freed, but two of his siblings remain in prison, and we have received reports from family members of their declining health. As the most recent deaths in custody demonstrate, fears that such prisoners may die from their mistreatment during incarceration are well founded.

Mr. Speaker, improved relations are in the interest of both Uzbekistan and the United States. But closer, deeper ties will not be built on the graves of Uzbekistan's citizens who have been tortured to death. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that I will soon be able to report back to my colleagues that President Karimov has taken meaningful steps to confront torture and bring a measure of justice to its victims.

BIOTECH DECISIONS SHOULD BE SCIENCE-BASED

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2003

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member commends to his colleagues the following editorial from the June 23, 2001, Omaha World-Herald. The editorial emphasizes the need to take a science-based approach regarding the issue of biotech crops and highlights a positive example in India. On the other hand, the European Union's continued moratorium on approving new agriculture biotech lacks a scientific basis. This discriminatory and protectionist stance harms U.S. farmers, consumers worldwide, and developing countries. The U.S. is correctly challenging the EU's position, which is transparently devoid of any relationship to sound science.

A TALE OF TWO MIND-SETS

Recent days have shown a big contrast in how some governments abroad approach the issue of genetically modified foods.

One development, from India, reflects a commendable, science-based approach to biotech crops. The other, from the European Union, indicates the E.U.'s continuing insistence on using bogus claims about biotech crops as an excuse to shut out U.S. food exports.

In India, the government says it is nearing regulatory approval of a genetically modified potato that has one-third more protein than normal. The new potato is to be distributed to school children as part of their mid-day meal.

The head of India's biotechnology department voiced strong support for the new product, calling it part of "a technology for the future." Many of India's more than 1 billion people are plagued by dietary deficiencies in protein and vitamin A, she said, and biotech foods such as the new potato can help address the need.

In another encouraging sign, a group of Indian scientists stepped forward in April to rebut the claim by anti-biotech activists that the new potato is the brainchild of profit-seeking Western corporations: As reported

by The Associated Press, "the Indian scientists made clear they are on the front lines of such developments."

Last week, representatives of India's biotech sector spoke out, saying that their industry is in a state of "near paralysis" due to opposition from critics of genetically modified foods. One Indian biotech consultant lamented that the "protest industry" has "exploited a few—technical violations and has made the entire system rigid."

In Europe, anti-biotech activists enjoy particular clout, and last week talks between U.S. and E.U. officials over genetically modified foods broke down. The United States will now turn to the World Trade Organization to appoint a panel to rule on the case. The United States is said to have a good chance of gaining a ruling that would compel the E.U. to end its ban on American biotech crops.

Don Lipton, a spokesman for the American Farm Bureau Federation, was right when he said that "countries shouldn't be able to erect barriers for nonscientific reasons." In India, the government, to its credit, acknowledges that point. Regrettably, European governments are content to ignore it and continue their opportunistic stonewalling.

CONGRATULATING FRANK J. WSOL OF CHICAGO

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2003

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Frank J. Wsol, the Secretary Treasurer of Teamsters Local 710, on being presented the Distinguished Community Service Award by the Anti-Defamation League at their annual dinner.

Frank Wsol epitomizes the principles of organized labor and the role it plays in our community. He has served loyally as a Teamster since 1946, and has ascended the ranks first as an Organizer, and later as Chairman of the Union's Health, Welfare and Pension Fund.

In addition to proudly serving as a Teamster, Frank has been a leader for all of labor including service as Chairman of the Illinois Joint State Grievance Committee and on the Executive Committee of the Chicago Federation of Labor. He currently serves as a member of the Executive Board for Joint Council 25.

Many of the principles of the organization and community that Frank has embodied for the last half century have come from his service to our country as a member of the U.S. Air Force. Frank served in both Japan and Korea, and has stayed active as a member of the Neer-Goudie American Legion Post 846.

Frank's care for his community has always included his love for children and his dedication to providing them with a bright future. He has dedicated time and energy to the Children's Advocacy Center in both Chicago and Hoffman Estates, and the Little City Foundation in Palatine.

Mr. Speaker, I join the Anti-Defamation League in recognizing Frank Wsol. I also congratulate Frank and his wonderful family: Florence, his wife of over 50 years, his late daughter Maureen, his son Michael and his fiancée Marlene Demuzio, his son Frank Jr. and his wife Madeline, and his grandsons

Frank, Brian, Kevin and Steve. And I applaud the Anti-Defamation League for the work that they do to protect our liberty, and for honoring one of our most distinguished citizens.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MOSAIC

HON. TOM OSBORNE

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2003

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, On July 1, 2003, two organizations deeply rooted in Nebraska will join hands to form a new organization dedicated to caring for people with developmental disabilities. I rise today to recognize and commend the beginning of this new organization—Mosaic.

Bethphage, founded in 1913 in Axtell, Nebraska, which is located in my congressional district, and Martin Luther Home Society, founded in 1925 in Sterling, Nebraska, is my colleague from Nebraska's, Mr. Bereuter's congressional district, bring 168 years of experience to the field of developmental disabilities. The consolidation of the two organizations will give Mosaic secure financial strength, fiscally responsible stewardship and diverse professional choices as it works to make life better for people with disabilities.

Mosaic will serve approximately 3,700 people in 16 states and Great Britain, and will employ more than 5,100 direct support professional, regional management and home office staff. Mosaic will have two corporate offices, both of which will be located in Nebraska.

Finally, Mosaic will provide a full range of supports and advocacy for people with disabilities from early intervention through elderly care. Services will include residential group home, host home, in-home supports, behavioral skills, and spiritual development.

As Mosaic officially begins operations on July 1, 2003, I want to congratulate this exceptional organization for their visionary leadership in the field of developmental disabilities. I feel I can speak for many Nebraskans when I say that I am proud that Mosaic calls Nebraska home.

REPRESSION SPREADING IN BELARUS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, Europe's last dictator, Belarus' Alyksandr Lukashenka, appears determined to ignore the voices of the people of Belarus calling for basic respect for human rights and democratic principles a decade after that country gained its independence and joined the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

As Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I am disturbed by recent developments which demonstrate the growing repression in Belarus. There have been further restrictions imposed on the independent media, with the recent suspension of independent newspapers Navinki and Ekho. Just a few days ago, the publication Predprinimatelskaya Gazeta was

suspended for three months. The offices of the trade union paper Solidarnost have been sealed by the authorities. Still other publications have received warnings that could lead to their closure. These actions were preceded by the three-month suspension of two prominent independent newspapers—Belaruskaya Delovaya Gazeta and BDG—For Internal Use Only.

The Lukashenka regime is also targeting schools. The National Humanities Lyceum, a highly respected high school promoting study of the Belarusian language and culture, is under fire, with its acting head to be replaced by a reportedly non-Belarusian-speaking official. Why? Because professors at the school support democracy and the Belarusian language and culture which ironically is anathema to the Belarusian strongman. Mr. Speaker, what kind of leader actively suppresses his nation's language and culture?

Moreover, a new crackdown on Pentecostal home meetings in western Belarus is underway, with fines being handed down on church members who permit their homes to be used for prayer meetings—a result of last year's restrictive religion law.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also facing increasing scrutiny, often for truly spurious reasons such as minor mistakes in registration documents. Several, including Ratusha, Varuta and the Youth Christian Social Union, are under threat of liquidation. Just a few days ago, the Homel regional court ordered the closure of the area's largest NGO, Civic Initiatives. The intensified campaign against NGOs and the independent media are widely regarded among domestic and international observers as a concerted attack on active and independent civil society structures.

Repressive actions against individuals continue as well. Recently, 18-year-old ZUBR activist Tatiana Elovaya was sentenced to 10 days imprisonment for manifesting her support in an April 3 demonstration outside the U.S. Embassy for the campaign to liberate Iraq. Several others, including 19-year-old Lyubov Kuchinskaya had served 10-day sentences earlier. Unfortunately, these are just some recent examples of a longstanding pattern of the Lukashenka regime's flouting of its OSCE commitments and continued disregard for the four OSCE criteria set forth three years ago by the Parliamentary Troika for Belarus.

Despite steps by the OSCE community, including the re-opening of the OSCE Office in Minsk (albeit under a more limited mandate), the seating of the National Assembly and the lifting of a visa ban, not only have reciprocal steps not been taken by the Belarusian authorities but the situation has indeed deteriorated further.

Earlier this year, I introduced H.R. 854, the Belarus Democracy Act, designed to assist the people of Belarus in regaining their freedom and enable them to join the European community of democracies. Key provisions of this Act also have been incorporated into the Foreign Relations Reauthorization bill. Mr. Speaker, the Lukashenka regime's continuing suppression of the long-suffering Belarusian people underscores the need for the Belarus Democracy Act and other efforts—including within the OSCE—to restore respect for human rights and institutions of democratic governance.