

concern for their own people the Chinese authorities resort to their usual "policy of merciless repression", whereby they are labelled as "splittists" and as a result arrested and imprisoned. They have no opportunity to speak out the truth. The recent execution of Lobsang Dhondup and the death sentence given to Tulku Tenzin Delek without due process of law are clear examples of this policy, which cannot resolve the problem and therefore must be changed.

It is my sincere hope that the Chinese leadership will find the courage, vision and wisdom for new openings to solve the Tibetan issue through dialogue. Looking around the world we cannot fail to notice how unattended conflicts with ethnic roots can erupt in ways that make them extremely difficult to solve. It is, therefore, in the interest of the People's Republic of China to address such issues. A new creative initiative to resolve the issue of Tibet would serve as a very convincing sign that China is changing, maturing and becoming more receptive to assuming a greater role on the global stage as a reliable and forward-looking power. A constructive approach to the issue of Tibet provides important opportunities to create a political climate of trust, confidence and openness, both domestically and internationally. Such an expression of Chinese leadership during this time of deep anxiety over international conflicts, terrorism and ethnic strife in the world will go a long way to impressing and reassuring the world.

It is necessary to recognize that the Tibetan freedom struggle is not about my personal position or well being. As early as in 1969 I made it clear that it is up to the Tibetan people to decide whether the centuries-old institution of the Dalai Lama should continue or not. In 1992 in a formal announcement I stated clearly that when we return to Tibet with a certain degree of freedom, I would not hold any office in the Tibetan government nor any other political position. However, as I often state, till my last day I will remain committed to the promotion of human values and religious harmony. I also announced then that the Tibetan Administration-in-Exile should be dissolved and that the Tibetans in Tibet must shoulder the main responsibility of running the Tibetan government. I have always believed that in the future Tibet should follow a secular and democratic system of governance. It is, therefore, baseless to allege that our efforts are aimed at the restoration of Tibet's old social system. No Tibetan, whether in exile or in Tibet, has any desire to restore old Tibet's outdated social order. On the contrary, the democratisation of the Tibetan community started soon upon our arrival in exile. This culminated in the direct election of our political leadership in 2001. We are committed to continue to take vigorous actions to further promote democratic values among the ordinary Tibetans.

As far back as the early seventies in consultation with senior Tibetan officials I made a decision to seek a solution to the Tibetan problem through a "Middle Way Approach". This framework does not call for independence and separation of Tibet. At the same time it provides genuine autonomy for the six million men and women who consider themselves Tibetans to preserve their distinctive identity, to promote their religious and cultural heritage that is based on a centuries-old philosophy which is of benefit even in the 21st century, and to protect the delicate environment of the Tibetan plateau. This approach will contribute to the overall stability and unity of the People's Republic of China. I remain committed to this realistic and pragmatic approach and will continue to make every effort to reach a mutually acceptable solution.

The reality today is that we are all interdependent and we have to co-exist on this small planet. Therefore, the only sensible and intelligent way of resolving differences, whether between individuals, peoples or nations, is through a political culture of non-violence and dialogue. Since our struggle is based on truth, justice and non-violence and is not directed against China, we have been fortunate to receive increasing worldwide sympathy and support, including from amongst the Chinese. I express my appreciation and gratitude for this consistent solidarity. I would also like to express once again on behalf of the Tibetans our appreciation and immense gratitude to the people and the Government of India for their unwavering and unmatched generosity and support.

With my homage to the brave men and women of Tibet who have died for the cause of our freedom, I pray for an early end to the suffering of our people.

THE DALAI LAMA.

HOUSE RESOLUTION 342, THE MOSQUITO ABATEMENT FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH ACT

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 11, 2003

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in great support of H.R. 342, the Mosquito Abatement for Safety and Health Act.

Mr. Speaker, mosquito borne-diseases are increasingly plaguing the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), last year alone there were more than 5,000 people infected with mosquito borne-illnesses such as Dengue Fever and the West Nile virus.

As a member of Congress, I am greatly concerned with the West Nile virus's rapid spread nationwide. Out of my concern for the victims of West Nile virus and other mosquito borne diseases, I not only cosigned legislation and letters seeking grants and research dollars to combat this deadly virus, but I also wrote a letter to Dr. Julie Gerderding, the CDC's director. In the letter, I expressed the importance of the CDC, the NIH, and Congress to work cooperatively to communicate the concerns and resolutions in combating these deadly viruses.

Considering West Nile virus is prevalent during the summer and early fall, it is imperative that the necessary steps are taken in the virus's prevention and vaccination before the onset of the next summer season. Mr. Speaker, I believe H.R. 342, the Mosquito Abatement for Safety and Health (MASH) Act, would do exactly that.

Essentially, H.R. 342 would establish two temporary grant programs to help state and local governments assess mosquito problems, and coordinate and operate mosquito control programs. This measure would also authorize \$100 million in FY2003, and such sums as necessary each subsequent year through FY 2007, for these grants.

While Florida was not as severely affected as Illinois or Michigan last year by the West Nile virus, Florida certainly has the propensity to be dramatically affected by this virus due to its annual warm climate. The increasing growth of outbreaks and spread of West Nile

virus each year qualifies it as a public health threat that is likely to be with us for years to come. Addressing the problem now through H.R. 342 will provide benefits in the future, and most importantly save lives.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the M.A.S.H Act.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MOURNING DOVE HARVEST ACT

HON. C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 11, 2003

Mr. OTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise before the House today to reintroduce the Mourning Dove Harvest Act, a bill that will give individuals who reside in all states a fair and equal opportunity to hunt mourning doves.

Hunters in states north of the 37th parallel often find that mourning doves already have migrated south for the winter by the time hunting season opens on September 1st. It is not uncommon for the fall hunting season to last less than one week or even one day in such northern states as Idaho, Montana and Washington. Many sportsmen unable to follow this migration are left without a hunting opportunity. States south of the 37th parallel, meanwhile, have a full season and ample opportunity to harvest these birds. Hunters in Mexico have the additional advantage of no harvest limits. Passage of this bill is the first step toward creating a season that will give residents of northern states an equal opportunity.

The designated hunting season for mourning doves that begins September 1st and ends March 10th is the result of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, which in turn stems from the Migratory Bird Treaty of 1916. The Treaty signed by the United States, Canada, Mexico, Great Britain, Japan and Russia covers a multitude of migratory birds, including mourning doves. There is little legislative history justifying the selection of this fall opening date, and migration routes, hunting practices and conservation efforts have changed significantly in the 86 years since the Treaty's ratification. The last week in August has been identified as a period when these birds are not nesting, but are preparing for their annual southern migration.

Passage of this bill will allow hunters in states north of the 37th parallel to hunt mourning doves seven days earlier—during a time when their migration south is about to begin. Hunters in the north will be on a more equal footing with their counterparts in the south.

Scientists have found that regulated hunting has no significant effect on the mourning dove population.

This legislation amends the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and asks the Secretary of State to begin discussions with the signatories of the Migratory Bird Treaty to include this change in the Treaty.

It is important to note that (1) this legislation offers hunters in the north a more equal opportunity to harvest mourning doves; (2) the mourning dove is the most widely distributed and harvested game bird in North America; (3) in states north of the 37th parallel, mourning doves often begin their southern migration prior to September 1st, the opening day of the hunting season; (4) this change will not impact the mourning dove population.

After exhaustive studies, analysis and discussion of this issue, the time to pass this measure is now. In the name of equitable access to this resource, I urge the passage of this bill.

RECOGNIZING THE FAIRFAX COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2003 VALOR AWARD RECIPIENTS

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 11, 2003

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary group of men and women in Northern Virginia. Each year, the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce, along with the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, recognizes public safety officials who have courageously demonstrated selfless dedication to public safety. These individuals are honored with the highest honor that Fairfax County bestows upon its public safety officials—The Valor Award.

There are several Valor Awards that a public safety officer can be given: The Lifesaving Award, a Certificate of Valor, or a Gold, Silver, or Bronze Medal of Valor. During the 25th Annual Awards Ceremony, 88 men and women from the Office of the Sheriff, Fire and Rescue Department, and Police Department received one of the aforementioned honors for their bravery and heroism.

It is with great honor that I enter into the RECORD the names of the recipients of the 2003 Valor Award in the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. Receiving the Lifesaving Award: Captain John Hart, Shift Supervisor Roy B. Shroul III, Asst. Shift Supervisor Tammy Read, Psc.III Judith Lassiter, Psc.III Susan Farnia, Psc.III Alicia Dale, Lieutenant Joseph Palau, Firefighter Juan C. Ayala, Technician Gregory W. Hunter, Technician David H. Gilmore, Technician Bryan J. Nix, and Technician James H. Williams; Certificate of Valor: Senior Building Inspector Michael A. Andreano, and Firefighter James M. Furman; Silver Medal of Valor: Lieutenant Wayne B. Stottleyer, and Technician Ronald S. Pifer; Bronze Medal of Valor: Master Technician John C. Mayers.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the men and women who serve the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. The events of September 11th served as a reminder of the sacrifices our emergency service workers make for us everyday. Their constant efforts on behalf of Fairfax County citizens are paramount to preserving security, law and order throughout our neighborhoods, and their individual and collective acts of heroism deserve our highest praise. I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating this group of extraordinary citizens.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MEDICARE Rx DRUG BENEFIT AND DISCOUNT ACT

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 11, 2003

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, today, I am proud to introduce the Medicare Rx Drug Benefit and Discount Act with JOHN DINGELL, the Dean of the House and Ranking Member of the Energy and Commerce Committee. Our Ranking Member on the Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, PETE STARK, has had a leadership role in the development of this legislation, as have so many other health care leaders in our caucus.

This legislation makes good on our promise to add affordable, comprehensive prescription drug coverage to Medicare.

The Democratic bill will look, smell, taste, and feel like any other Medicare benefit, because it is a Medicare benefit. Beneficiaries will not be forced to join an HMO or other private insurer to get the prescription drugs they need.

Under this legislation, every beneficiary will be guaranteed a \$25 monthly premium, \$100 annual deductible, 20 percent coinsurance and \$2000 out-of-pocket limit, no matter where they live.

We provide additional assistance for low-income beneficiaries. Those with incomes up to 150 percent of the poverty level (\$13,470 for one person) will pay nothing.

Those with incomes between 150–175 percent of poverty (\$13,470–\$15,715 for a single person) will pay premiums on a sliding scale with no additional cost-sharing.

The Medicare Rx Drug Benefit and Discount Act would: lower prescription drug costs for all Americans, regardless of whether they are covered by Medicare, give all Medicare beneficiaries the option of a reasonably-priced guaranteed prescription benefit under Medicare, and ensure that senior citizens and people with disabilities receive coverage for the drug their doctor prescribes and not some substitute that an insurance company deems “equivalent.”

Unlike the President’s and other Republicans’ proposal, our plan would never force seniors into an HMO or similar private plan in order to get a prescription drug benefit.

Republicans claim they will give seniors a “Medicare” prescription drug benefit, but their proposals are really just a way to provide subsidies to insurance plans and HMOs, not to help beneficiaries.

Republicans claim they will give beneficiaries choices, but their proposals really leave virtually all of the important decisions to the private insurance companies. Under the GOP plan, private insurers will decide which drugs are covered and which are not. If your drug is not on the list, too bad. Millions of seniors will not be able to afford their prescriptions under the GOP plan. Under the GOP plan, private insurers can pick and choose which pharmacies to include in their networks. If your neighborhood pharmacy is not on the preferred list, you are out of luck.

The bottom line is that those who can buy insurance under the GOP plan may find their choice of pharmacies severely limited or that they cannot get coverage for the drugs prescribed by their doctor.

Ultimately, there is only one choice the President and other Republicans want to force seniors to make—the choice of either their family doctor or their life-saving medicines. Under the GOP plan, seniors in search of even modest drug benefits would have to leave the traditional Medicare program—where they have the choice of any doctor they want—and join an HMO or other private insurer that may or may not cover their family doctor.

Many HMOs and private insurers have unfairly limited health care in the past. That’s what the Patients’ Bill of Rights debate has been about. They’ve been unreliable partners in Medicare to date; just look at the problems in the Medicare+Choice program. And now the Republicans want to put them in charge of this medication benefit under their “privatization” model.

Republican leaders have never liked Medicare. Former Speaker Gingrich once said Medicare would “wither on the vine because we think people are voluntarily going to leave it.” In 1995, Dick Armey called Medicare: “a program I would have no part of in a free world.”

Republican proposals lay the groundwork for them to make good on their desire to do away with the program. The Republican prescription drug plan is the first step towards privatizing Medicare. They would force seniors to deal with private insurance companies instead of having the choice of getting prescriptions through Medicare. They would also institute so-called “modernizations” that would significantly raise the premiums of beneficiaries who wish to stay in the traditional Medicare program.

In contrast, we base our plan—not on a flawed privatization model—but on the successful Medicare program. We offer a genuine Medicare plan, providing affordable voluntary drug coverage to all American seniors through Medicare.

Under this legislation, no senior will ever have to choose between putting food on the table or paying the rent or getting the medicines they need.

This legislation also helps reduce the skyrocketing costs that seniors and other beneficiaries currently pay for prescription drugs by utilizing the collective negotiating power of Medicare’s 40 million beneficiaries to guarantee lower drug prices. By closing some loopholes in current law that prevent or delay generic drugs from coming to market, this legislation also reduces drug prices for all Americans.

While our Republican colleagues are engaged in a cynical political exercise designed to bring themselves political cover, we offer serious legislation. It would bring senior citizens Medicare prescription drug coverage.

When President Harry Truman first proposed Medicare in his second term, a wide array of Republican forces were against him saying he could not do it. Truman said: “We may not make it [now], but someday we will.” Eventually, Truman and other Medicare advocates succeeded. Harry and Bess Truman became the first Medicare enrollees in 1965.

The Republican leadership may prevent us from passing a true Medicare prescription drug benefit now, but they cannot stop us in the long run because that is what seniors and all Americans have said they really want.

As PETE STARK points out, prescription drug coverage is as essential to seniors’ good