

that our fellow colleagues deliberated on a decision to weaken the vital and necessary sanctions against the ruthless Castro regime, at that same moment human rights and liberty were hurriedly moved to what is now one of the worst prisons on the island; that is what happened to Dr. Oscar E. Biscet Gonzalez.

At the same time we were going to lift sanctions on Castro, Castro was putting Dr. Biscet in a dungeon. Even as we meet here today, courageous advocates suffer in jail for speaking their minds and advocating for liberty and freedom, and it is a crime to do that in Fidel Castro's Cuba. People such as Dr. Oscar E. Biscet Gonzalez are serving horrific prison sentences for promoting democratic values.

Dr. Biscet is a leader, as Members have heard from the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), and we will hear from the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) in a moment, is a leader in the Cuban opposition movement. He is a follower of Ghandi and Martin Luther King, and he was arrested earlier this year and has been arbitrarily detained over 26 times in the past 18 months. His body may be weak, rapidly deteriorating; but his courage, his spirit, his commitment to see a free Cuba from its enslavement, they are stronger than ever. Dr. Biscet sits in a jail where prisoners are tortured so intensely that their skulls are cracked, their faces are disfigured, and their bodies are dragged down rugged stairs feet first. But we are going to lift the sanctions against his jailer.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Biscet, together with an incalculable number of victims of a bloody and terrorist regime illustrates the reason why our government, the great United States of America, must remain vigilant against tyrannical regimes. Dr. Biscet's torture and cowardly imprisonment is an attempt to break the spirit of liberty from the minds of Cubans who long for a free Cuba, and there are 11 million of those Cubans on the island.

Dr. Biscet previously served 3 years in prison. He was released October 31 of last year only to be rearrested on December 6 as he was to meet with human rights activists. That is a crime in Cuba. On April 7 of this year, he was summarily tried during a Cuban regime crackdown, along with 75 other activists and independent journalists, and was sentenced to 25 years for serving as a mercenary to a foreign state.

Mr. Speaker, our esteemed halls of democracy have welcomed many distinguished speakers. We have received countless heroes and people of the highest honor, and these are the same caliber and fiber such as Dr. Biscet, who is one of Cuba's many unsung heroes. I would like to quote his most recent note to his wife and have his words ring loudly in these Halls so we may all understand the true brutal na-

ture of the Cuban regime and the reasons why we must bring an end to the misery of the Cuban people.

Dr. Biscet writes, "I don't know why I am in this dismal place. I will not grieve nor be afraid for being punished in this dungeon. I will face life's difficulties in order to enjoy the germination of love. I know I will succeed, for the darker the place, the brighter and more intense the light."

Every day more and more opposition leaders such as Dr. Biscet are sentenced to languish in squalid jail cells subjected to the most inhumane and degrading treatment. We must not be silent. We cannot and we must not be indifferent to the anguish and misery endured by the Cuban people, just 90 miles from our shores, at the hands of this depraved dictator and his agents of terror.

Mr. Speaker, indifference breeds evil. Indifference is the enemy of freedom. Indifference helps cloak the deplorable actions of tyrants.

Mr. Speaker, I would say to Dr. Biscet, inside your jail cell I know you cannot hear our words, but we want to express our profound admiration for you and the just cause that you are fighting for. We support you and we support all of Cuba's independent internal opposition in your struggle to be free. Let us not become indifferent to the plight of our fellow Cuban brothers and sisters. Dr. Biscet, vamos a continuar luchando hasta que usted y el pueblo de Cuba sea libre.

WRONGFUL IMPRISONMENT OF CUBAN DISSIDENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, we have heard tonight the plight of Dr. Oscar E. Biscet Gonzalez and the situation that he finds himself in today, in a dungeon where he is not able to receive light and barely has enough air to breathe, where he has been placed with another person who is a violent person to see if that violent person can do harm to Dr. Biscet. Why is he serving under those conditions? Because he has asked for the one thing that the Castro dictatorship, just 90 miles away from the United States, that that thug fears the most. What Dr. Biscet continues to ask for is freedom. That is it. Freedom to associate, freedom of religion and freedom to speak out and elect one's leaders; and for that, he has been sentenced to 25 years in prison.

There are those that apologize for the Castro dictatorship, and they say we have to normalize relationships with the Castro dictatorship and we should treat Castro as if we were dealing with the government of Costa Rica or Paraguay because he is not that bad. He is ailing. He is an older, ailing individual; and, therefore, we should treat him nicely, while he has people like Dr.

Biscet and many others rotting in prison because all they want is to be free.

As my colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) said, Where is the outrage?

From time to time we see miniseries on those expensive movie networks glorifying Castro, showing him as a great leader. Where is the news coverage of Dr. Biscet and the story of Dr. Biscet's suffering? Where are the stories of any of the other political prisoners suffering in Castro's prisons? Where are they? Why does the press refuse to cover the plight of these people?

Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that the press has total indifference, that still gives excuse after excuse as to why we need to deal with Castro as if he were a normal human being, not the animal or the murderer that he is, despite all that, we will continue to speak out because the Cuban people deserve to be free and the American people understand more than anybody else how valuable freedom is, which is why the American people have always stood fast and have always supported people like Dr. Biscet.

And until the day that Dr. Biscet is free, we will continue to speak, despite those that want to apologize for Castro, and despite those who want to help the regime and go to Cuba to have sexual tourism with little boys and little girls, we will continue to speak up for those that cannot be heard, and they will ultimately win. They will ultimately be heard, and the Cuban people will be free and the American people will feel very proud that they stood by the people of Cuba in their darkest moments by not treating Castro as if he were a normal human being, by keeping the pressure and making sure that the world understands that Castro is what he is: he is a crazy, sick, senile, murdering animal. And until the day he is gone, we will continue to speak for those like Dr. Biscet who cannot speak.

REGARDING RETIREMENT OF HOUSE RADIO-TV GALLERY DEPUTY DIRECTOR BEVERLY BRAUN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, when we come back for the second session of the 108th Congress, there will be a new face in the House Radio-TV Gallery. That is because, after 20 years of service, the Deputy Director Beverly Braun is retiring December 12th.

When Braun came to the Gallery in 1983, she and her colleagues sat up there in the southeast corner of the House chamber taking notes on floor proceedings by hand because they didn't have a computer, and the television reporters who covered out activities had to physically transport tapes to their bureaus. Beverly has shepherded the staff from learning to use a single 10K floppy disk drive machine to having individual 60 Gig hard drive laptops, and has helped incorporate technical developments that now afford the broadcasters use of fiber optic transmission lines.

In the past 20 years Beverly Braun has worked under five speakers, under both Democratic and Republican control of the House and has been involved in coverage arrangements of many diverse events. Some were annual like State of the Union Addresses, St. Patrick's Day luncheons and Christmas Tree lightings. Some were periodic like mock swearing-ins of new members. Some were joyful like the joint meeting to celebrate Harry Truman's 100th birthday. Some were tragic like that lying in honor for Officers Chestnut and Gibson, and September 11th. Some were historical hearings such as Iran-Contra and Waco. Some were historical visits such as those by Queen Elizabeth, Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel, and most special to Braun, the Dalai Lama.

As part of her regular Gallery work Braun worked with many Congressional staffers and committee members, but in recent years has primarily served as liaison to the Ways and Means, Financial Services and Rules Committees. In addition to her regular Gallery work, Braun helped with broadcast arrangements for 10 Democratic and Republican national political nominating conventions and provided on site assistance in San Francisco, Dallas, Atlanta, New Orleans, New York City, Houston, San Diego, Chicago, Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

Braun was born to Phyllis (Lawson) and Ray Nicholas in Warren, Ohio in 1942, attended Ohio University and graduated from St. Vincent School of Medical Technology in Cleveland in 1961. She and her first husband Roland Braun lived in Pittsburgh PA where her son Stephen was born in 1964, and in Ramsey NJ where her daughter Leslie de Vries was born in 1966. They moved to Minnesota in 1967 where Braun became active in politics and women's rights organizations and where she ran unsuccessfully for a state senate seat in 1972. She later served as Communications Director for the Minnesota Bicentennial Commission, Director of the Small Business Division of the Minnesota Department of Economic Development and managed a Small Business Development Center for Control Data Corporation.

Braun and her second husband, Skip Loescher, moved to Washington, D.C. twice, staying here since their second move in 1981. After spending 20 years with WCCO-TV and a short stint with Senator and Vice President Walter Mondale, Loescher has been the Washington correspondent for CNN Newsource for the past 12 years. Prior to her employment with the Gallery, Braun worked in Washington with the National Women's Education Fund and later founded a business which provided services to companies that did not have a Washington Office.

Braun and Loescher's families are spread all across the country. Braun's mother Phyllis Beadle lives in Queensbury NY. Braun's son Stephen and his wife Anne live in Columbia MD. He has a son Nicolas and daughter Katie. Braun's daughter Leslie and her husband Jackson Griffith live in Sacramento CA with daughters Emma and Ellie and son Will. Loescher's son Jeff lives in Portland OR with wife Carol, daughter Nicole and son Tyler. Loescher's son Mick and wife Erin live in Peabody MA with sons Sean and Christian. Loescher's daughter Suzy and husband Jeff Quinlan live in Covington GA with son Alex and daughter Kate. Both Braun and Loescher

are also blessed with aunts, uncles, cousins, former classmates and friends in almost every other state represented by the members in this chamber.

After leaving Congress, Braun plans on possibly teaching, writing and doing more gardening at her home in Annapolis where she and her husband moved after 19 years on Capitol Hill. She also wants to address end of life issues. She and her husband hope to eventually pursue training and taking therapy dogs in hospitals, nursing homes and hospices . . . and spending more time with all those adorable grandchildren.

Braun has always been a helpful and cheerful professional and she will be missed. So at the end of her career with us, let us say to Beverly as we have heard her say at the end of many a photo op . . . "Thank you . . . lights!"

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ROHRABACHER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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THE HEALTH CARE CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening with my fellow members of the Congressional Black Caucus to address the health care crisis in America. While millions of Americans lack adequate health insurance, the rights of the uninsured continue to increase. In addition, the cost of prescription medication is placing an enormous financial burden on consumers. And our seniors, many of whom are living on fixed wages, are in desperate need of relief.

Mr. Speaker, the late Senator and former Vice President, Hubert Humphrey, once said, ". . . the moral test of government is how it treats those in

the dawn of life, the children; those in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped." As a Nation we have failed that test on all three counts.

Currently, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are offering a bill to overhaul the Federal Medicare program under the guise of a much-needed prescription drug benefit for this Nation's seniors. This bill, if passed, would cost our children over \$400 billion. Mr. Speaker, I say it will cost our children because the government is currently operating in a deficit. We simply do not have the money. Therefore, it is the younger generations and those yet unborn who will have to shoulder the financial burden required by this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, let us not be mistaken. Every dollar being spent worth saving or improving one's quality of life is a dollar well worth spending. However, this bill directs billions of dollars towards enhancing the financial well-being of corporations at the expense of the physical well-being of those who need it the most.

This Nation's seniors have practically begged us, as their congressional representatives, to work together in drafting a comprehensive bill that would provide prescription drug coverage and enhance the current Medicare program. Quite frankly, this bill is an inadequate response to their plea.

Let me boil it down to the very basics. The Medicare conference agreement prohibits the Secretary of Health and Human Services from negotiating lower drug prices on behalf of the 40 million Medicare beneficiaries. In other words, this legislation says that the Secretary of Health and Human Services cannot negotiate lower prices although we have millions of Medicare beneficiaries buying medicines or obtaining medicines from these pharmaceuticals.

This proposed legislation also creates a gap of \$2,844 that would be impossible for lower-income seniors to bridge and disallows lower-income seniors the ability to receive coverage under both Medicare and Medicaid. And further, Mr. Speaker, the bill could have disastrous effects on my home State of Maryland. 59,640 Maryland Medicare beneficiaries could lose their retiree health benefits and 75,800 Maryland Medicaid beneficiaries could pay more for the prescription drugs that they need. Mr. Speaker, that is simply unacceptable. We can and we must do better for our seniors.

The Congressional Black Caucus is extremely concerned about the health care needs of the 26 million people of every color that we represent. Therefore, providing affordable, high-quality health care for every American is a top priority. And I emphasize the fact that the Congressional Black Caucus represents not only African American people but we represent people of all colors. As a matter of fact, many of our