

of thousands of other minorities. They are holding over 52,000 Sikhs as political prisoners, according to the Movement Against State Repression (MASR) and tens of thousands of other minorities, according to Amnesty International.

The only way to preserve basic human rights for minorities in India is to stop all aid and trade until India observes these basic liberties. And we should also go on record in support of self-determination for the Sikhs of Punjab, Khalistan, the Muslims of Kashmir, the Christians of Nagaland, and the minority nations of South Asia. That will help bring freedom, prosperity, peace, and stability to this troubled region.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to place the Council of Khalistan's press release on the celebration into the RECORD for the information of my colleagues.

400TH ANNIVERSARY OF GURU GRANTH SAHIB

WASHINGTON, DC, Sept. 10, 2004.—On September 1, Sikhs gathered in Anuitsar to observe the 400th anniversary of the first installation of the Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy scriptures, at Darbar Sahib, the holiest of Sikh shrines. Indian President Abdul Kalam, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Buddhism, attended the celebration. Sikhs remember that bullets pierced through the Guru Granth Sahib during Operation Bluestar, the Indian government's military attack on the Golden Temple in Amritsar, in 1984.

The Guru Granth Sahib was written by the Sikh Gurus as revealed to them by God. It was written at the time in which they lived. It also includes the writing of other saints of that time which fit the philosophy of the Sikh Gurus.

"This anniversary is a joyous occasion for the Sikh Nation as we celebrate the Sikh way of life as given to us by the Gurus," said Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan. The Council of Khalistan, the government pro tempore of the Sikh homeland, Khalistan, leads the struggle to liberate Khalistan, which declared its independence from India on October 7, 1987.

Sikhism is an independent, monotheistic religion that believes in the equality of the whole human race. The tenth and last Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, declared the blessing "In Grieb Sikhin Ko Deon Patshahi," conferring sovereignty on the Sikh Nation, which is culturally, linguistically, and religiously distinct from any other people in the world, including Hindu India. "We must honor the Guru by reclaiming our lost sovereignty," Dr. Aulakh said.

The Indian government has murdered over 250,000 Sikhs since 1984, more than 300,000 Christians in Nagaland since 1947, over 89,000 Muslims in Kashmir since 1988, and tens of thousands of Tamils, Assamese, Manipuris, Dalits, and others. Christians and Muslims have also been murdered in other parts of the country. The Indian Supreme Court called the Indian government's murders of Sikhs "worse than a genocide." According to a study by the Movement Against State Repression, 52,268 Sikhs are being held in illegal detention as political prisoners without charge or trial. Some of them have been held since 1984!

Christian missionary Joseph Cooper was expelled from India after a mob of militant Hindu nationalists allied with the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), a fundamentalist, pro-Fascist organization that is the parent organization of the BJP, beat him so severely he had to spend a week in the hospital. In 2002, 2,000 to 5,000 Muslims were

murdered in Gujarat while police were ordered to stand aside, reminiscent of the 1984 Delhi massacres of Sikhs. Indian newspapers reported that the government planned the Gujarat massacre in advance.

India is not one country; it is a polyglot thrown together by the British for their administrative convenience. Sikhs ruled Punjab until 1849 when the British conquered the subcontinent. Sikhs were equal partners during the transfer of power from the British. The Muslim leader Jinnah got Pakistan, the Hindu leaders got India, but the Sikh leadership was fooled by the Hindu leadership promising that Sikhs would have "the glow of freedom" in Northwest India. The Sikhs took their share with India on that promise. For that mistake, Sikhs are suffering now. "As Professor Darshan Singh, a former Jathedar of the Akal Takht, said, 'If a Sikh is not for Khalistan, he is not a Sikh,'" Dr. Aulakh noted.

"Democracies don't commit genocide," Dr. Aulakh said. "Only in a free and sovereign Khalistan will the Sikh Nation prosper. In a democracy, the right to self-determination is the sine qua non and India should allow a plebiscite for the freedom of the Sikh Nation," he said.

"The Guru Granth Sahib is the reigning Guru of the Sikh Nation and reminds us of our heritage of freedom," Dr. Aulakh said. "It is appropriate that it received a fitting celebration."

SYSTEMS—NATIONAL 8(a) GRADUATE OF THE YEAR

HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-MCDONALD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to congratulate bd Systems and its President/Chief Executive Officer Clarisa F. Howard of Torrance, California on being named the United States Small Business Administration's National 8(a) Graduate of the Year.

I am very proud that this prestigious award, which is presented annually to companies who have demonstrated excellence in business since graduating from the SBA's 8(a) minority business development program, was awarded to a business located in the heart of the 37th District of California.

Clarisa Howard built bd Systems from a three-person operation in 1981, to a thriving company of more than 346 employees today. bd Systems has operations in twenty locations, including right here in the District of Columbia.

bd Systems has been recognized for over 20 years as a world-class provider of technology solutions, providing proven engineering and IT performance, design, analysis, and support. Under Clarisa's leadership, the firm has earned a positive reputation as a key subcontractor to several large defense contractors, including Boeing, which operates a facility in the Long Beach area of my District.

Mr. Speaker, this week is National Minority Enterprise Development Week, and minority business owners from all over the country are participating in a weeklong conference being held at the Omni Shoreham Hotel here in Washington, DC.

The theme for this year's conference, which is the largest federally sponsored activity held on behalf of minority business enterprises, is

"Forward to the Future, Minority Business Enterprise: The National Priority".

The conference is an important conduit in providing critical information to both the minority business community, and to corporate America at large. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the number of minority owned small businesses are growing nationwide and are an emerging economic force.

In closing, I'd like to salute Clarisa Howard and all of the employees of bd Systems for their tremendous achievement, and I am sure that they will continue to be a success for years to come.

OPPOSITION TO COST OF LIVING INCREASE FOR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

HON. JERRY MORAN

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to a cost-of-living increase for Members of Congress. During the recent August district work period, I traveled across Kansas, meeting with farmers and ranchers, teachers, small business owners, and health care providers. Many of them shared with me the difficulties they face making ends meet in our recovering economy with the rising costs of transportation and health care services. These individuals are working hard to provide for their families, but while they are experiencing first-hand the effects of a cost-of-living increase, an automatic pay raise is not available to them. Families in Kansas and across the country are making tough decisions, controlling spending, balancing their budgets, and practicing fiscal discipline; Members of Congress should be no different.

I am opposed to an automatic congressional pay raise and believe the process should be reformed. If Congress desires a pay increase, we should debate the issue as we do with other funding legislation. There should be a yes-no vote on the record with full disclosure to the public. Congressional action should reflect the interests of our constituents and any vote to increase Member salaries should be done with an open, transparent process.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MAJOR R. OWENS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, because of an emergency in my district, I missed rollcall votes Nos. 441, 442 and 443. If present I would have voted "yea."

REMEMBERING TOM OSBURN

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to pay tribute to the former mayor of Sherman,

TX, Tom Osburn, who died on August 6, 2004.

Tom Osburn was a selfless and devoted servant to the community of Sherman. Community leaders remember him as a man who worked constantly for the good of Sherman. If there was a problem, Tom was ready and willing to fix it. Friends recall that he was instrumental in getting a new building for the Texoma Council of Governments when a mold-infestation was discovered in the old building. The Old Settler's Park in Sherman was getting run down, so Tom led an effort to renovate the facility. He also made citizens feel as if they were integral to the success of the community. Rev. Jim Pledger stressed that Tom was a good mentor who encouraged people, through events like Great Days of Service, to give back to Sherman.

Tom and his wife, Jo Ann, arrived in Sherman in 1990. Tom served as TXU's district manager for the Texoma District. The Osburns quickly became an integral part of the community. In addition to serving as Mayor from 1999–2003, he was a member of the city council from 1998–2003. Tom also served on the Board of Directors of the Sherman Chamber of Commerce, the Boy Scouts of America, the American Cancer Society, the United Way, the Texoma Area Paratransit System, the Grayson County Rehabilitation Center, the Sherman Minority Recruitment Scholarship Foundation, and the Grayson County Juvenile Alternatives. Tom further gave his time and energies to the community as chairman of the Administrative Board of the First United Methodist Church, chairman of the Wilson N. Jones Memorial Hospital Foundation, and president of the Sherman Rotary Club. He served as president of the Board of Directors of the Texoma Council of Governments, and it isn't surprising that he was chosen this year as the Texoma Council of Government's Person of the Year for Grayson County.

Tom was a devoted family man. He met his wife, Jo Ann, at New London High School. They both graduated from the University of Texas at Austin after Tom played college basketball at Tyler Junior College, where his team took second place in the nation. Besides Jo Ann, Tom is survived by three children, Chris, Tim, and Beth, five grandchildren, and a sister, Pat Sager of Tyler.

The community of Sherman feels a deep and abiding loss by the death of Tom Osburn. Rarely has an individual made such a lasting and permanent mark on a town and its citizens. On behalf of his many friends and fans, and the community of Sherman, I want to take this opportunity in the House of Representatives to pay our last respects to this honorable man—Tom Osburn.

HONORING J.D. ROGERS

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to pay tribute to Mr. J.D. Rogers III, who on September 18, 2004, will be honored during the UAW Local 599 Walter Reuther award ceremony in Flint, MI, for his contributions as the longest serving production committeeman in the history of the local.

J.D. Rogers began his leadership career within UAW local 599 in 1976 when he was elected as alternative committeeman. One month after assuming his post he was elected to fulfill the position of the recently resigned committeeman. His superior leadership skills and support of the union membership granted him several unopposed elections to this post.

J.D. is committed to fulfilling Walter Reuther's mission of helping people, and ensuring human dignity and social justice for all. His hard work and dedication to the duties of his elected position is commendable. His deeds are self evident in the faith the members of 599 have bestowed upon him in allowing him to be re-elected. His service to the UAW extends many years and is highly regarded.

Mr. Speaker, many people have greatly benefited from the leadership and service of Mr. J.D. Rogers. His commitment to the UAW membership is unwavering. I ask my colleagues in the 108th Congress to please join me in congratulating him on obtaining his mark in history and in wishing him the very best in future endeavors.

HONORING HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I recognize Hispanic Heritage Month, which begins on September 15, the anniversary of independence for five Latin American countries—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Additionally, Mexico declared its independence on September 16, and Chile on September 18. These are some of the countries that comprise our diverse ethnic group, which have enriched our beautiful Nation.

The 2000 Census found that 35.3 million people identified themselves as Hispanic Americans. This represents a 58-percent increase from the previous Census of 1990. Hispanic Americans continue to thrive and exemplify the American dream. A larger percentage of Hispanic Americans are becoming proud homeowners. Hispanic-owned companies made up 6 percent of the Nation's 20.8 million nonfarm businesses, and earned \$186.3 billion in revenues. Since 1822, 73 Hispanic Americans have served in this very Chamber, in the U.S. House of Representatives.

In March of last year, the Congressional Hispanic Conference, of which I am proud to serve as chair, was inaugurated. We are comprised of a group of Representatives of Hispanic and Portuguese descent, as well as Members who are interested in promoting policies of importance to Americans of Latino descent. The Conference will inform Hispanic Americans that their issues and concerns are being listened to and acted upon in the U.S. Congress. Lower taxes, affordable health care, and the education of our youth are all issues that are imperative to our conservative values. We will be strong advocates to ensure that the largest minority group in the United States has a loud and powerful voice in the Halls of Congress.

Educational advancement and funding continues to be an important issue for all Ameri-

cans, especially Hispanics. Congress has increased funding for Hispanic Serving Institutions by more than 750 percent—from \$10.8 million in 1996 to \$92.4 million in 2003. The Bush administration has also proposed an additional 5-percent increase in funding for minority serving institutions in FY05. This would increase funding for Hispanic Serving Institutions to \$94 million. This vital funding works to advance the educational pursuits of Hispanic Americans across our country.

Congress continues to amend and improve tax policy to the benefit of all Americans. H.R. 839, The Renewing the Dream Tax Credit Act, modifies the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow an income tax credit for the provision of homeownership and community development. This bill would create tax incentives for the construction or rehabilitation of affordable housing for low-income families. The ability to afford and own your own home is a quintessential part of living and pursuing the American dream.

This Congress and our President are committed to ensuring that Hispanic Americans continue to seek economic opportunities and achieve prosperity. The huge increases in educational funding are unprecedented and will continue to serve the needs of the ever-growing Hispanic American community. A stronger, smarter, and fairer tax policy will continue to serve the needs of all Americans. A vibrant, stronger, and more educated Hispanic American population contributes to the greatness of this wonderful nation making us competitive for the new global economy in this technologically advanced society.

INTRODUCTION OF THE VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 2004

HON. JIM SAXTON

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Veterans' Employment Act of 2004. Our veterans too often see limitations in the availability of civilian employment opportunities. While federal service positions offer preference to veterans, this provision is not universal in private industry. For many seeking a position in the private sector, the search for employment proves long and arduous.

During their time in the service, our veterans acquire several personal attributes that private employers find imperative in today's business world. While serving in the armed services, these men and women consistently demonstrate a high level of adaptability; the ability to work within a team; a strong work ethic; and, more often than not, exemplary leadership qualities. Alongside the extensive technical and strategic training sustained during their service, the character displayed by our veterans should be sufficient to secure them steady employment. Unfortunately, we have too often been shown that this is not the case.

During my tenure in Congress, many of my constituents have expressed to me their frustration with the availability of steady, well paid employment opportunities. Unlike their non-veteran contemporaries, they often find employers unfamiliar with the extensive training and exemplary personal attributes accumulated during their years of service. With their