

promotes Russia's expansionism, even to the detriment of democracy and the welfare of the very Russian people. It is by design directed against the stability of Europe and it represents an insult to the Romanian nation. And, last but not least, in the future, its continuous existence will mar the good relations between the United States and Romania, thus hurting America's interests.

We, responsible and loyal American citizens of Romanian descent, are aware of the risky consequences of modifying borders. We are aware of America's limitations and of Russia's reluctance. But we also believe in America, we believe in justice, and we believe in redress. With good will, wisdom, and an open mind, the problem could be properly addressed. Thus, we recommend that the United States start considering the reunification of this land with Romania where it belongs. Such an approach would avoid further complications and undesirable consequences. To this end we are ready to lend our full and unconditional support.

Nicholas Dima, PhD
Retired professor
JF Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, Fort Bragg, NC
US Naval War College, Newport, RI

IN MEMORY OF FERN HOLLAND

HON. SUE WILKINS MYRICK

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 2004

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, in a tragedy personified by the killing of a young woman from middle America, we were reminded of the unsung goodness and bravery of so many Americans serving their country overseas.

On March 9, 2004, Fern Holland, of Miami, Oklahoma, was the first American civilian killed in the Iraq war. Her death has sparked over 200 national news reports, and an outpouring of grief from around the globe. Fern's story has touched people like me who never knew her, but who can now never forget her.

It's rare these days to know someone who is willing to sacrifice the comforts America offers to serve others who are less fortunate. It is even more rare to know a person who is willing to sacrifice their own life in order to improve the lives of others around the world. Fern Holland was an American hero who sacrificed both the comforts of home, and indeed even her life, to make the world a better place. People who exemplify such compassion and courage should be honored, and by telling her story I hope that she will be remembered.

Fern was a successful attorney, first in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and later in Washington, DC. She walked away from a lucrative career to carry out human rights work in violence plagued Guinea, Liberia, and later Iraq.

In her first effort to help others overseas, Fern lived in a remote village in Namibia as a Peace Corps volunteer. She helped the villagers there learn English, and built a computer laboratory to access the internet. Later, Fern worked for the American Refugee Committee where she investigated sexual assaults in a violence-plagued refugee camp in Guinea. There, she established the first sex violence legal clinic that to date has processed more than 100 cases.

Last year, after major combat operations in Iraq concluded, Fern traveled to Iraq and

worked for the Coalition Provisional Authority as a women's rights specialist. She helped establish women's rights, she established service centers throughout Iraq, and she helped found an Iraqi women's political party. The day before her death, Iraqi leaders signed an interim constitution that includes a controversial provision Fern helped draft. It establishes a goal for 25 percent female membership in the national assembly. Knowing of the dangers in Iraq, especially in working to extend women's rights, Fern wrote to friends only weeks before her death, "I love the work and if I die, know that I'm doing precisely what I want to be doing—working to organize and educate human rights activists and women's groups".

These are but a few of Fern Holland's contributions to the world, a world which is a better place because of her. In this day and time, when the world seems dark and dreary, we look to people like Fern Holland who's bright light gives us hope. Fern displayed a compassion and commitment to people that Jesus spoke about when he said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." Her sacrifice is an example and inspiration to all who strive for a better world, and she will be missed.

RECOGNITION OF TIARA PURIFOY

HON. TAMMY BALDWIN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 2004

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Tiara Purifoy of Beloit, WI, who recently appeared on the popular reality television show "American Idol." After being named a semifinalist with her powerful rendition of Whitney Houston's song "I Wanna Dance with Somebody," she was surprisingly eliminated before the singing even started on the wild card show on Tuesday, March 9, 2003. The show, which first aired in 2002, draws a nationwide audience in the millions, two nights a week. "American Idol" brings aspiring singers from across the nation to Hollywood, and awards the winner a recording contract and celebrity status. Tiara was selected at an audition in Hawaii.

While her dream of being the next "American Idol" has not yet come to pass, Tiara is still a star in the hearts of Wisconsinites. Tiara began singing as a small girl at age four in her church choir. She will continue to sing and perform with her traveling family group the Gospel Belles, where she sings lead. Her appearance on "American Idol" was not her first brush with fame, however. She describes her greatest accomplishment thus far as being named Miss Beloit in 1999 because she was able to be a positive example for young people.

Indeed, Purifoy proved to be a positive example to both young and old across the nation when she stood up to judge Simon Cowell, who is known for his hurtful and critical remarks to budding stars' performances. Despite praise from the other judges, celebrated performer Paula Abdul and Grammy Award winning producer Randy Jackson, Cowell told Purifoy she was capable of much more. With her absolute confidence and positive attitude, Purifoy retorted, saying she would let America decide. Indeed, America responded, and Purifoy moved on to the next round.

Even though Tiara is not the nation's new "American Idol," she will continue to share her sweet voice with her friends and family who continue to cheer for her back home in Beloit. Please share this opportunity with me, Mr. Speaker, to honor Beloit and Wisconsin's own American Idol.

BILL TO ALLOW A DEDUCTION FOR EXPENSES PAID IN CONNECTION WITH THE DONATION OF AN ORGAN

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 2004

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to introduce a bill to allow a tax deduction for expenses paid in connection with the donation of an organ.

Mr. Speaker, each year approximately 6,500 people die waiting to receive an organ transplant. However, 25,000 lives are saved due to the generosity of organ donors. While we have made significant strides to promote and encourage organ donation, we still fall short of our goal.

In response to this need, the legislation I now introduce will allow organ donors a tax deduction for up to \$15,000 per donation. Specifically, this bill amends the Internal Revenue Code to allow individuals to deduct qualified organ expenses such as travel and lost wages for donating all or part of a liver, lung, pancreas, kidney, intestine, or bone marrow for human organ transplantation.

Unlike previous bills that have been introduced in the House, this bill does not require donors to wait on what is often a long and tedious grant process to approve reimbursement. The donors will automatically be able to deduct up to \$15,000 in related expenses.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of this bill because I believe organ donors should not have to pay any price or expense for an act of kindness. I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass this important legislation.

DISABILITIES ADVOCATES FIGHT BUSH SECTION 8 PROPOSAL

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 2004

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, the Administration proposal for a drastic reduction in the ability of the Section 8 program to help people in need has caused a great deal of dismay, especially among those organizations that exist to provide services to the most vulnerable in our society. On March 22, a broad and inclusive coalition of people concerned with people with disabilities, people with low incomes, and others who have legitimate need for assistance sent a very thoughtful letter to the Chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, expressing their strong disagreement with this proposal. As the coalition notes, the funding level proposed by the Administration would mean that "approximately 250,000 low income families with children, senior citizens, and people with disabilities could lose their vouchers."

Mr. Speaker, this will be one of the most important issues on which this House will vote this year, and I ask that this very thoughtful letter by this broad range of groups be printed here for the benefit of the Members who will have to vote on this.

March 22, 2004.

Hon. C. W. BILL YOUNG,
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN YOUNG: The undersigned groups are writing to express our strong opposition to the severe cut to the Section 8 voucher program in the HUD Fiscal Year 2005 budget. The President's request for the voucher program is more than \$1.6 billion short of fully funding all vouchers in use. At this funding level, approximately 250,000 low income families with children, senior citizens, and people with disabilities could lose their vouchers.

This shortfall comes at a time when a recent analysis of the American Housing Survey reveals 31 percent of all households had housing problems in 2001. Now is not the time to cut the funding for a housing program that has served as the "linchpin" of our federal housing policy for the last two decades.

We also urge you to oppose the proposed Flexible Voucher Program that would make significant changes in the program's structure. The proposed changes would create a block grant program and eliminate many of the long-standing rules that benefit low income families. Under the proposed block grant, PHAs would receive a lump sum that would not be adequate to serve all current voucher holders. The elimination of statutory requirements including targeting the program to the lowest income families and ending the requirement that tenants pay no more than 30 percent of their income for their rent could have a devastating effect on families across the nation.

The Administration has expressed concern about the growth in costs of the voucher program. This increase was largely the result of rising utilization rates, expansion of the voucher program by Congress, and the widening gap between rental housing costs and family incomes in recent years. However, a recent study by CBO projects that the growth rate of Section 8 expenditures will slow to 1.8 percent in fiscal year 2005. They also project the costs to continue to level off because of the cooling of the housing market as well as increases in wages as the economy recovers.

The Section 8 voucher program is an effective and critical resource. Housing assistance is needed by the many low income families with children, elderly, people with disabilities, and victims of domestic violence who would not have safe, decent, and affordable housing without it. Housing authorities cannot be expected to do more with inadequate resources. We respectfully urge you to provide the necessary funding for all existing vouchers and reject HUD's plan to dismantle the housing voucher program.

Sincerely,

ACORN
Alliance for Children and Families
Alliance for Healthy Homes
Alliance for Retired Americans
American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association on Mental Retardation
American Baptist Churches USA
American Friends Service Committee
American Network of Community Options and Resources
American Society on Aging

Association for Gerontology and Human Development in Historical Black Colleges and Universities

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Brain Injury Association of America

Catholic Health Association

Child Welfare League of America

Children's Defense Fund

Church Women United

Corporation for Supportive Housing

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Families USA

Generation United

Gray Panthers

International Union, UAW

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Local Initiatives Support Corporation

Lutheran Services in America

National Advocacy Center of The Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Affordable Housing Management Association

National AIDS Housing Coalition

National Alliance for The Mentally Ill

National Alliance to End Homelessness

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth

National Association of Housing Cooperatives

National Association of Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers

National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

National Coalition for the Homeless

National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare

National Council of Jewish Women

National Council on Independent Living

National Council on the Aging

National Health Care for the Homeless Council

National Housing Conference

National Housing Trust

National Low Income Housing Coalition

National Mental Health Association

National Network to End Domestic Violence

National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness

National Rural Housing Coalition

National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness

Network, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty and Law

The Arc of the United States

The Coalition on Human Needs

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force

The Enterprise Foundation

The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

Union For Reform Judaism

United Cerebral Palsy

United Spinal Association (formerly Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association)

United Way of America

U.S. Jesuit Conference

Volunteers of America

FREEDOM FOR VICTOR ROLANDO
ARROYO CARMONA

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 2004

Mr. DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about Victor Rolando Ar-

royo Carmona, a prisoner of conscience in totalitarian Cuba.

Mr. Arroyo is vice-president of the group Forum for Reform as well as a member of the Union of Independent Cuban Journalists and Writers. Mr. Arroyo is a leading pro-democracy activist and has been a constant target of the totalitarian regime. Because of his peaceful activism for freedom and democracy, Mr. Arroyo has been harassed, beaten, and imprisoned in Castro's abhorrent gulag.

According to Human Rights Watch, in January 1995, Mr. Arroyo was beaten and thrown in prison for nine days after organizing a ceremony to commemorate the birth of José Martí. In 1996, he was sentenced to eighteen months in the totalitarian gulag and held in a "tapiada" cell—a narrow, dark and extremely humid cell—for "disrespecting" the government. In January 2000, Mr. Arroyo was charged with "hoarding" and sentenced to eighteen months in the gulag for organizing a toy drive and distributing toys to needy Cuban children. In October 2000, he was beaten by the dictatorship's goons on three separate occasions. In October 2001, rocks and bottles containing flammable chemicals were thrown at the home where Mr. Arroyo lives with his wife and children.

Despite these horrifically repressive intimidation tactics, despite being locked in the totalitarian gulag for distributing toys to needy children, Mr. Arroyo has never stopped demanding freedom and democracy for the Cuban people. Even with first hand knowledge of the brutal, inhumane, consequences of depicting the true reality of the totalitarian regime, Mr. Arroyo has bravely continued to write the truth about Castro's nightmarish oppression.

In 2002, Human Rights Watch awarded Mr. Arroyo a Hellman-Hammet grant in recognition of his courage in the face of political persecution. This prestigious grant is awarded annually to writers around the world who have been targets of political persecution.

On March 18, 2003, as part of the tyrant's brutal March 2003 crackdown on peaceful pro-democracy activists, Mr. Arroyo was arrested by Castro's agents of repression. After a sham trial, Mr. Arroyo was sentenced to 26 years in the totalitarian gulag.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Arroyo supports basic human rights for all Cubans. Despite being beaten, harassed, and now, once again, languishing in the grotesque, totalitarian, squalor of Castro's gulag, he is fervently committed to the cause of freedom. My Colleagues, we must demand the immediate release of Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona and every prisoner of conscience suffering in the totalitarian gulags of the nightmare called the Castro regime.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 4032, THE
VETERANS FIDUCIARY ACT OF 2004

HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 2004

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, during the first session of this Congress, the Subcommittee on Benefits of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs held a hearing concerning the Department of Veterans Affairs