

In the 56 years since its establishment, Israel has served as a beacon of democracy in the Middle East. In the face of war, terrorism, and frequent diplomatic isolation, Israeli society has flourished because of the pluralism, freedom, and human rights guaranteed by Israel's democracy. These democratic values have sustained a strong alliance between Israel and the United States, an alliance of friendship, principles, strategy, and a commitment to defeat terror.

Perhaps more than any other nation, Israel understands the dilemmas faced by a democratic society confronted with terror. Terrorism threatens the institutions that nurture Israel's prosperity—both through the bloodshed it engenders and through the sacrifices of civil liberties necessary to achieve security. Israel has admirably maintained an open, democratic society in spite of relentless threats to its citizens. We in America must salute this accomplishment and try to learn from the Israeli experience how to balance homeland security and a free society.

Much as its existence has been constantly challenged over its turbulent history, Israel currently faces critical threats to its well-being. The cycle of terrorist violence and reprisals shows no signs of ceasing, and the virulent specter of anti-Semitism remains a staple in the Middle East and is resurgent in Western Europe. However, we must embrace the cautious optimism embodied in Israel's national anthem, *Hatikvah*, which means "the hope." We hope that Israel will continue to serve as the "light unto the nations" that Herzl envisioned more than a century ago and that Israel's 57th year will be a time of peace throughout the region.

CONGRATULATING MAURICE CALDERON OF REDLANDS FOR SERVICE TO THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

HON. JERRY LEWIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 27, 2004

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I would like today to congratulate Maurice Calderon of Redlands, whose efforts to ensure that all communities in San Bernardino County have access to financial services has been recognized by the Foreign Ministry of Mexico, which presented him with the Ohtli Award for public service.

I have counted Maurice Calderon as a friend for more than 30 years, and I have been proud to work with him on many projects to improve our communities in San Bernardino County. Maurice was born and raised in Banning, California, and served as a school board member there for nine years, followed by another nine as a community college trustee.

He is currently the Senior Vice President of Governmental Affairs and Community Development at Arrowhead Credit Union in San Bernardino, California. In that position, Maurice has been an advocate for providing financial services to the large and growing Hispanic community, many of them immigrants from Mexico. He was instrumental in convincing the credit union to open a new branch in the San

Bernardino minority community after all other banks had closed their outlets there.

Maurice is truly a community activist, serving as a member of both the Inland Empire Hispanic and African American Chambers of Commerce. He is a member of the Board of Trustees of both the University of California Foundation, and the San Bernardino Valley College Foundation. Maurice is also a Director for the Inland Empire Economic Partnership, and President of Sinfonia Mexicana.

His service has been recognized by many honors: "Father of the Year" from the City of Banning, "Citizen of the Year" from the City of Beaumont, "Hispanic of the Year," and "Influential Latino of the Year" in 1998 by the Inland Empire Hispanic Chamber and Hispanic Lifestyle Magazine, respectively. Maurice was the inaugural recipient of the California Credit Union League Diversity Award, and was named to the Southern California Native American and Latino Hall of Fame.

Most recently, Maurice Calderon has been recognized for his public service to the Mexican immigrant community by the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which awarded him the Reconocimiento Ohtli Medal. It honors those individuals who are role models for society, and have contributed successfully toward building relations with the Mexican community living outside of the country.

Mr. Speaker, a big reason for Maurice Calderon's dedication to his community is the support he receives from Dorothy, his wife of more than 40 years, and his two children and four grandchildren. Please join me in congratulating the entire Calderon family for this honor, and thanking him for all the years of public service he has given the people of San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ELTON GALLEGLY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 27, 2004

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, April 22, 2004, I was unable to vote on H. Res. 602, on ordering the previous question (rollcall 126); and on agreeing to H. Res. 602 (rollcall 127). Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on both questions.

Additionally Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, April 22, 2004, I was unable to vote on the Larson amendment to H.R. 2844 (rollcall 128); and on Larson amendment (2) to H.R. 2844 (rollcall 129). Had I been present, I would have voted "no" on both measures.

And, finally, on Thursday, April 22, 2004, I was unable to vote on final passage of H.R. 2844, the Continuity in Representation Act of 2004 (rollcall 130). Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

RENEW THE BAN ON ASSAULT WEAPONS

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 27, 2004

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, in 139 days the assault weapons ban will expire. In 139 days our

streets could be flooded with AK-47's. In 139 days the work of 10 years and the progress towards safer neighborhoods could vanish. In 139 days we could see the semiautomatic weapons that are used in combat zones on our street corners.

But we don't have to let this happen. H.R. 2038, the Assault Weapons Ban and Law Enforcement Protection Act of 2003, is a common sense approach to protecting Americans from dangerous and impractical weapons. I continue to support responsible legislation that protects the rights of those who collect or hunt and use weapons for legitimate recreational purposes, but I think we can all agree that restricting the availability of Uzis will not impede lawful hunting. Assault weapons make up less than 1 percent of all guns but they are 18 times more likely than other guns to be cop-killers, and 16 times more likely to be traced to crime than other firearms.

H.R. 2038 is supported by more than three-fourths of the American public and virtually every major national law enforcement organization. In fact President Bush and Attorney General John Ashcroft have both stated their support for this legislation. I urge the leadership of the House to protect Americans from these senseless weapons of mass destruction and bring this legislation to the floor for a vote.

IN OBSERVANCE OF THE 56TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF ISRAEL

HON. ROBERT T. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 27, 2004

Mr. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I want to join my colleagues and the world Jewish community in congratulating the people of Israel on the celebration of the 56th anniversary of their independence. Israel is the only true democracy and our country's strongest ally in the Middle East. Since the United States became the first country to recognize Israel's independence, our countries have shared a deep friendship and partnership. We are bonded by our commitment to democracy and freedom.

Since they declared their independence in 1948, Israel has faced continuous challenges to their right to exist as a sovereign country. To this day, we hear new reports almost daily of violence against the people of Israel. Thousands of innocent lives have been lost to attacks by terrorist organizations.

As Israel's partner, the United States must stand with its allies against these violent assaults on the Israeli people and maintain our commitment to a free, peaceful and democratic Israel. As partners in peace, the United States must also support Israel's right to take necessary measures to defend its citizens against violence. The future of Israel, and the hopes of peace in the Middle East depend on it.

CELEBRATING ISRAEL'S 56TH
ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE**HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 27, 2004

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the state of Israel on the celebration of its 56th anniversary of independence. Born out of the ashes of the Holocaust, Israel has blossomed into a dynamic and successful democracy. I urge all of my colleagues to pause and recognize this grand achievement.

Since their forced removal from the historic land of Israel by the Romans some 2,000 years ago, Jews have migrated the four corners of the earth. With the establishment of

the modern state of Israel, Jews once again found sovereignty and self-rule in the land of their forefathers.

The United States has a special relationship with Israel and her people, and it is right that we do. Israel, like the United States, values liberty, individual expression, and freedom of religion, assembly and the press. It too is a land of immigrants from continents as diverse as Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. We share basic values of freedom, a love of life, and a concern for our citizens' well-being. Israel also is a land of great innovation, home to great advancements in biosciences, agriculture and computer sciences to name a few. Israel's military and our own share resources and work together to achieve advances in defense technology that benefit both nations.

We all know that Israel finds itself beset by enemies sworn to its destruction, facing daily

acts of terrorism. We in Congress stand firmly behind Israel's security. Israel is a reality, and it is here to stay. The sooner Israel's neighbors accept this basic point, the sooner we will see progress toward peace.

Israel faces many great challenges, and solving them will take our active participation. The United States has a stake in the future of Israel and in the entire region, and we must not neglect our obligation to lead and the opportunity to respond. We should not dictate results, but should work always to create an environment that encourages dialogue.

Today is a day of celebration, one that marks the great achievements of Israel and her citizens these past 56 years. Like our own independence, Israel's comes at great cost. We all look forward to the day when Israel will celebrate its independence in peace.