

APPLAUDING THE MEN AND
WOMEN WHO KEEP AMERICA
MOVING AND RECOGNIZING NA-
TIONAL TRANSPORTATION WEEK

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 17, 2004

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Chairman YOUNG and Ranking Member OBERSTAR, for introducing H. Con. Res. 420, which properly applauds the men and women who keep our country moving—the American transportation workers.

There can be no doubt that the transportation sector is the most critical sector of our economy. We cannot produce or sell goods, agricultural products or raw materials if we cannot move them throughout our great land, or ship them overseas. And yet, despite the importance of these workers, they now find themselves under attack from within and without. But, their government has, at best, abandoned them in their hour of need. In some cases, the Federal government has actually joined in—and even led—the assault on their safety, their livelihoods and their rights.

Mr. Speaker, we can never forget that the very first victim on September 11, 2001 was a flight attendant, sliced by a box cutter our lax security measures allowed on board. And yet, three years later, these underpaid and overstressed workers find themselves fighting for proper security training and for safer conditions. Will we ever truly honor the dead of that infamous day as long as these citizens are at risk? And today, two years after it expired, the flight attendants of Southwest Airlines continue to work without a contract, victims of the alliance between management and the National Mediation Board (NMB), the agency responsible for administering the Railway Labor Act (RLA) which governs their work class. Management has refused to offer a new contract after the rejection of woefully inadequate opening offers. However, NMB has refused to declare an impasse, which would allow workers and the Transport Workers Union, which represents them, to move forward in exercising their rights.

And the Southwest Flight attendants are not the only victims of the recalcitrance of the NMB. Despite the fact that the current round of national rail negotiations is well into its fifth year for thousands of workers, the NMB has refused to move the bargaining process along in a timely manner. Specifically, the NMB has refused to “release” the International Association of Machinists (IAM) and the Sheet Metal Workers International Union (SMWIA) from mediation despite the fact that both unions have reached an impasse with management and further talks would be fruitless. It is intolerable for our government to force a rail worker to wait five years for a new collective bargaining agreement.

The NMB, whose three members are appointed by the President and confirmed by the other body, is responsible for providing bargaining and mediation assistance, and fostering productive collective bargaining between labor and management. The NMB’s ability to either advance or delay labor-management talks is a power the agency should use fairly and with great care. The NMB is well known

for touting its own record of having parties reach agreements without resorting to “self-help” such as strikes or lockouts.

In fact, the statute has survived since 1926 because it can work well if implemented fairly. But by failing to act on a release in the JAM and SMWIA case, the NMB is ignoring its own policy of expediting the bargaining and mediation process. Forcing employees and their unions to stay at the table well beyond the point of any productive negotiations frustrates the rights of workers and denies settlements within a reasonable time frame. The problems surrounding these excessive delays have little to do with the RLA, but rather with the manner in which the NMB administers the process. By failing to change the endless cycle of delay in rail bargaining, the NMB is denying basic due process. In other words, justice delayed is justice denied.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to truly honor America’s transportation workers by helping to make them safe on their jobs and secure in their contracts.

BURMA

HON. MARK E. SOUDER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, this week, the military dictators in Burma opened a “constitutional convention” whose purported aim is to establish democracy in Burma. Anyone who has followed the situation in Burma knows that the brutal dictators of the State Peace and Democracy Council (SPDC) are the last people who should be guiding the democratic process.

While on the one hand, the SPDC talks of democracy and peace among Burma’s ethnic and political groups, it continues to terrorize these same groups, impress people into forced labor for the military, and imprison those working for democratic change. This constitutional convention is a deception designed to give the perception of democracy while maintaining maximum military control.

While the SPDC organizes its constitutional convention, the legal and duly elected leader of Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest. Nearly one year ago, the SPDC engineered an unprovoked attack on Aung San Suu Kyi’s motorcade as she traveled throughout Burma spreading her message of freedom and democracy. In the aftermath of the attack, she was taken into custody for her own safety—at least that is what the Burmese military wants us to believe.

Wherever she goes crowds gather to hear her message. Despite the danger of attending these rallies, the Burmese people do not care. Countless Burmese of all ethnic persuasions look to Aung San Suu Kyi as the very heart and soul of the Burmese democracy movement. The credibility and charisma of Aung San Suu Kyi cannot be denied; it cannot be sold; it cannot be bought. It comes only from standing up for what is right.

To be sure, the movement is bigger than one person, but Aung San Suu Kyi has led the forces of democracy in Burma for many years. On many occasions, she could have left Burma behind, but at great personal sacrifice, she has remained. She provides a shining ex-

ample of standing tall and standing firm in the face of relentless opposition and hardship. And although she has been in prison or under house arrest for 9 of the last 15 years, her commitment to freedom, democracy, and a better life in Burma has never wavered and never faltered. She is the public face of thousands of men, women, and children who have suffered unspeakably harsh conditions and who remain prisoners in their own country.

As leader of the National League for Democracy, it would seem natural that Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD Vice Chairman Tin Oo, who is also in the hands of Burma’s merciless thugs, would attend the convention. Shamefully, the SPDC has refused to release either freedom fighter before, during, or after the convention.

Equally regrettable is that the SPDC has refused to allow NLD offices to reopen around the country. The SPDC has also failed to clarify procedures of discussion and has limited the parameters for discussion. The convention is being held in grim isolation with limited access by outside observers. In short, the SPDC is so tightly controlling the convention that it would seem that the participants can only rubber stamp the SPDC’s agenda. That is not democracy; that is dictatorship.

The National League for Democracy is boycotting the convention, and I support that decision. Participation in such an obvious fraud can only undermine all for which the NLD is working.

Democracy in Burma is a goal that cannot be compromised. The United States believes in that goal. American sanctions on Burma have had a profoundly positive impact over the last year. Reports coming from inside Burma and from groups knowledgeable about the situation in that country have praised the tough stance the United States has taken against the dictatorship in Rangoon.

Our tough stance is in danger of faltering unless the sanctions are renewed during this Congress. H.J. Res. 95, which has 46 bipartisan co-sponsors, approves the renewal of American sanctions and show our continuing commitment to freedom, liberty, and emancipation from tyranny. I urge all of my colleagues to fight for the passage of this important resolution.

If the daylight of freedom feels like it’s a long way off, it will be even longer unless the United States stands side by side with Aung San Suu Kyi, the NLD, and the people of Burma struggling under the heavy yoke of oppression and cruelty.

HONORING THE SPIRIT OF CUBAN
FREEDOM

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, 102 years ago, Cuba achieved its hard-fought independence from the tyranny of Spanish imperialism. This moment of triumph and relief ushered in a new era of freedom, a republican age. The ideals of self-government had trumped despotic rule, and all were captivated by the promise of enduring liberty. May 20, 1902 immediately assumed a profound significance for the Cuban nation, melding a fierce

passion for independence with a zeal for democracy. Indeed, May 20, paralleling America's own 4th of July, celebrates the same democratic fervor that Americans fondly recall whenever we reflect on our own sorely won freedom.

Unfortunately, the promise of a lasting and viable democracy would never be fully realized in Cuba. As we know all too well, the veil of "freedom" Fidel Castro promised with his Revolution soon descended into one of the worst tyrannies in modern history. July 26, a date sanctified by Castro as a symbol of his own political triumph, replaced May 20 as the new national holiday, wiping away all memories of democratic hope.

The Cuban people watched in stunned silence as they witnessed the dismantling of their republic and the institution of Marxist-Leninist totalitarianism. Soon the Soviet juggernaut had extended its iron fist across the ocean, marking the dawn of crushing religious, political, and artistic repression and the emergence of a culture of fear, theft, stagnation, and moral bankruptcy. After suffering countless state-sanctioned crimes throughout the decades, the indomitable will and courage of the Cuban people keep the hope of freedom and democratic change alive as an achievable goal.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly serve the cause of democracy as a United States Congresswoman, and continue the fight against the Castro regime and the oppression of the Cuban people. Ever cognizant of Cuba's plight, I feel compelled to call this oppression to your attention this day, May 20, 2004, a day representing freedom, and reminding us all of the tyranny that has usurped freedom.

Mr. Speaker, this 20th of May, liberty has once again eluded the Cuban people. Yet, I know that soon May 20th will once again stand as an affirmation of Cuban democracy, as a new birth of freedom, as a celebration of victory over dictatorship. Positive change will no doubt come, and we work toward it every day. I unite my thoughts and prayers with the Cuban people, and ask them to believe: a true 20th of May celebration is on the horizon—Cuba will once again be free.

TRIBUTE TO PRIVATE FIRST CLASS JESSE BURYJ

HON. RALPH REGULA

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a dedicated soldier and citizen from my district in Ohio who gave his life defending our country. Private First Class Jesse Buryj (pronounced booty) died protecting a U.S. Army checkpoint in Iraq.

A graduate from McKinley High School in Canton, Ohio, he was a member of the marching band all four years and an outstanding citizen to his community. Growing up he served as a member of the Canton City Police Youth Corps with the lifelong dream of becoming a police officer in his hometown. Upon learning the age requirement to become a police officer was twenty-one years, he decided to join the army to serve his country until he could join the police force.

Pfc. Jesse Buryj served as a Military Police Officer for the Army and displayed great cour-

age and dedication during his tour of duty. He died saving the lives of three of his comrades in Karbala, Iraq. He will be remembered as a hero to those men in Iraq and to all who knew him.

I would like to extend my deepest sympathy to his mother, father, sister, wife and all of his family and friends who are now mourning the loss of his life.

I pray for the safe return of all of our servicemen and women and thank them for the sacrifice they make every day defending our country.

HONORING COLONEL DEAN E. DETAR USAF (RET.) FOR HIS HEROISM AND LEADERSHIP

HON. KAY GRANGER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor retired U.S. Air Force Colonel Dean E. DeTar of Azle, Texas, for his combat heroism in Vietnam, and his leadership as National Commander of the Legion of Valor for the year 2003–2004.

The Legion of Valor of the United States of America, Inc. traces its heritage to the founding of the Medal of Honor Legion in 1890 by Medal of Honor recipients from the Civil War. In later years, recipients of the Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, and Air Force Cross were made eligible for this elite organization, and those medals were authorized by Congress for extraordinary heroism in combat against enemy forces.

COL DeTar received the Air Force Cross for his extraordinary heroism in Vietnam on March 21, 1970, while leading a force of twenty-nine aircraft against one of the most heavily defended enemy locations in Southeast Asia to successfully rescue a downed airman.

COL DeTar's other U.S. decorations include the Silver Star; Legion of Merit; Distinguished Flying Cross with five oak leaf clusters; Air Medal with fifteen oak leaf clusters; Purple Heart Medal; and Air Force Commendation Medal, plus numerous USAF service medals and skill badges; and foreign decorations. COL DeTar will conclude his term of office as National Commander of the Legion of Valor by presiding over that distinguished organization's 2004 annual meeting to be held in Fort Worth, May 19–23.

Mr. Speaker, it is my great honor to commend COL Dean E. DeTar to my colleagues for his outstanding patriotism during his exemplary military career which included combat heroism in Vietnam. Since his retirement from active duty, he has shown devotion to the membership of the Legion of Valor and leadership as National Commander during the past year.

HONORING COLONEL FRANK S. VAJDA, MASON DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS MAN OF THE YEAR

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Colonel Frank S. Vajda on winning the Mason District Council of Civic Associations' Man of the Year award. This special honor is truly well-deserved.

Colonel Vajda first relocated to Fairfax County following his retirement from the United States Air Force after 28 years. He quickly became active in both volunteer and community activities, demonstrating a strong commitment to improving Fairfax County. Currently a member of the Court of Camelot Civic Association, Colonel Vajda has also served the organization as president. Moreover, Colonel Vajda founded and continues to orchestrate Camelot's annual holiday charity fund drive in support of the Children's Hospital.

With community safety as a top priority, Colonel Vajda has served on the Camelot Neighborhood Watch Group for the past 15 years. As the organization's current coordinator, Colonel Vajda has tirelessly upheld the highest standards of care in the nation's oldest continuously active watch group. Furthermore, he organized and promoted the first park watch group at Pine Ridge, a local neighborhood park. Stemming from Mr. Vajda's efforts, the Park Authority, the Fairfax County Police, and the Rose Purple have effectively established the county-wide PARKWATCH system.

Since 1997, Colonel Vajda has notably contributed to the Friends of Mason District Park as a member of the Steering Committee. His other efforts include acting as a park volunteer for the Mason District Park Festival, the Spring Egg Hunt, and the Spotlight by Starlight summer concert series. Colonel Vajda's actions have ensured that all of these events were carried out in a safe and secure environment.

In 1998, Colonel Vajda was selected as the Mason District Representative to the Public Safety and Park Bond Referendum Committee. On this committee, his duties included speaking commitments informing county voters as to the purpose of the bonds during many speaking commitments. In 2001, Colonel Vajda extended the scope of responsibilities upon his appointment to the Park Authority Board. He continues to maintain the highest standards of service and dedication to this group.

Throughout his accomplished career of service, Colonel Vajda has received numerous awards including the 1998 Elly Doyle Park Service Award on the Pine Ridge Park Green Team.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Colonel Vajda for his extensive service to the Mason District. His contributions and efforts are much appreciated and greatly admired. I call upon my colleagues to join me in congratulating Colonel Vajda on his award and in wishing him the best of luck in all future endeavors.