

to war, is failing in helping men and women in uniform when they get out of war.

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the Special Order time of the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE).

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

There was no objection.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

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

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I come from the Sunshine State of Florida, and I rise tonight to shed a little sunshine, speak out some truth regarding the facts on stem cell research and specifically President Bush's position on stem cell research. And I would like to highlight some of the inaccuracies, misstatements and lack of candor that is coming from presidential candidate JOHN KERRY.

Senator KERRY's statements are notable for their sweeping inaccuracy. And as a physician who has formerly and still does take care of patients suffering from diseases like Alzheimer's and diabetes mellitus, I am very concerned that these statements are creating a false hope on the part of many people who suffer from these conditions. And, further, I am very disturbed by the fact that it appears as though the Senator is trying to exploit their suffering for his own personal political gain.

Senator KERRY has repeatedly stated that he intends to lift the Bush ban on stem cell research. What he does not tell us is that there is no Bush ban on stem cell research. Indeed, just this past year, under the Bush administration, some \$300 million has been spent on adult stem cell research, and on embryonic stem cell research, there has been about \$35 million spent. The facts are simple, and they are basically this: This body, the Congress of the United States, passed a ban on Federal dollars being used for research that involves the destruction of a human embryo.

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Interestingly, Senator KERRY has voted for that, it is in the Labor, Health and Human Services bill, and he has voted for it I understand repeatedly; and that is where the ban is. It is actually in a bill this body passed and that Presidential candidate JOHN KERRY actually voted for. He is now criticizing President Bush for something that he actually voted for.

So what is the truth? What is really going on? Well, this body voted for no funding on any research that involves the destruction of a human embryo.

When you do embryonic stem cell research in humans, you have to destroy a human embryo in order to do that research. You have to take stem cells out of that embryo and, in the process of doing that, you destroy it. This is not illegal in the United States. It is perfectly legal to do it. The debate is exclusively over Federal funding of it.

Now, what President Clinton did is he played a very clever game around the intent of the law. He allowed these embryos to be destroyed in outside labs, and then the embryonic stem cells were shipped over to the NIH and he allowed Federal funding to be used for that.

I, along with others, felt that President Clinton was violating the law when he was doing that. And we asked him to stop, and he did not. Ultimately, George Bush came into office, and this was one of the first significant biomedical issues that the Bush administration had to wrestle with, and the decision was made that they would stop doing that. They would essentially stop being complicit in violation of the law and they would comply with the law.

So what is exactly the controversy here, you might say? Stem cell research, embryo stem cell research, what exactly is going on is very, very simple. We have been using adult stem cells, and adult stem cells are stem cells from our own bodies, in treating people with diseases for years and years and years and years.

I have in this chart next to me on my left an example of a person who had bad rheumatoid arthritis, and this is something we call a rheumatoid nodule. They were treated with adult stem cells, and you can see in this photo that nodule clears up, the rheumatoid arthritis goes away.

This is another chart of the same person. It may be a little bit hard to see, but this is before the treatment, the joints were very inflamed and red. You can see a nodule here on the thumb. Then after an adult stem cell treatment, it all clears up.

There are some people who feel that these embryonic stem cells will be better at this kind of treatment, but it has never been done. Nobody has ever taken an embryonic stem cell and treated a human being for anything.

What I believe Senator KERRY wants is he wants Federal dollars to be used for embryonic stem cell research in humans, even though it has never even been successfully done in animals. I think this is the wrong thing to do, and I think Mr. KERRY needs to retract some of these misstatements that he has been making.

GREAT VICTORY FOR FARM LABOR ORGANIZING COMMITTEE IN REACHING LABOR AGREEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio

(Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to speak this evening on behalf of the people of our congressional district in Ohio. All Members like to rise when something really significant has happened, and I come from a part of America, northern Ohio, that has always fought for the betterment of the working conditions of people, across our region, across our State, across our country, and indeed across the world.

This past week, and I will place the article in the RECORD, something truly historic has occurred, something that deserves mention in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of our Nation, and that is the great victory by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee of Northwest Ohio and its magnificent leader, Baldemar Velasquez, in achieving the first labor agreement on behalf of thousands and thousands of migrant workers across this continent, for the first time giving them the ability to earn a decent wage, to have decent working conditions, and to contract for their labor, to begin to get rid of the corruption that surrounds individuals who move around this continent, exploiting people and forcing them to pay bounty if they want to go back to their nation, forcing them to pay a bounty if they want a job, and then ignore them, ignore their welfare when they are working with no rights at all.

Every year, 9 million people come to the United States of America, most of them illegally, to work in our fields, picking blueberries, cutting cabbage, working in meat plants, working in food processing facilities with absolutely everybody sort of closing their eyes to their welfare, everybody making money off their backs, and yet those workers having no standing.

This past week, through this incredible agreement, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee has finally given the most exploited people on this continent the first platform to stand on. I could not be prouder to represent any group of people than this group.

I can remember as a young college graduate coming back to my community in Ohio and wearing a button that said FLOC, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, and it had the words "viva la causa," long live the cause. Indeed the cause has finally been victorious across this great continent.

This contract that the workers have gotten will cover over 8,000 workers, dozens of growers, and hopefully begin to ameliorate the terrible conditions forced on workers on this continent because of NAFTA, all that came before it and the worsening conditions that came after, as millions of Mexican farmers were thrown off their land and became a mobile group of people across this continent with no place to live, no decent wages, coming into our market, trafficked by among the most despicable people that have ever lived.

I am just so proud of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee. This is the first

contract for guest workers in our Nation's history, in Mexico's history, and, indeed, in Latin America's history.

What will happen is that workers will receive a decent wage, not terrific for working in the hot sun 12 hours a day, \$8.06 an hour, for the backbreaking work they do. It has been covered in articles in the Toledo Blade which reported this front page story: "Pact to affect 8,000 migrants."

The pact was signed in North Carolina after a several-year boycott of the second-largest pickle company in our country called Mt. Olive Pickle. It talks about FLOC's 35 years of struggle to provide migrant workers with better working conditions and fair wages. Initially, the contracts were signed locally in our region of Ohio with companies like Campbell's Soup and Vlasic Pickle, but finally it has expanded to other parts of the country where workers will now be paid \$8.06 an hour, a federally set minimum wage rate for what are called H2-A workers, the workers that do come into our country. But again I say, so many are illegally trafficked by unscrupulous labor barons they call "coyotes." And workers could earn up to \$12 an hour on piecework. So it provides for people who have the ability to work harder to be paid more.

Undocumented workers who are under control of unscrupulous smugglers and farm labor contractors, this provides the ability, finally, to get rid of those terrible, terrible individuals.

Mr. Speaker, I could not be prouder than to come to this floor this evening and congratulate Baldemar Velasquez and the Farm Labor Organizing Committee for building a better world.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the article from the Toledo Blade.

PACT TO AFFECT 8,000 MIGRANTS

(By Jon Chavez)

In what would be its first major organizing victory outside Ohio and Michigan, the Toledo-based Farm Labor Organizing Committee today is expected to sign a three-way labor agreement in North Carolina with Mt. Olive Pickle Co. Inc., which has been the subject of a FLOC boycott since 1999.

At a ceremony in Raleigh, N.C., this morning, FLOC officials said they will sign a three-year labor pact with the North Carolina Growers Association, of Vass, N.C., which represents about 1,050 farms that raise 27 different crops ranging from cucumbers to tobacco, and a related agreement with Mt. Olive.

It's a marked change in business in mostly nonunion North Carolina. The contracts will cover the most union workers in the state, and FLOC will be its largest labor organization.

Covered by the agreements will be nearly 8,000 migrant workers who travel from Mexico to North Carolina, numbers that will more than double FLOC's membership rolls.

Baldemar Velasquez, president of FLOC, was ecstatic yesterday. "I knew eventually they would have to do something. I just never knew the timing would be this soon," he told The Blade.

Lynn Williams, a spokesman for Mt. Olive, said the company would not comment until the contract is signed.

How individual farmers feel is unclear. They can choose to opt out of the association, which a party to the contract. But how those growers would be affected is uncertain.

The agreements cover migrants who harvest crops and work with visas issued under a U.S. Department of Labor program called H-2A. The growers association helps place H-2A workers at various farms as needed.

The pacts will provide the workers with specific wage rates for either hourly work or for how much is picked (depending on the crop), a formal procedure to address grievances, and third-party verification to ensure all parties are living up to the agreement.

FLOC was born in the fields of northwest Ohio nearly 35 years ago as a means to provide migrant workers with better working conditions and fair wages. Initially, it reached contracts with individual growers but became a formidable force in the industry when it reached an agreement in 1986 with Campbell Soup Co. and its subsidiary, Vlasic Pickle, and a group of growers to improve wages and working conditions.

The agreements in North Carolina follow a similar arrangement and similarly occurred after years of public boycotts and pressure tactics by the farm union.

In FLOC's agreement with Mt. Olive Pickle, the nation's second-largest pickle firm, the Mount Olive, N.C., company endorses the separate contract between the union and growers association and it provides economic incentives for the deal to occur.

Mr. Velasquez said that about 60 cucumber growers will get a 10 percent price increase for their crops they supply to Mt. Olive. That increase will be passed along in the form of wage increases for the 800 to 1,000 workers who work for those growers.

Those workers are paid \$8.06 an hour, a federally set minimum wage rate for H-2A workers. Under the new pact, which raises pay rates, workers could earn up to \$12 an hour. "It depends, but a good picker could earn that," Mr. Velasquez said.

Growers do not have to participate in the contract. However, those who remain in the association will be covered by the agreement and receive the crop price increases, said Stan Eury, director of the growers association.

The agreements do not prohibit farmers who are not part of the association from supplying Mt. Olive Pickle. At least a few suppliers now do not belong to the association.

David Rose, a sweet-potato and tobacco farmer from Nashville, N.C., said there have been rumors for months that a farm labor contract was in the works. He declined to say how many farmers might leave the association.

Still, Mr. Rose, of JB Rose Farms Inc., said the labor agreements likely will have an impact on all farmers.

The key provisions of the contracts were not necessarily wages.

Workers frequently complained of abuses by growers but were fearful to report them because they might be blacklisted and later denied a work visa, Mr. Velasquez said. The agreements provide a list of worker rights, including a hiring seniority system that the union will administer through a work office to be set up in Mexico.

"The pact goes from Mexico all the way to Ohio, so that will eliminate debate around blacklisting of workers," Mr. Velasquez said. "They'll be union members by the time they enter the U.S."

For the growers, there is a formal grievance system and third-party inspections to verify compliance, which should protect the farmers' image if they are treating their workers right, he said.

"The worst part of it for them is the terrible negative image that comes with these

issues," the Toledo labor leader said. "They don't like the publicity."

In a statement, Mr. Eury agreed that credibility is important.

"Unfortunately the lines have been blurred between the treatment of H-2A foreign guest-workers and undocumented workers who are under control of unscrupulous smugglers and farm labor contractors," the statement said. "Our industry is continually judged as a whole by the misdeeds of a few."

The three parties began negotiating about six weeks ago at the behest of Mt. Olive. Mr. Velasquez said. The first hint became publicly known last month when FLOC said a large growers' association agreed to not meddle in the union's organizing activity.

After reaching agreement on key principles, details of the pact were worked out in about a week, Mr. Velasquez said.

Both Mt. Olive and the growers researched FLOC's previous labor agreements with growers for Campbell and Vlasic.

"They studied it and told us they could live with it," Mr. Velasquez said. "They had also called some growers in Ohio to see how it had worked up there. The growers gave them some positive feedback."

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

(Mr. SOUDER 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 gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

INFLUX OF WOUNDED STRAINS VA

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

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about a matter that is of very grave importance to the veterans of our country. I am referring to an article that was in The Washington Post this past Sunday. The article mentioned that thousands of U.S. troops are now returning to this country from Iraq and Afghanistan with physical injuries and mental health problems. They are encountering a VA benefit system that is already overburdened, and officials and veterans groups are concerned that the challenge could grow as this Nation remains at war.

Currently, we have had well over 1,000 of our soldiers killed in Iraq, and we have had 6,000 to 7,000 of our soldiers seriously injured. Many of those soldiers have lost limbs, they have been blinded, they have sustained brain injuries and terrible disfigurements. Many of those injuries are occurring as the result of roadside bombs which explode as these soldiers are out on patrol.

The disability benefits and health care system, as noted in The Washington Post article, this system that