

cheating. This is about Halliburton. It is not about anybody else.

When a company says they are feeding 42,000 soldiers and being paid for it by the U.S. Government and it ends up they are only feeding 14,000 soldiers a day, and 28,000 meals are being paid for that are not being fed, it seems to me there ought to be aggressive oversight hearings to figure out what is going on, who is cheating the Government. Yet there is dead silence.

I come from a really small town, about 300 people. We have one small little cafe right in the middle of Main Street. My guess is, if somebody got a check for 4 meals that were never served, they would sure know that, and the same goes for 14 meals, or 40 meals. It would appropriately be a big deal in my hometown. But 28,000 meals that are billed but were not delivered to U.S. troops? In my little town, they would call that cheating and fraud. Yet there is dead silence with respect to the oversight responsibility we ought to have as a Congress to find out what is happening, why, and who is responsible.

Mr. President, I will have more to say about this as well, and we intend to continue to hold oversight hearings as well in the Democratic Policy Committee.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, we are in morning business, as I understand it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. THOMAS. I thank the Chair.

ISSUES BEFORE CONGRESS

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I want to take a couple minutes as we come to the close of this congressional session and soon will be entering into a new one. It seems to me we have some great challenges before us, of course, as is always the case. However, in this instance, we have perhaps some more defined issues than normal. There are lots of issues before us, of course.

There are always challenging issues before the Congress. Sometimes they are less well defined, but this time hopefully we can come together on issues we have talked about, trying to find answers to questions that are important to this country.

It seems to me there are several issues that are pretty well defined. I hope we can find, on both sides of the aisle and both sides of the Capitol, some solutions or at least move toward some solutions that are very important to us.

In doing that, it seems to me—and I will comment on it a little later—we have to take a long look at the kinds of things we deal with here to try to make some kind of an analysis as to the issues that are appropriate for the Congress to deal with.

There are lots of interesting things going on, of course, but we find our-

selves in the position of dealing with lots of things that I think quite easily could be defined as a role for some other Government level or indeed for the private sector to deal with.

We find ourselves dealing with a good many of those things that are interesting. I was thinking a while back about the activity we had with respect to—I don't remember what it was—\$15 million to help kids play tennis. Well, playing tennis is a great thing, and helping kids to play tennis is a great thing, but is that a congressional activity, I wonder.

I have some concerns from time to time, but there are issues we clearly have to face up to. One of them is health care and the cost of health care throughout the country. Particularly, I am aware of the issues of health care in my State of Wyoming, as is the Presiding Officer, which include the fact that the costs of health care are beginning to limit access to one of the best health care systems in the world.

Well, we have the best health care in the world, but if people cannot utilize it and are not able to take advantage of it, then, of course, we have to do something. The cost of health insurance, which is related to the cost of health care, more and more is one of those issues we need to deal with nationwide. It is not an easy issue.

One of the obvious problems is the uninsured. Approximately 40 million are uninsured. Quite often the costs, when the uninsured receive health care, have to be shifted to those who have insurance, and that lifts the price. The same is true of hospitals and emergencies and Medicare and Medicaid, which actually pay less than the cost, quite often, so that cost again is shifted. It is particularly difficult for the families of the self-employed. In our case, many rural ranchers and farmers pay very high prices to carry insurance for their families. That is one we clearly need to work on. I don't suppose we will find the total solution all at once. We are moving forward in Medicare, but this goes beyond Medicare. This goes to health care in general. We are going to have to do some things there, I am sure.

Energy, of course, continues to be an issue that we have sort of avoided over the last couple years. I guess we have the idea that all you have to do is turn the light on or get in the car and go to the station and everything is going to be all right. The fact is, demand is exceeding production in many of these areas, and we are going to have to do something about it. I am hopeful we can at least begin with an energy policy—and we have tried a number of times—that looks ahead for 15 years or 20 years and says here is what we will have to do, here is where we want to be. And to be there, we have to do other things.

Unfortunately, in this body we haven't been able to pass a policy. I have never understood why. Some areas, such as New England, generally

have been cold on it, and they don't even have production. Production has to come from somewhere else, but there is no interest in that. We need to talk about alternative sources. We need to talk about renewables, efficiency, and conservation of energy, as well as domestic production. We find ourselves with a 60-percent dependence on imported oil, much of which comes from the Middle East, which is unsettled. That is a tough thing. I hope we can get moving on that.

Social Security is a hard one. The President has talked a great deal about it. I am sure there will be some things done here. But clearly there has to be something done for the future. It is true that over the next few years things won't change very much. When Social Security was begun, I believe there were 28 people working for every beneficiary. Now it is about three people working for every beneficiary. Obviously the system that we started with is not going to be able to continue to be the kind of system that we need. It is going to be hard. We will have to get together.

On the highway bill, nothing is more important to us than having highways. We haven't really done that in terms of the 6 years looking out. It is important because the highway departments in the various States do almost all their work by contracting, and they have difficulty contracting if they don't know what their income is going to be over a period of time.

Obviously, we have to continue our fight on terrorism until that job is done, whether it is here or in Iraq, wherever. We will do that, I am sure.

However, now we are faced with a deficit, a legitimate deficit. When you have emergencies in your business or in your family, you spend more than you would normally spend. That is what has happened in the last 4 years. It hasn't been normal. We had September 11. We had a turnaround in the economy. We had terrorism. We had Iraq. Now it is more important. I am pleased in the last year in our omnibus bill, the increase in discretionary spending was only about 1 percent. That is good. We will have to continue to do that.

I had a thick book outlining all the Federal programs we have, a tremendous number of Federal programs. I hope we can take an analysis of those from time to time and see if programs that were started 10 years ago are still as viable as they were at that time. I wish we had programs that ended in a few years so that there would be time to evaluate and see what is getting done.

I hope we can work on some of these things and that we can do a little sorting. I hope we don't become part of that group which thinks that Government action is the only answer to problems in the world. I hope we don't think the Congress has to get involved in every issue that is there. Many of them can be better done in the private

sector and by local governments. I know you get requests from everyone to do something, but we need to control our activities and control our spending and yet do the things that are there that need to be done.

We have a great challenge and a great opportunity. Hopefully, we will be away for a year or so from the real intense politics in this body. The election is over. We might consider that for a year or so and really move ahead on those things that have merit rather than political impact.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Mr. THOMAS assumed the chair.)

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CHAMBLISS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONDEMNING REPRESSION OF THE IRANIAN BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY AND CALLING FOR EMANCIPATION OF IRANIAN BAHÁ'IS

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from further consideration of S. Con. Res. 78 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 78) condemning the repression of the Iranian Bahá'í community and calling for the emancipation of Iranian Bahá'ís.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment to the concurrent resolution be agreed to, the concurrent resolution, as amended, be agreed to, the amendment to the preamble be agreed to, the preamble, as amended, be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements relating to this measure be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 4082) was agreed to, as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 4082

(Purpose: To amend the resolution to update and reflect current events)

Beginning with page 5, line 22, strike all through page 6, line 7, and insert the following:

“(A) assert the concerns of the United States Government regarding violations by the Iranian Government of the rights of Iranian citizens, including members of the Bahá'í community;”.

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 78), as amended, was agreed to.

The amendment (No. 4083) was agreed to, as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 4083

(Purpose: To update the preamble to reflect current events)

Insert after the fourth whereas clause the following:

“Whereas Iranian authorities destroyed a Bahá'í holy site, the tomb of Quddus, in February 2004, and the historic house of the father of the founder of the Bahá'í faith in June 2004, marking the first time in 25 years that Bahá'í sites have been destroyed;”.

Strike the tenth whereas clause that begins “Whereas as of June 2003” and insert the following:

“Whereas as of November 2004, one Bahá'í remains in an Iranian prison for converting from Islam to the Bahá'í faith in 1995;”.

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to. The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. CON. RES. 78

Whereas in 1982, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, and 2000, Congress, by concurrent resolution, declared that it holds the Government of Iran responsible for upholding the rights of all Iranian nationals, including members of the Bahá'í Faith;

Whereas in those resolutions and in numerous other appeals, Congress has deplored the religious persecution by the Government of Iran of the Bahá'í community and has condemned the execution by Iran of more than 200 Bahá'ís and the disruptive imprisonment of thousands of others solely on account of their religious beliefs;

Whereas Iranian Bahá'ís are not permitted to elect their leaders, assemble or organize as a community, operate religious schools, or conduct other religious community activities that are guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 217(A)(III) of December 10, 1948;

Whereas the continued denial of Bahá'í property rights by the Iranian Government is demonstrated by the confiscation by the Iranian Government of a multitude of Bahá'í community and private properties;

Whereas Iranian authorities destroyed a Bahá'í holy site, the tomb of Quddus, in February 2004, and the historic house of the father of the founder of the Bahá'í faith in June 2004, marking the first time in 25 years that Bahá'í sites have been destroyed;

Whereas the Government of Iran continues to deny individual Bahá'ís access to higher education and government employment, in addition to denying recognition and religious rights to the Bahá'í community;

Whereas because Bahá'ís have been banned from teaching and studying at Iranian universities since the Islamic Revolution, Bahá'ís established the Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education, or Bahá'í Open University, to provide educational opportunities to Bahá'í youth using volunteer faculty and a network of classrooms, libraries, and laboratories in private homes and buildings throughout Iran;

Whereas in September and October of 1998, officers of the Ministry of Information, the intelligence agency of the Iranian Government, arrested 36 faculty members of the Open University;

Whereas on July 19, 2002, Iranian Revolutionary Guards systematically disrupted student qualifying examinations for the Open University in 9 different districts by videotaping the proceedings, questioning the students, and confiscating examination papers and Bahá'í books;

Whereas the use of arbitrary arrests, suspended sentences, and short-term detentions against the Iranian Bahá'ís have become widespread;

Whereas as of November 2004, one Bahá'í remains in an Iranian prison for converting from Islam to the Bahá'í faith in 1995;

Whereas on October 10, 2003, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2003 to Shirin Ebadi for her efforts involving democracy and human rights, including advocating equal rights for the Bahá'í community in Iran;

Whereas the conclusions contained in the report of October 13, 2003, by the General Affairs and External Relations Council of the European Union, conveyed the continuing concern of the European Union about the violations of the Bahá'ís' right to freedom of religion, and urged the Iranian Government to comply with both the recommendations made in June 2003 by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and with the recommendations made in August 2003 by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination concerning injustice, particularly in relation to education, property rights, and employment; and

Whereas in the 2003 General Affairs and External Relations Council report, the European Union urged the Government of Iran to expedite reform on many fronts, while recognizing the meetings held in 2003 and the planned meetings that have been welcomed by the Government of Iran, to be an important step toward progress: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), that Congress—

(1) continues to hold the Government of Iran responsible for upholding all the rights of its nationals, including members of the Bahá'í community, in a manner consistent with Iran's obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 217(A)(III) of December 10, 1984, and other international agreements guaranteeing the civil and political rights of Iranian citizens;

(2) condemns the repressive anti-Bahá'í policies and actions of the Government of Iran, including the denial of legal recognition to the Bahá'í community and the basic rights to organize, elect leaders, educate youth, and conduct the normal activities of a law-abiding religious community;

(3) expresses concern that individual Bahá'ís continue to suffer from severely repressive and discriminatory government actions, solely on account of their religion;

(4) urges the Government of Iran to permit Bahá'í students to attend Iranian universities and Bahá'í faculty to teach at Iranian universities, to return the property confiscated from the Bahá'í Open University, and to permit the Open University to continue to function;

(5) urges the Government of Iran to implement fully the conclusions and recommendations on the emancipation of the Iranian Bahá'í community made by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and also to comply with the recommendations made in August 2003 by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination;

(6) urges the Government of Iran to extend to the Bahá'í community the rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 217(A)(III) of December 10, 1984, and other international covenants of human rights, including the freedoms of thought, conscience, and religion, and equal protection of the law;

(7) calls upon the President to continue to—