knew him. For the past decade, Emmett Burke worked for the Cook County Forest Preserve Police Department. He started in patrol, then was promoted to the canine and search and rescue units, and eventually served as the deputy chief of the police department. Emmett Burke was known for his diligence, his commitment, and his excellence in the field of law enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, I personally understand the undescribable sadness that occurs when a father has to bury his son. It has been nearly 5 years since I was faced with that same difficult reality. This is why I am able to stand today and encourage Alderman Burke to counter the hurt, pain, and sorrow with strong support from family and friends, and fervent prayers to God, who is the author and finisher of our faith.

And finally, I can assure the Burke family that the present agony felt from the loss of a loved one can only be replaced with the everlasting love and peace of God, the father, Jesus the son, and the Holy Spirit.

So, I rise today to extend my deepest sympathy to the Burke family, my prayers are with you, and know that in our time of mourning, God has promised to comfort us.

THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN VIETNAM

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 4, 2004

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, President Bush and his Administration have begun a new relationship with the communist regime in Vietnam. Recently, the Vietnamese Defense Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister traveled to Washington for historic visits with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Secretary of State Colin Powell. Shortly thereafter, the U.S.S. Vandegrift entered the port of Ho Chi Minh City, the first U.S. warship to visit Vietnam since the end of the Vietnam War nearly three decades ago.

This newly forged friendship between the Bush administration and the communist regime in Vietnam comes amidst continuous reports of human rights violations committed by the Vietnamese government.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom reports that almost forty Buddhist monks and lay leaders are in prison, under house arrest, or in re-education camps, as well as twenty Hmong Protestants and at least ten Catholic priests in detention.

Freedom of speech in Vietnam is just as bad. According to a report by the Campaign for Freedom of Expression and Information in Vietnam, Vietnam's 500-plus newspapers and magazines are state-owned and vigorously censored while 2,000 of Vietnam's 5,000 websites are currently blocked for disseminating messages the state has deemed ''subversive'' or ''reactionary.'' Worse yet is the case of a Vietnamese writer and journalist imprisoned just after he submitted written testimony to a Congressional Members' briefing that I sponsored.

Yet, every time I write the State Department, I get the same response, but no action, just as the letter I am submitting for the RECORD today. The State Department tells me, in their words, ''we share your serious concern'' and are ''deeply troubled by the restrictions that the Government of Vietnam places on its citizens' freedom of expression, as well as other human rights.'' They tell me that ''[p]romoting human rights is a priority in our bilateral relations with Vietnam.''

If promoting human rights in Vietnam really is a priority for the Bush Administration, why are they having friendly meetings with high-level Vietnamese officials without initially demanding protection of human rights?

Why is the Bush Administration not, instead, condemning the communist regime in Vietnam for issuing a statement that attacks a human rights resolution this body passed with an overwhelming vote of 409–13? That Vietnamese statement, which I submit for the RECORD today, alleges that our Congressional resolution contains ''false'' and ''inaccurate'' information. Yet, our resolution is backed by reports from various respected human rights organizations, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and the U.S. State Department. Instead of condemning the reckless statement from Vietnam, the Bush Administration is embracing a communist regime it admits is a human rights violator.

The Bush Administration's hypocrisy and apathetic attitude towards human rights is unacceptable. As long as the people of Vietnam are oppressed, abused, and imprisoned, our President should not get friendly with a communist regime without first demanding protection of human rights.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, DC, January 13, 2004.

Hon. ZOE LOFGREN,
House of Representatives.

DEAR MS. LOFGREN: This is in response to your December 30, 2003 letter to Secretary Powell concerning detained dissident Mr. Nguyen Vu Binh in Vietnam. We share your serious concern over his recent sentence and ongoing detention.

The Department strongly condemned the harsh sentence given to Binh on December 30, 2003. No individual should be imprisoned for the peaceful expression of his views. The sentencing of Binh clearly violates international standards for the protection of human rights, including freedom of expression. The U.S. Embassy sent an officer to the court, but he was unable to gain access to the trial, despite repeated oral and written requests to the Vietnamese Government.

We are deeply troubled by the restrictions that the Government of Vietnam places on its citizens' freedom of expression, as well as other human rights. These restrictions violate international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that Vietnam has ratified. We consistently urge the Government of Vietnam to adhere to its international obligations to protect the human rights of its citizens. The Government of Vietnam should release Mr. Binh and all others detained or imprisoned for the peaceful expression of their views.

Promoting human rights is a priority in our bilateral relations with Vietnam. We will continue to press the Government of Vietnam to take steps to improve its human rights record.

Let me assure you that our efforts to promote human rights and freedom in Vietnam continue undiminished. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL C. POLT,
Acting Assistant Secretary,
Legislative Affairs.

EMBASSY OF VIETNAM,
Washington, DC, November 28, 2003.

Hon. ZOE LOFGREN,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

The Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States of America presents its compliments to the Office of the Honorable Zoe Lofgren and has the honor to forward herewith the faxed copy of the Statement of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam with regard to passing by the US House of Representatives of H. Res. 427.

The Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the Honorable Zoe Lofgren the assurances of its consideration.

STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

The National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam altogether rejects H. Res. 427 Resolution adopted on 19th November 2003 by the United States House of Representatives and the Resolution adopted on 20th November 2003 by the European Parliament on the so-called ''situation of religious freedom in Vietnam''. These wrongful, negative resolutions do not serve the relations between the United States and the European Union on the one hand and Vietnam on the other.

Alleging false, inaccurate information provided by a handful of extremist elements who take advantage of the mantle of religion and in pursuit of political goals, distort the founding history of the Buddhist Church of Vietnam after the reunification of the country these resolutions slander the policies and practice of religious freedom in Vietnam. Today's so-called ''United Buddhist Church of Vietnam'' is nothing but a grouping of individuals who are driven by personal ambition and political motives to act against the nation's interest. As a result of their blatant violation of the law and of their attempts to spur confrontation and sow division among the Buddhist followers, this grouping stands completely isolated from the Buddhist congregation and the national community of Vietnam.

Expressing the will of the Vietnamese people, the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam supports the consolidation and development of Vietnam's relations with the United States and the European Union on the basis of mutual respect for their respective independence and sovereignty, of non-interference into each other's internal affairs and of mutually beneficial cooperation on an equal footing.

In that spirit, the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam urges that the US House of Representatives and the European Parliament stop lending their support to actions that slander the actual situation of religion in Vietnam and undermine mutually beneficial cooperation with Vietnam. At the same time, the National Assembly of Vietnam consistently advocates the enhancement of mutual understanding and narrowing down of differences through dialogue with the US Congress and congressmen as well as with the European Parliament and its members, for the sake of the long-term interests of the nations concerned, and of peace, cooperation and development in the world.

Hanoi, 26 November, 2003.