

SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT THERE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED A CARIBBEAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

SPEECH OF

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 27, 2005

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 71, a resolution supporting the establishment of a Caribbean-American Heritage month. This resolution is admirable and deeply appreciated in its recognition and celebration of the Caribbean-American community and of the contributions that community has made to every sphere of American life.

The American spirit is a tapestry that weaves cultures together, one in which people of all traditions and walks of life convene to better protect and educate one another. The Caribbean-American people are an invaluable part of his tapestry, and their influence has stretched to every field of American society, culture and politics.

The State of Florida is especially indebted to the Caribbean-American community, enjoying one of the largest and most flourishing Caribbean-American populations in the nation. The contributions of this community to Florida's economy, educational system, politics and culture, and indeed to all areas of our society, are of the greatest importance to our state and to our country.

I am so privileged to represent people of virtually every single Caribbean heritage. From Lauderdale to Miramar to West Palm Beach to Oakland Park, I am honored to work on behalf of all of these communities and many more.

As early as the 17th Century, Caribbean men and women journeyed to find new lives in America. Our regions have endured similarly difficult pasts. We shared a struggle against slavery, we shared a fight for independence, and now we share the strong ties built on social equality and democratic government.

Mr. Speaker, the United States has been profoundly shaped by the achievements of its Caribbean-American citizens. Whether in technology, science, the military, fashion, politics, government, business, education or journalism, the achievements of Caribbean-Americans have been immense and invaluable.

Some of the most revered figures in American art have come from the Caribbean-American community: actors, musicians, politicians, authors, educators and so many others. All of them have played central roles in the cultural development of this country.

This resolution enjoys strong bipartisan support including mine because it is critical for this body to acknowledge and appreciate those who contribute to America's unique and highly respected culture. I am proud to lend my support to this most excellent resolution, I urge my colleagues to do the same.

MILITARY PERSONNEL FINANCIAL SERVICES PROTECTION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. DAVID SCOTT

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 27, 2005

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise in support of Title II of, H.R. 458 Military Personnel Financial Services Protection Act. Title II of this measure regulates lenders who target the military and safeguards our armed services personnel from unscrupulous consumer credit lending and collection practices.

Many lenders have developed sales campaigns to market directly to military personnel. A few unscrupulous agents have made misleading pitches to 'captive' audiences, by posing as counselors on veteran's benefits and soliciting soldiers while they were on duty. In some instances, lenders have garnished military personnel's wages or required them to agree to have their loan repaid through the allotment system. Title II of H.R. 458 would clarify that lenders cannot garnish a military salary or give the appearance that they are agents of the military.

Predatory lenders have contacted or threatened to contact the borrower's commanding officer in order to collect debt. In addition, some lenders have required borrowers to sign documents as a condition of obtaining the loan that purportedly waive their legal rights, including requiring the borrower to submit to mandatory arbitration of any dispute. H.R. 458 would prohibit a lender to contact a loan recipient's chain of command and the measure would ensure that the customer's rights are not waived.

Title II in H.R. 458 recognizes that many military personnel are not aware of their borrowing options or rights or how to manage their finances after taking out a loan. To remember this problem, under Title II, military lenders would be required to provide detailed disclosures prior to the consummation of a loan transaction.

Last year, as a member of the House Committee on Financial Services, I expressed concerns about unscrupulous military lenders in several hearings. Some of these reported scams occurred at Fort Benning in my state of Georgia and were made public through a series of articles in the New York Times.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Title II of H.R. 458 takes strong steps to ensure that our military men and women are not treated as second-class citizens when it comes to financial transactions and loans.

THE NEED FOR CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 12, 2005

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, today I come before this chamber to be heard on an issue of deep importance to US and Mexican relations. It is a concern that to many seems trivial but which in reality represents an important aspect of the cultural relationship and respect that exists between our two nations.

I speak of the stamp intending to honor the comic strip Mémín Pinguin. The decision to

draw attention and promote this character that would be recognized by those in the international community as racist is an act of gross insensitivity on the part of the Mexican government. In this global day and age, the Mexican authorities should have been aware of the negative international impact of this characterization of the Negro race in grotesque imagery associated with the vilest forms of racism. They should have realized that the depiction of a childish apelike cartoon intended to draw attention to racial stereotypes would be seen as racist. They should have understood that the postage stamp would be seen as a reflection of the beliefs of Mexico and that to pay honor to a character that would signal tolerance with racism is disgraceful.

While President Fox has defended this insulting portrayal as simply cultural differences, he must also understand the cultural message his government is sending to the rest of the world. Clearly, African-Americans and other African and Afro-descendant populations would see the uplifting of a black cartoon character, with monkey-like lips and head and a childish demeanor, as an attempt to malign them. At a time when the world is becoming increasingly interdependent, President Fox's government has decided to insult an entire race of humans—a race that has long suffered discrimination, insult, and abuse. Rather than highlight for the international community and the Mexican people a rich heritage of understanding and harmony, the Mexican government has chosen a symbol of offense and smear.

Yes, we should be aware of the cultural differences that exist between the people of our two countries, but that awareness requires efforts from both sides. In this Congress and past congresses, I and members of the Congressional Black Caucus have worked to erase the elements of racism that exist towards Mexicans, Hispanics, African-Americans, and Blacks. We have reached out in the spirit of cooperation and harmony to our friends in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to fight against discrimination and discord between our people. We have pursued policies and positions that call on our leaders to decry stereotypical comments that appeal to our most basic emotions. We have united to condemn characterizations and caricatures intended to offend, defame, or marginalize our people, our race, and our community.

In the last month alone, I have been joined by a number of my colleagues in supporting an resolution to draw attention to the challenges and struggles of Afro-descendant populations in Latin America and the Caribbean. We introduced this resolution because too often the international community and the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean ignore, marginalize, and dehumanize the descendants of the transatlantic slave trade. Throughout the region, Afro-descendant populations have the lowest standards of living, the highest rates of illiteracy, the poorest standards of health care, the smallest per capita incomes, and the least amount of access to the political, social, and economic levers of power and opportunity.

It was surprising to me that, the week after the House International Relations Committee favorably marked up this resolution to recognize and support Afro-Latino and Afro-Caribbean populations, the government of Mexico would issue a postal stamp honoring an

apelike depiction of Afro-Mexicans. It was deplorable that the Mexican government would produce stamps that would remind Americans—white and black—of the humiliation and degradation of Sambo and Aunt Jemima. It is insulting that President Fox would defend the publication of this stamp as an example of our cultural misunderstandings, despite the call of the *Asociacion Mexico Negro*—a Mexican-based group representing the interests of over 50,000 blacks—for the recall of the stamps.

This is not simply an example of cultural differences. Afro-Mexicans deplore the comparison of being described as apelike and childlike, just as much as African-Americans. To say that it is acceptable to depict an entire race of people in one's country as childish apes is to not understand the universal impact and role of race in this world.

At a time when members of Congress are trying to find amicable ways of bringing our two countries together, the actions of President Fox's government apparently are to draw a line between us. President Fox has ridiculed the hard work and efforts of African-Americans. He has rejected repeated invitations to dialogue with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. His government has issued stamps that not only insult the character of his own people, but also those of Afro-descendant populations in the United States, and throughout the Americas.

I am disappointed in these acts by my friends in the Mexican government and by President Fox. I hope that they will reach out once again to those with whom they have worked here in the United States and put aside these insulting and racist stamps. For us to achieve greater cultural sensitivity on the part of the United States and to obtain greater racial sensitivity in the Americas, it is important to have an equal awareness and effort on the part of our international allies.

RECOGNIZING THE CITY OF
POMPAÑO BEACH, FLORIDA

HON. E. CLAY SHAW, JR.

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 12, 2005

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the City of Pompano Beach, Florida, which has been named as one of only ten cities nationwide designated as a 2005 All-America City by the National Civic League. I have represented the City of Pompano Beach since coming to Congress in 1981, and I take special pride in this recognition of their achievements.

The City of Pompano Beach was recognized for two programs which impact the community's youth, and an affordable housing project.

The Pompano Beach Junior Lifeguard Program which began as a small part-time recreational swimming program has grown into an annual recreation and education program for children ages nine to seventeen. The program partners parents and local schools in promoting activities which develop healthy lifestyles, sportsmanship and self-esteem in the community's youth. Childhood obesity has also been targeted with parents reporting improved eating habits, weight loss and increased muscle mass in their children.

The Kidz-N-The-Hood Program is a weekly TV show produced and scripted by kids of all ages, income levels and ethnic backgrounds. Developed to counteract the often negative and gratuitous images children are too often exposed to on television, the program receives accolades from parents and educators who report more attentive students, improved test scores and reduced drop out rates. Supported by a diverse community group including AT&T Broadband, the South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Pompano Middle School, Broward County Sheriff's Office, and the Broward County Urban League, the program has reached thousands of children through participation and viewing opportunities.

Pinnacle Village, a new affordable rental community, replaces a failed HUD subsidized housing complex which stood as an eyesore and haven for crime in the neighborhood. Frustrated by a failed project which had undergone numerous attempts at rehabilitation for a period of years, the public and private sectors worked together to improve the living conditions for dozens of families. The result was Pinnacle Village—148 town houses with one to three bedrooms. This project not only meets the needs of the resident families, it has had a positive impact on the surrounding community.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to congratulate the residents, officials, and the staff of the City of Pompano Beach whose efforts on behalf of their city have earned the title of 2005 All-America City.

TO REPORT ON THE SUCCESSES
OF THE FOURTEENTH ANNUAL
SESSION OF THE ORGANIZATION
FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION
IN EUROPE'S PARLIAMEN-
TARY ASSEMBLY

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 12, 2005

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to report on the successes of the fourteenth annual session of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Parliamentary Assembly which convened in Washington, DC over the first five days of July. Over 800 parliamentarians and staff were in attendance, making it one of the largest assemblies in the Organization's history, and one of the most productive.

The theme of this year's session, "30 Years since Helsinki: Challenges Ahead" reminds us of the agreement that founded the OSCE, and the ideals which must guide us through the tests of the future. The Washington Declaration, a compendium of resolutions adopted at this year's session, is a testament to the excellent progress that has been made in central areas of social, economic, and human rights policy. The OSCE has maintained its position at the forefront of some of our world's most critical concerns; eradicating human trafficking, ensuring fair elections, combating social prejudice, and maintaining stable economic relationships between all nations.

Members of both branches of Congress play a central role in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Our delegation offered a resolution entitled "Combating involvement in trafficking

in human beings and sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces" that was adopted into the Washington Declaration. The practice of human trafficking is an affront to humanity, and must not be tolerated. According to the most recent Department of State estimates, between 600,000 and 800,000 people are trafficked across borders each year worldwide, including 14,500 into the United States. Combined with trafficking within countries, the total figure is estimated at between 2 and 4 million. The OSCE, as the world's largest regional security organization, is uniquely positioned to take on this critical issue.

During this year's session, the U.S. delegation made major progress in international trade. Representative BEN CARDIN, Ranking Member of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, spearheaded a resolution urging the Mediterranean Partners to work with the Arab League in order to rescind the trade boycott of the State of Israel. The boycott has existed for almost half a century, and it is clear that a healthy economic relationship between the United States, Israel, and the Middle East will be central in the fight for a stable and more peaceful world.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to serve as the current President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and delighted to have been elected to a second term. The U.S. delegation was at the forefront of efforts to preserve the quality of the OSCE's election monitoring activities, the battle against anti-Semitism and efforts to set codes of conduct for peacekeepers and international representatives.

We were also privileged to welcome you, Mr. Speaker, and Secretary Rice, to address the Assembly and I am pleased to report that the conference was a major success.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I ask for unanimous consent that the statement of the Honorable Canadian Senator Jerry Grafstein be added to the RECORD immediately following this statement. Senator Grafstein was elected to a second term as Treasurer of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, a clear endorsement of his dedication, prudence and fine leadership. I thank him for his kind words, and I thank the whole Canadian delegation for their admirable contributions to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-
OPERATION IN EUROPE

FOURTEENTH PARLIAMEN-
TARY ASSEMBLY

Hon. Jeremiah S. Grafstein: Honourable senators, yesterday the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe completed its fourteenth annual session in Washington, D.C. It lasted over five days and was attended by more than 1,000 parliamentarians and staff. It was probably the largest assembly in its history. The Washington Declaration, a compendium of all resolutions adopted, will be tabled in the Senate. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is composed of parliamentarians from 55 member states, and is the largest international organization dedicated to the advancement of democratic rights, human rights, and economic and security cooperation.

The Washington Declaration included a number of issues on which Canadian parliamentarians took the lead: trafficking in human beings; steps for cooperation in the Middle East; combating anti-Semitism; advancing the fight against corruption amongst parliamentarians and in the public