

awareness and knowledge of the traditions and values that have formed our Nation, and to enhance appreciation of our civic institutions.

Because contact with the humanities encourages individuals and our Nation to seek knowledge and wisdom, to reflect deeply on issues, and to make sense of and find meaning in our cultural heritage, the mission of the NEH continues to be a worthy national enterprise.

I extend my congratulations to the NEH for its 40 years of service to the American people.

REMARKS IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE
RESOLUTION 388

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 29, 2005

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the House of Representatives considered House Resolution 388, a resolution condemning the gross human rights violations committed by the Cuban regime, and expressing the support of this House for the right of the Cuban people to exercise their fundamental political and civil liberties. Unfortunately due to scheduled Committee hearings I was unable to be on the floor during debate on this extremely important resolution. As chairman of the International Relations Committee Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere—and a long-standing critic of the Castro regime—and co-sponsor of the resolution, I want to take this opportunity to express my strong support for H. Res. 388. I would also like to thank my colleague from Florida, Congressman LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART—a true champion for the Cuban people—for introducing this resolution and once again highlighting the atrocious human rights violations the Cuban people continue to suffer at the hands of Castro's oppressive regime.

Since Castro assumed control of Cuba on January 1, 1959, fundamental human rights and basic living conditions have deteriorated tremendously. Most Cuban people live every day in fear of their government, thousands of whom risk their lives every year to flee the communist regime by any means necessary—even attempting to brave the hazardous 90-mile crossing between the United States and Cuba on makeshift rafts.

For a time, they tried to pretend that Mr. Castro had changed his ways, but events in Cuba over the past two years have reopened the eyes of the world community to the true evil nature of the Castro Regime. For example, Castro created a constitutional amendment permanently making socialism the official form of state government, and positioning himself to remain in power until he is either forcibly removed or deceased. In addition to these totalitarian mandates, he has staged the most sweeping crackdown on peaceful advocates of change in the history of Cuba.

On March 18, 2003, Fidel Castro ordered the arrest of many writers, poets, librarians, and pro-democracy activists in a large-scale operation to stifle any movement against his regime. Subsequently, some of the targeted individuals were released, but 75 remained in jail to be tried for their “crimes” against the country, citing Article 91 of Cuba’s Penal Code

that states, “(anyone) who in the interest of a foreign state, commits an act with the objective of damaging the independence or territorial integrity of the state of Cuba.” The Cuban government accused the dissidents of engaging in activities that could be perceived as damaging to Cuba’s internal order, and/or perceived as encouraging to United States embargoes against the country.

The list of Cuban detainees published by Amnesty International in their “Essential Measures” brief of 2003 reveals some striking information. Among the detained are 23 people over the age of 50, as well as 5 others who are more than 60 years of age. I wonder what dissenting activities they were engaging in that would earn them a collective 1,242 years in prison. These peaceful pro-democracy advocates, whom Mr. Castro likes to call dissidents or “enemies of the revolution,” were convicted for activities such as: attending an assembly to promote civil society, possessing membership in the Committee on Cuban Human Rights, or publishing documents to be disseminated abroad that represent a clear means of implementing the measures established in Article IV of LIBERTAD, also known as the Helms-Burton Act, which would increase the United States sanctions and blockades against Cuba.

Three of the 75 activists rounded up during the regime’s Spring 2003 crackdown on dissent are currently engaging in a hunger strike to protest the deplorable conditions of their confinement; contaminated food and water, excessive heat, filthy conditions and medical mistreatment.

Christian Liberation Movement member José Daniel Ferrer, who has not eaten for more than 22 days. He is serving a 25-year sentence for promoting the Varela Project, a constitutional petition calling for free elections, civil liberties and freedom for political prisoners. He recently was placed in a prison unit with dangerous common criminals, a tactic that Cuban authorities often use to harass and injure political prisoners.

Victor Rolando Arroyo, an independent journalist and librarian, has been on a hunger strike for more than 16 days. In 2000 he spent 6 months in jail for giving out toys to children on Three Kings Day. Now he is serving a 26-year sentence. His wife says that he has been hospitalized. He has refused forced feeding and is severely dehydrated.

Félix Navarro, a democracy advocate and Varela Project activist, has shared the hunger strike in solidarity with Mr. Arroyo, who is in the same prison. Mr. Navarro is serving a 25-year term.

Just this past July, the Castro regime renewed its efforts to stamp out the pro-democracy movement.

On July 13, 2005, the Cuban Government detained 24 human rights activists who were participating in a solemn event in remembrance of the victims of the tugboat massacre of innocent civilians by the Cuban government on July 13, 1994. Human rights activists Rene Montes de Oca, Emilio Leiva Perez, Camilo Cairo Falcon, Manuel Perez Soira, Roberto Guerra Perez, and Lazaro Alonso Roman remain incarcerated from the July 13, 2005, event and face trumped up charges of “disorderly conduct.”

On July 22, 2005, Members of the pro-democracy opposition in Cuba sought to demonstrate in a peaceful and orderly manner in

front of the French Embassy in Havana, on behalf of the liberation of all Cuban political prisoners, and to protest the current policy of the European Union toward the Cuban Government. The Cuban regime mobilized its repressive state security apparatus to intimidate and harass, and eventually arrest and detain many of those who were planning on attending the peaceful protest. These leaders in the struggle for freedom in Cuba continue to be detained without cause.

The Cuban regime has also arrested more than 400 young Cubans, from late 2004 through June of 2005, as a “measure of pre-delinquent security.”

The facts are undeniable; the Castro regime is just as committed today to repressing attempts by the Cuban people to bring democratic change to the island and denying the Cuban people their universally recognized liberties, including freedom of speech, association, movement, and the press as it was in 1959. That is why H.R. 388 is so important; because it sends a strong message to the Castro regime that this House will not forget—and it will not let the world community forget—those people who are suffering and dying in Cuban prisons for the so-called crime of speaking out against the injustices perpetrated by Castro and his henchmen.

Mr. Speaker—although I am very concerned about the state of democracy throughout the Western Hemisphere—as it stands today, Cuba is the only nation in the hemisphere that is a complete dictatorship. As U.S. service men and women put their lives on the line to bring freedom and democracy to people around the world who have long suffered under the hand of tyranny, we only need to look at Cuba to see what can happen when any Nation shuns democracy and subjugates itself to the whims of dictatorship.

I believe that because of the ills inflicted upon Cuba by the Castro regime, the transition from economic stagnation and political oppression to a democratic society built around the principles of respect for the rule of law and basic human rights—with a free economy—will be a challenging process, but it is an attainable endeavor. I have hope that there will be a day when the light of democracy shines in Havana. Until that day, I say to Mr. Castro—we will never forget.

HONORING THE AUGUSTUS
LUTHERAN CHURCH

HON. JIM GERLACH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 29, 2005

Mr. GERLACH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Augustus Lutheran Church in Trappe, Pennsylvania on the occasion of their 275th anniversary.

The Augustus Lutheran Congregation was founded with its first baptism on May 8, 1730. From there, the first church was built. Originally described by an early Church press release as a “shrine of Lutheranism,” the Augustus Lutheran Church has diligently served its community since 1743. The first church building was constructed by its first pastor, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg. Its construction, according to church documents, marks the beginning of the Lutheran movement in America.

This unique church also stands as an extraordinary symbol that emphasizes the impressive 275 years that the Augustus' ministry has served its community in Pennsylvania. The Augustus Lutheran Church has always had a close and reciprocal relationship with its community. Prior to the construction of the Church, the Augustus congregation built the first schoolhouse in Providence Township, Pennsylvania, where Muhlenberg served as one of the teachers. Consequently, in 1743 when the congregation decided to build a church, men in the community donated their labor and materials by hauling stone and timber, while the women and children split and shaved shingles for the roof. The official dedication ceremony took place on October 6, 1745 when a dedicatory stone was placed in the wall over the main entrance. In 1751, the gallery was erected to house the newly purchased pipe organ that was brought from Europe. This pipe organ was unique in that it was one of first pipe organs in any country church in America.

As the congregation grew throughout the next one hundred years, so did the need for a new church that could adequately accommodate its members. In 1852, a new cornerstone was laid and a new brick church was constructed. Throughout the following years, extensive reconstruction was done on the new church. Sunday school facilities were created, the pulpit was refurnished, and the pipe organ was electrified and enlarged by the addition of an echo organ chamber and chimes. In 1960, a new parish house was added and in 1987, new stained glass windows were added. Today, the Augustus Lutheran Congregation has grown substantially to include 480 families with 1,000 baptized members.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing the Augustus Lutheran Church for its rich and honored history and its exemplary contributions to the religious and community life of the Trappe area for the past 275 years.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF "LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL!"

SPEECH OF

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 27, 2005

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.J. Res. 66, a resolution supporting the goals and ideals of "Lights On Afterschool." Lights On Afterschool is a national celebration of after school programs and the dedicated people who keep them going.

After school programs play an important role in the lives of millions of school children throughout the United States. These programs provide fun and educational activities that help develop the social, emotional, physical, cultural, and academic skills of children, while giving them a safe and enriching alternative to the streets.

Students in my home town of Chicago benefit from hundreds of exciting after school options. Many of these are coordinated through After School Matters, a non-profit organization which partners with the City of Chicago, the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Park

District, the Chicago Public Library, and the Chicago Department of Children and Youth Services to create a network of after school opportunities for teens in underserved communities.

Through After School Matters, Chicago teens take part in engaging activities that provide skills that translate to the workplace. After School Matters helps kids build positive relationships with adults and peers, providing them with access to educational and career opportunities in their neighborhoods and the city.

Programs such as After School Matters are making a difference in communities throughout the United States. These programs deserve our support, and I urge my colleagues to make after school programs a priority as we move through the budget process.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity to recognize the work of these dedicated people who help provide quality after school opportunities for children. On October 20th, I urge my colleagues to participate in "Lights On Afterschool" and honor the after school programs which serve their communities.

CONGRATULATING SHERIFF MARK HACKEL

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 29, 2005

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Sheriff Mark Hackel, who is the recipient of the 2005 Alexander Macomb Man of the Year Award from the March of Dimes.

Mark Hackel has dedicated his professional life to serving and protecting Macomb County. He began his career in 1981 as a dispatcher with the Macomb County Sheriff's Department and since then he has held every rank within the Department. Through hard work and determination, Mark was elected as Macomb County Sheriff in November of 2000.

Sheriff Hackel graduated from Sterling Heights High School in 1980. He received an Associate Degree from Macomb Community College in 1983, a Bachelor of Art Degree in Criminal Justice from Wayne State University in 1991, and a Master Degree in Public Administration from Central Michigan University in 1996.

To ensure excellence professionally, Sheriff Hackel has attended in 1994 the F.B.I. National Academy in Quantico, Virginia, and the United States Secret Service Dignitary Protection School in Washington D.C. He also has international training which includes Project Harmony Educational Exchange in Lviv, Ukraine and the Police Instructor Exchange Program in London, England.

In addition to being the Sheriff of the third largest county in Michigan, Sheriff Hackel serves his community in a number of other important capacities. He teaches young adults at Macomb Community College, is a Police Academy Instructor and an Advanced Police Training Instructor at the Macomb Criminal Justice Training Center.

Sheriff Hackel also participates in many community based organizations such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving, American Cancer Society, and Traffic Safety Association of

Macomb. He has been a mentor through Winning Futures Mentoring Program and serves as a Fitness Council Advisory Board Member for Creating a Healthier Macomb.

Sheriff Hackel understands that many factors influence the law enforcement environment he is elected to lead and he seeks to bring about a better and safer community through all of his many endeavors.

Mr. Speaker, I have been privileged to work with Sheriff Mark Hackel and to see first hand his many effective endeavors. I ask my colleagues to join me recognizing Sheriff Mark Hackel for his commitment to excellence, and his professional and personal devotion to his community.

HONORING AND RECOGNIZING THE DEDICATION OF THE MOHAMMAD ATAYA PARK

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 29, 2005

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor and recognition of the Ataya family for their collective vision, generosity and concern for the people of Twinsburg, especially the children, for donating their personal property and transforming it into a public park for residents of all ages to enjoy. Dr. Khalid Ataya, his wife, Dr. Alfida Ataya, and their three children, Dana, Samy and Ramsey, have dedicated the park in honor of Dr. Ataya's father, Mohammad Ataya.

Mohammad Ataya worked diligently to provide a safe and secure home for his family in America, and has also ensured that the cultural bridge connecting the Ataya family—from Cleveland to Lebanon—remains viable and strong. Mr. Ataya continues to be the center of his family, a living legacy defined by a steadfast dedication to his wife, nine children, and his many grandchildren.

In a clearing surrounded by trees, playground equipment, park benches and picnic tables spring from the green grass at Mohammad Ataya Park, located on Cambridge Street in Twinsburg. Plans are already in place to expand the playground and picnic area at the park—preserving a natural space where a sense of renewal is possible and where family unity abounds.

Mr. Speaker and Colleagues, please join me in honor and recognition of Dr. Khalid and Alfida Ataya, for their vision and generosity in entrusting their land to the Township of Twinsburg for use as a public park, in honor of Dr. Ataya's father, Mohammad Ataya. Mohammad Ataya Park will flourish as a vital preservation of green space and will exist as a peaceful and joyous haven, accessible to all citizens, today and for generations to come. As founding members of the Arab American Community Center for Economic and Social Services (AACESS), Dr. Khalid and Dr. Alfida Ataya continue to embrace an energetic spirit and a dedication focused on service to others, and their efforts and volunteerism continue to enhance our entire community.