

tourism, which is a major draw for Swaziland. "I'd say the whole kingdom is a tourist attraction area," Hlophe noted.

The ambassador is also working to tackle the more serious issues that his country faces, namely the HIV/AIDS epidemic that continues to plague much of Africa. Swazi King Mswati III is expected to visit Uganda early next year to examine the successful "ABC" model (abstain, be faithful and use condoms) that Uganda has been using.

Like its neighbors, Swaziland has an especially high rate of HIV infection. "We've seen some significant improvement in terms of people who are willing to be tested so that they benefit from these drugs that are made available through the Global Fund," the ambassador said, referring to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. But as a small kingdom, Hlophe said an aggressive approach that encompasses all the methods of prevention and treatment will be crucial to the king's efforts to combat the epidemic.

In addition, Hlophe must address the backlash that often stems from the king's rule of what is Africa's last absolute monarchy. Swaziland has been criticized for its lack of democratic reforms and human rights record, particularly with regard to women's rights.

But Hlophe, a jovial and easygoing man, prefers to highlight the positive advancements his country has made. He pointed to the new constitution scheduled to take effect early next year—Swaziland's first in more than 30 years—explaining that the entire country had a hand in its drafting. "I think that instrument is not the king's instrument. It is our instrument; it is every Swazi's instrument."

The king has also been heavily criticized for his many wives, which he often picks out from among a lineup of topless virgins at an annual dance. On the topic of women's rights, Hlophe noted that when he served as principal secretary for the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, he took over from a woman—a "visible effort" that is reflective of the drive to include more women in decision-making roles, something that is often overlooked by the media. "People always highlight the negative and not highlight the good points," he said.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to offer their own expressions of good wishes to Ambassador Hlophe as he takes up his post to represent Swaziland in Washington. I am certain that he will enjoy a major measure of hospitality on the part of the American people.

THE FY 2006 DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE REPORT (H.R. 2863), AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 22, 2005

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, we are here today because the Senate rightly rejected the Defense Appropriations conference report—not because they didn't support our troops, but because they honored their service enough to insist on a military spending bill unsullied by special interest politics.

While I continue to have concerns about a number of unrelated provisions in the underlying bill, I also believe it is critical to ensure that our soldiers get the equipment they need to protect themselves and succeed in their missions.

Therefore, with the ANWR issue out of the way, I am prepared to support this legislation and forward it to the President for his signature.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON S. 1932,
DEFICIT REDUCTION ACT OF 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sunday, December 18, 2005

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, There's a lot of talk about "savings" associated with this budget reconciliation, but let's be honest with ourselves and our children. This Congress continues to add to our \$8 trillion national debt. Nothing is being done here that is making any serious attempt to balance the national budget. Any reduction to our budget deficit will be more than offset by the tax cuts that Congress is still negotiating.

What makes matters worse are the programs being targeted to pay for these tax cuts. Republican leadership is cutting federal child-support enforcement aid, reducing states' capacity to help families make sure that children get the financial support they are owed. Student loans are the subject of some of the largest cuts, \$16 billion over 5 years.

This budget cuts programs that help protect the financial well-being of our children and grandchildren; cuts that help them cope with an increasingly expensive education. Even worse, this budget will then add to the national debt that these future generations will have to payoff.

It is a sad day for this country and a poor reflection on this Congress when our children will inherit a worse world because of what we do here today. This situation is a result of the Republican leadership's inability to legislate. Honest debate, open dialogue and legislating would not create bills so detrimental to society. This is the shameful outcome of backroom negotiating and ideological policy making.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2830, PENSION PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 15, 2005

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2830, the Pension Protection Act of 2005.

Any bill that is called the "Pension Protection Act" should protect pensions, but the bill we have before us makes things worse in many ways for many current pensioners in this country and for many future pensioners.

First and foremost, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation was first created to protect some of the retiree benefits of people if pension plans went bust or the corporations went bust. We are now told that this legislation makes that problem worse. The Congressional Budget Office tells us that this will make it at least \$9 billion worse over the next decade.

This is an agency that can look out into the future and can see up to \$100 billion of liabilities possibly coming their way. Much of which will come because this bill makes it easier to terminate plans. Simply, it makes it easier to put plans into bankruptcy.

This bill does nothing to solve the problems we have seen with airline industry pensions because their pension plans can be dumped during bankruptcy just as easily as they can now. This bill does nothing to prevent this.

The way we can tell that this legislation does not do the job is the way the Republican Leadership is making us debate the bill by taking the unusually restrictive step of not allowing us to debate substitute legislation. I guess they realize that this bill is so bad that if they allowed us the substitute, it certainly would have prevailed over this legislation. I would have supported the legislation that Congressmen RANGEL and GEORGE MILLER had prepared.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this legislation. Its only accomplishment is to make the problems of America's pensioners even worse than they are today.

H.R. 2017, THE TORTURE VICTIMS RELIEF REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2005

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 22, 2005

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2017, the Torture Victims Reauthorization Act of 2005.

Building on great legislation originally introduced by former Minnesota Senator David Durenburger, this bill further enhances the work that was started nearly a decade ago. The Torture Victims Relief Reauthorization Act reauthorizes funding for both domestic and foreign treatment centers for victims of torture, as well as the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud that Minnesota is the home of the world-renowned Center for Victims of Torture. The work being done at the Center by Mr. Doug Johnson and his extremely qualified, compassionate staff is changing the lives of thousands of people around the world. The Center not only works directly with survivors of torture, but they also train American and International professionals, who return to their communities with the skills needed to better assist victims in rebuilding their lives. Through the work of the Center for Victims of Torture, and other centers like it, survivors of torture are able to reclaim their dignity, their hope, and their futures.

For years, Minnesotans have committed themselves to providing a safe haven for people who have been victims of torture. This is why I, along with so many of my constituents, am so deeply disturbed by recent media reports that the U.S. government might be the source of violence similar to what these victims of torture have suffered. I am extremely disappointed by the Bush Administration's strong opposition, earlier this month, to a provision added to the Senate Fiscal Year 2006 Defense Authorization bill. That provision would ban the use of torture and cruel, and inhumane treatment by members of the U.S.

military, and would clearly demonstrate our country's commitment to defending human rights. To even suggest that the U.S. government would condone the use of torture should shame every one of us in this House. Members of my community in Minnesota stand in shock and disbelief at the mere suggestion that our government would seek approval for acts similar to those that have shattered their own lives.

America must remain a beacon of hope and justice in this world. It must be our role as policymakers to restore our nation's reputation and our role in promoting peace and democracy around the world. We cannot allow the fear of the unknown to force our country to turn from our long record of upholding and strengthening the human rights of all people everywhere. Our citizens deserve a better path to security. The best way to restore our Nation's reputation and ensure the safety of Americans, and people everywhere, is to promote human rights, hope and opportunity across the globe. This bill helps to restore our reputation by aiding in the recovery and rebuilding of lives devastated by torture.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support this bill, and would like to thank Representative CHRIS SMITH for his tireless work in supporting victims of torture, by introducing this reauthorization. I would also like to thank Ranking Member LANTOS and Chairman HYDE for their strong support of this vital legislation in the House International Relations Committee. In addition, this bill would not be what it is today without the amazing and inspiring work of Doug Johnson, John Salzberg, their associates at the Center for Victims of Torture, and all those working in the field around the world. It is my hope that this bill allows their good work to continue for years to come.

HONORING THE PACIFIC GAS &
ELECTRIC COMPANY BLACK EM-
PLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 22, 2005

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Pacific Gas & Electric PG&E, Company's Black Employees' Association on the occasion of its 25th year of service to our community.

The PG&E Black Employees' Association, BEA, was founded in 1980 by a group of African American PG&E employees who wanted to enhance the social and intellectual exchange of ideas among the growing number of African American employees at the company. Over the past 25 years, this exchange has resulted not only in networking, collaboration and workplace adjustment opportunities for African American employees, but has also been integral to PG&E's outreach efforts to the African American Community and our community at large.

The primary focus of PG&E's outreach efforts in this regard has been on providing educational opportunity, namely in the form of college scholarships. Since its founding, BEA has awarded upwards of \$700,000 in college scholarships, with the majority of those funds coming directly from BEA member contributions.

In addition to the significant contributions it makes to nationwide educational funds, BEA

reaches out to young people and members of our community in a variety of other ways. In addition to its consistent support of the National Society of Black Engineers, the Black Employees Associations of Northern California, the Museum of African Diaspora and numerous diversity awareness efforts within PG&E, BEA provides mentoring and job shadowing opportunities to young people seeking career guidance. Furthermore, BEA sponsors regular events which address issues related to retirement, financial management and other forms of career management for current employees.

In addition to its efforts in the areas of education and professional development, BEA is known for its charitable involvement with a number of local community organizations, as well as its members' regular volunteer efforts. Recently BEA awarded \$25,000 to five community based organizations through its partnership with PG&E and other groups, and has also awarded funds to local hospitals and community service organizations.

BEA is a regular participant in events and fundraisers at local K-12 schools and projects, such as the Beacon Project and E. Morris Cox Elementary School in Oakland. BEA members also volunteer regularly for major health initiatives such as the AIDS Walk, Juvenile Diabetes Fund, the Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign, and many other community building efforts.

This year marks the PG&E Black Employees' Association's 25th Anniversary. On behalf of the California's 9th U.S. Congressional District, I salute all BEA for their many years of invaluable service to the African American community and to the community at large. I congratulate BEA on this very special occasion, and thank its members for their invaluable contributions to California's 9th Congressional District and to our country.

PEACE ON EARTH

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 22, 2005

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to enter into the RECORD "Witness for Justice #245" entitled My Christmas List, published on December 5, 2005, by the United Church of Christ of Cleveland, Ohio. The article eloquently written by Bernice Powell Jackson the Executive Minister of this Church on 700 Prospect Avenue in Cleveland is a fervent wish for Peace. Her wish, her prayer, is one that many of us share with her and I hope is in the hearts and on the lips of every minister, rabbi and imam when he or she stands before a congregation. Minister Jackson believes that for Christians the call to work for peace comes from the Prince of Peace. Those of other faiths, she says, are called "by our Creator to work for a world of peace not only at this time of year, but all year long."

Minister Jackson's first wish on her Christmas list is for peace on earth. I join with her in this wish for all of us; but I wish the God's peace especially for the least among us for these are the first victims when peace is absent. These victims are the women, the children, the child soldiers, the soldiers and their families, the poor, the invisible, the uncounted,

the sick, the forgotten, and those whose dignity, even humanity, is not acknowledged—the enslaved, the trafficked, and the tortured.

Minister Jackson's second wish is for young people who are ready and willing to take up the struggle for a world of peace and justice. She states this article, number 245, is her last Witness for Justice Column. She hopes for young people like the ones who struggled for civil rights in the U.S., in the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, in the people power struggle in the Philippines, and in Tiananmen Square in China will arise to take on the causes for which she has been such an effective advocate. Minister Jackson recognizes the struggle continues against poverty.

I join Minister Jackson in her second wish and add a second wish of my own. I wish that we will see the end of extreme poverty in our lifetime. I commend the work and advocacy of Jeffery Sachs, Bill and Melinda Gates, Bono and Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton and wish with them that childhood AIDS can be treated, that the AIDS Pandemic in Africa can be stopped, that treatable diseases that cause blindness in Africa can be eradicated and that people who are too poor to live can receive simple remedies like mosquito nets that will save 5000 children a day in Africa, clean water and enough food to flourish not just survive.

The third wish on Minister Jackson's Christmas List is for health care for every American. I join her in this wish. Ours is the richest country in the world and yet 45 million Americans cannot afford health care. Minister Jackson says the health care system is "imploding all around us." It is failing us. As a nation, America can no longer afford not to have health care for all Americans. The lack of universal health care for Americans represents a failure of our government and of our priorities; both must be changed.

Finally, Minister Jackson wishes for a return of a value which she writes "seems to be disappearing from our landscape—the value of integrity." Integrity she says is "a value which can only be earned through a life of honesty, fairness, forthrightness and a commitment to the common good of all humankind. It is a value which seems to be sorely lacking in government, in politics, in media, in business, even in religion. Integrity means standing up for what is right and just and true, no matter which way the winds of the world blow. It means speaking the truth, not words of political spin . . . It means matching your words with your life. My Christmas wish is for an increase in integrity in our world." I join Minister Jackson in this wish with all my heart.

Witness for Justice #245, Dec. 5, 2005

MY CHRISTMAS LIST

(By Bernice Powell Jackson)

Every year for the past eleven years I have shared my own Christmas list with you. Most years it has included a wish for even a day of peace in the world—when war ceases, when domestic violence pauses, when guns are laid down in homes and cities and nations. It hasn't happened yet, despite the prayers and the hard work of so many of you. Nevertheless, I believe, that those of us who are Christian are called to work for peace by the Prince of Peace. Those of other faiths are also called by our Creator to work for a world of peace not only at this time of year, but all year long. So my first wish is for peace on earth.