

It is said that coral reefs are the rainforests of the ocean. Although they occupy less than one-quarter of 1 percent of the marine environment, coral reefs are home to more than one-quarter of all known marine fish species.

Coral reefs are among the most biologically rich ecosystems on Earth. About 4,000 species of fish and 800 species of reef-building corals have already been identified. However, scientists have barely begun to catalogue the total number of species found within these habitats. Their scientific value cannot be underestimated. Yet, they are disappearing at an alarming rate.

According to a 1998 study conducted by the United Nations and various international environmental organizations, 58 percent of the world's reefs are potentially threatened by human activity. These activities include coastal development, overfishing, marine pollution, and runoff from inland deforestation and farming.

More than one-quarter of the world's reefs are at risk. Predictions made in 1992 were that 10 to 20 years from now, another 30 percent of the world's coral reefs could be effectively destroyed, adding to the 10 percent that already were destroyed.

While these numbers sound alarmist, figures today show that they are conservative. Most Caribbean and South Pacific mangroves have disappeared, while India, Southeast Asia, and West Africa have each lost about one-half of their mangroves.

Almost a half a billion people, 8 percent of the world's population, live within 100 kilometers of a coral reef. A decline in the health of coral reefs has implications for the lives of millions of people who depend upon them. Coral Reefs are the basis of subsistence for the local-market fisheries in 100 countries, providing the protein for more than one billion people worldwide.

The burden of foreign debt falls especially hard on the smallest nations, such as island nations in the Caribbean and Pacific. With few natural resources, these nations often resort to harvesting or otherwise exploiting coral reefs and other marine habitats to earn hard currency to service foreign debt. At least 40 countries lack any marine protected areas for their coral reef systems.

This legislation will make available resources for environmental stewardship that would otherwise be the lowest priority in a developing country. It will reduce debt by investing locally in programs that will strengthen indigenous economies by creating long-term management policies that will preserve the natural resources upon which local commerce is based.

The Tropical Forest Conservation Act has set a path for debt-for-nature swaps, and the United States has an important role to play in assisting in the protection of the world's natural resources. This bill extends the support from forests to the oceans, and critical countries like Jamaica, Belize, Dominican Republic, the Philippines, and Thailand could benefit from this legislation.

Under President Bush's Enterprise for the Americas Act, the United States sponsored many debt-for-nature swaps to protect rainforests. It is now time to expand these successful programs to cover critical coral reef habitats.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WENDY MCCUISTON, SMITHSON VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 28, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the many accomplishments of Wendy McCuiston, Smithson Valley High School Teacher of the Year.

Wendy McCuiston holds a B.A. from New Mexico State University at Las Cruces, and a Master's degree from Texas A&M University. She has had an outstanding career in education, with more than 27 years of teaching experience.

Ms. McCuiston teaches 9th through 12th grade Family and Consumer Science at Smithson Valley High School in the Comal Independent School District. She is committed to teaching her students the practical skills that will stand them in good stead in later life.

She has distinguished herself as a warm and supportive presence in the classroom. Asked about her teaching philosophy, she summarizes it this way: "Treat people with respect, let them know you value them as an individual, and most of all show them you care."

Wendy McCuiston is an outstanding teacher, and her career has been filled with countless accomplishments, of which this award is only the most recent. She is a credit and a blessing to her community, and I am proud to have the opportunity to honor her here today.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ROGER F. WICKER

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 28, 2005

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall votes Nos. 133-145, I was unavoidably absent. Had I been present, I would have voted as follows: On Nos. 133-139, "yea"; on No. 140, "nay"; on Nos. 141-142, "no"; on No. 143, "nay"; on No. 144, "aye"; on No. 145, "yea".

RECOGNIZING WORLD WAR II VETERANS OF THE PLAINVILLE CHAPTER, DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 28, 2005

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to pay tribute to several World War II veterans in my district.

These heroic men, through their sacrifice and bravery, literally helped save the world from tyranny. They left their homes and families behind to fight on distant shores, and they returned home to help make this country the most successful democracy the world has ever seen. In many cases, they left as boys and returned as men, with a sense of pride for what they had accomplished, but also with painful memories of those who never made it home.

On Sunday May 1st in Plainville, the newly elected Commander and Officers of the Disabled American Veterans, Chapter 5 Memorial of Wrentham will pay tribute to 11 of these men. They are: Owen W. Emery Sr, Alvin L. Berman, Caster Salemi, Charles Guinn, Army; Donald J. Calvey; Edmund F. Stoddard, Donald R. Flynn, Evan Gilmore, Joseph Goff, William Fermano, and Father Valentine Chepeleff.

This year, of course, marks the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. And this recognition ceremony represents just a small token of the great gratitude we owe these veterans.

I look forward to participating in this important ceremony. I know that all of my colleagues here in the House of Representatives join me in paying tribute to these extraordinary men and their families.

REMOVING NAME AS CO-SPONSOR ON H.R. 513

HON. XAVIER BECERRA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 28, 2005

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, I have always supported meaningful efforts to curtail the increasing influence of money in the political process, and I will continue to do so. As our existing campaign reform laws continue to evolve in the real world, I find myself with a growing discomfort that H.R. 513, the 527 Reform Act of 2005, though altruistic in principle, may actually limit voices too dramatically without offering other alternatives as it attempts to rein in the disproportionate effect of large contributions. Because of these misgivings, I am at this time removing my name as a co-sponsor of this legislation. I reserve a final decision on whether I would sponsor H.R. 513 in the future or eventually support its passage to a later date.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 28, 2005

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, for the week of April 25th through the 29th, I was unable to make it to the House Floor to vote because I was unintentionally detained in the African nation of Togo. I have traveled to Africa on numerous occasions in the past, both as an election observer and as a human rights ombudsman and advocate. Most recently, I was in Nigeria (in April, 2003) during the momentous election which underlined that nation's continual transition to democracy. Many Members of the CBC, including myself, attended, and we were more than pleased to see that the outcome was just, and that popular, fair elections instead of a violent military coup decided who would run the government. Africa is a continent that is very near and dear to my heart, and is an area of the world that is too often overlooked and ignored.

The recent presidential election that took place in Togo was the first election the country has witnessed in the last 38 years. As an invited election observer, I viewed with cautious

optimism how people nationwide went to the polls and cast their vote for the next President of Togo. From what I saw, a position which was supported by 160 ECOWAS (Economic Countries of West African States) observers and hundreds of independent observers, the election appeared to be "credible." Again, in my view, the election was a success overall, and I will be filing a complete report on my observations of the election in the near future. I would also like to thank the United States State Department for all of their help and support. Certainly, when a citizen of the United States leaves our country's borders, the Department of State takes over as the guardian and protector of U.S. citizens. Oftentimes, they do not get the credit they deserve for their hard work, dedication and service to our nation. I would like to particularly thank the United States Ambassador to Togo, Charles H. Twining, and United States Ambassador to Benin, Wayne Neill, as well as their staffs for all of their attention and assistance to me while I was in Africa.

Again, I was unintentionally detained out of the country while serving as an Election Observer for the Presidential Election in Togo. The airport in the capital, Lome, was closed, and the borders out of the country were sealed.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS
OF STEVE FOSTER

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 28, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the many accomplishments of Steve Foster, who teaches at Smithson Valley Middle School in the Comal Independent School District.

"In order to understand where you are going, you must first understand where you have been." This proverb teaches us a great lesson; we must understand the heritage and history of our nation before we can begin to understand ourselves. American history teachers help our nation's children get a better understanding of who they are by letting them know where they came from. Steve Foster teaches eighth-grade American History and is a great example of a teacher who finds new and innovative ways to engage students in learning about their nation's history. By captivating students about their own history, Mr. Foster lets his students get a better understanding of themselves. He describes the environment promoted in his classroom as one where "all students can learn about history while they learn to develop." Through his great commitment to his students, Mr. Foster has reached out to students not only as a teacher but also as a friend.

Steve Foster received his Bachelor's degree from Texas Lutheran College in Seguin, Texas. He has taught at Valley Middle School for eight years now and has been an irreplaceable asset to the school and the community. It is with great honor that I recognize him for his commitment.

CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS SOCIAL SECURITY AND LATINOS FORUM

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 28, 2005

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, April 25, 2005, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus organized a Social Security and Latinos Forum to address the Bush Administration's disturbing proposal to privatize Social Security. This forum was very important because as Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus' Health Task Force and Democratic Chair of the Women's Caucus, I believe we must discuss the impact of the proposed privatization to our Latino community.

The President's privatization plan will not help Latino families and will especially hurt Latinas in the future. Right now, Social Security gives people with lower earnings a greater return on what they pay into Social Security. Latinas will be especially hurt by the Bush Administration's plan because they are more likely to be employed in lower-wage jobs and have fewer years in the workforce. Latinas are already facing disproportionate pay gaps—they earn only 55 cents for every dollar that men earn, which is much less than national wage gap which averages 76 cents per dollar earned by a man. As a result, Latinas are less likely to have pensions or retirement savings to supplement their Social Security checks and money to invest in risky private accounts.

Let's look at the facts: About 46 percent of older Latinas depend entirely on Social Security in retirement; only 33 percent of Latinas have retirement income from savings or assets; and 60 percent of Latinas over the age of 65 would live in poverty without Social Security. If the President's plan to privatize Social Security moves forward, young Latinas in their 20s and 30s will see their benefits cut by at least 30 percent.

I am also very worried about how Latina mothers will be affected by the privatization plan. Latina moms rely heavily on their Social Security monthly benefits to provide for their families, especially if their husbands become injured or die. Latinas have higher rates of disability, and, consequently, are more likely to receive benefits from the Social Security Disability Insurance Program. The work injury rate for Latinas in 2000 was 16.7 percent compared to 11 percent overall. In 2003, the rate of fatalities for Latino workers was 13 percent higher than the rate for all workers. Many Latinas rely on disability and survivor checks to keep their families fed and clothed.

Congress needs to start talking about real solutions for Social Security that will help hardworking Latino families. We have and will continue to save, strengthen, and secure Social Security for our community. Once again, I thank the Congressional Hispanic Caucus for organizing on the Social Security and Latinos Forum.

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 28, 2005

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the one and a half million Armenians who perished in the Armenian Genocide that began 90 years ago on April 24, 1915. This is a sacred obligation that we undertake each April—to ensure that future generations of Americans remember the first genocide of the 20th century and to ensure that the men, women and children who perished at the hands of the Ottoman Empire are not lost to history.

Mr. Speaker, there is no dispute that what happened to the Armenian people is genocide. Thousands of pages of documents sit in our National Archives. One of these documents is a report from the American Consul in Trebizond, Oscar Heizer. On July 28, 1915, Heizer cabled the U.S. Embassy in Constantinople to report on the massacre of 180 Armenian road workers, who were shot and stripped of their clothes before being buried in the woods.

Newspapers of the day were replete with stories about the murder of Armenians. "Appeal to Turkey to Stop Massacres" headlined the New York Times on April 28, 1915, just as the killing began. On October 7 of that year, the Times reported that 800,000 Armenians had "been slain in cold blood in Asia Minor." In mid-December of 1915, the Times spoke of a "Million Armenians Killed or in Exile."

Prominent citizens of the day, including America's Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, and Britain's Lord Bryce reported on the massacres in great detail. Morgenthau was appalled at what he would later call the "sadistic orgies" of rape, torture and murder. Lord Bryce, a former British Ambassador to the United States, worked to raise awareness of and money for the victims of what he called "the most colossal crime in the history of the world." In October 1915 the Rockefeller Foundation contributed \$30,000—a sum worth more than half a million dollars today—to a relief fund for Armenia.

Last week at the annual commemoration of the genocide here on the Hill, I had the honor to meet, Henry Morgenthau, the grandson of Ambassador Morgenthau. He is still carrying on his grandfather's mission to make America and the world aware of what happened.

The generation of Armenians with direct memory of the genocide is almost gone; their children are aging. Much of the rest of the world has moved on, reluctant to dredge up "unpleasant" memories and risk the ire of modern Turkey.

But even now, almost a century after the start of the genocide, some survivors are still with us. One of them, Ghazaros Kademian, is a constituent of mine. He is 96 now, but his mind is sharp and he remembers clearly the day when, as a six-year-old boy he and his family were forced from their house. He was from the village of Zaitoun, located southeast of present day Turkey. Kademian's father stayed behind to defend his homeland and was murdered. His mother took his hand and ran away.