

fellow Central American Presidents. Together, we are here as the singular voice of Central America bringing a crucial message to the United States Congress. That message is as simple as it is important: pass the Central American—Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement and pass it as quickly as possible.

There is a common misunderstanding about DR-CAFTA in the United States. The misunderstanding is that DR-CAFTA is primarily about trade. Yes, it is true that DR-CAFTA will bring very important trade and economic benefits to both the United States and to the nations of Central America and the Caribbean. This is an undeniable fact. But to truly understand DR-CAFTA, you have to get underneath the surface and see what DR-CAFTA is really about. In its central core, DR-CAFTA is really about "democracy." It is about rewarding a region who has fought so hard to build their democratic institutions and increase the security of the region.

Democracy has made very important gains in Central America in the last 15 years. But many of those gains are not irreversible. As we have seen recently in some of the countries of South America, some people are beginning to question whether democracy and free markets can solve their country's problems. But they are wrong. This well-negotiated free trade agreement will consolidate the democratic gains and ensure that the region does not back slide into the insecurity and violence of previous decades. DR-CAFTA binds the United States and Central America not only economically, but more importantly, democratically. DR-CAFTA should be seen for what it really is: a chance to lock in the democratic future for Central America with all economic and security benefits that implies for the United States. I want all Americans, particularly members of Congress, to understand that CAFTA is a democracy issue more than a trade issue.

Today, Nicaragua's democracy faces a new set of threats. Yesterday's enemies of democracy used pure military force. Today's enemies of democracy have evolved and refined their techniques. Today's enemies of democracy leave the outside facade of democratic institutions intact, while at the same time they hollow out these institutions from the inside, leaving nothing but the hollow shell.

Unfortunately, this is exactly what the enemies of democracy are attempting to do in Nicaragua. As many of you who are following events in Nicaragua know, democracy is under a direct threat. The assault is being led by what the Economist magazine called an "unholy alliance" of the extreme left, led by Daniel Ortega, and of the extreme right led by ex-President Arnoldo Aleman who is currently serving a 20-year prison sentence. Together these two party bosses, or caudillos, as we say in Spanish, are attempting to dismantle some of democracy's most sacred principles—principles such as checks and balances and the independence of the judiciary—principles without which no democracy can be called a democracy.

When the military dictatorship was ended and freedom was restored to our country in 1991, many believed that progress towards building fully functioning democratic institutions would be linear, that is to say forever upward on a steady course. This has not been the case, however. And once again those who value democracy and believe in democracy for Nicaragua are being called to the ramparts to defend it.

My administration will never cease to fight for the independence of the judiciary, will never cease to fight for the separation of powers, will never cease to fight against corruption by government officials. And my administration will fight on every front: we

will rally Nicaraguan people who crave democracy and functioning democratic institutions; we will fight to enforce the ruling of the Central American Court of Justice which in a historic decision on March 29, 2005 ruled against the attempts of the Nicaraguan National Assembly to strip the Presidency of its powers and declared it a violation of the principle of separation of powers. And we will fight if necessary in the Organization of American States with its wonderful and powerful Democratic Charter. And we will fight with the help of the many friends of Nicaragua that are here tonight who have supported the cause of freedom.

Finally, I would like to point out, only eleven days ago, on May 1st at the May Day ceremonies in Havana, Cuba, Daniel Ortega was hugging the dictator Fidel Castro and calling the United States "an enemy of humanity." This would be a scene intimately familiar to both of our honorees here tonight from their days of defending democracy in the 1980s. All of which proves that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, and with the help of all our friends here tonight, together we will meet the new challenges with the same courage and resolution that was brought to the earlier challenges to democracy in Nicaragua in the past.

A TRIBUTE TO LANCE BRET
TAYLOR

HON. DUNCAN HUNTER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 16, 2005

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to a constituent of mine, Lance Bret Taylor of Spring Valley, California. On April 6, 2005, Lance was traveling on a CH-47 Chinook helicopter when it crashed in the desert of Afghanistan, killing all eighteen Americans on board.

With the brave military personnel aboard that aircraft, there were three civilians, all non-combatants. Working for Halliburton subsidiary KBR, Lance was responsible for providing U.S. and coalition forces operating in Afghanistan with vital logistics and life support services.

A specialist in vector control who was returning to the U.S. base in Bagram from a mission, Lance was, like many Americans, proudly serving his country in other ways besides wearing a uniform. While Lance recognized the dangers inherent to working in a war zone, he was driven by a desire to help improve the lives of others.

Lance leaves behind his loving mother Lori, brother Kevin, his beautiful wife Deborah, a ten-year-old daughter, four stepchildren, and a baby granddaughter. He will continue to be remembered and loved by all those who knew him—not just today, but for as long as the U.S. defends the ideas of democracy and liberty throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, I extend my heartfelt sympathy to the members of Lance's bereaved family and loved ones. Lance's dedication and service represents the best America has to offer and his sacrifice will never be forgotten.

WE ARE ALMOST OUT OF TIME

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 16, 2005

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise to join with my colleagues in the recognition of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. The contributions of Asian Pacific Islander Americans throughout the history of the United States are widely known.

One of the contributions that has never been properly acknowledged by the United States and by Congress is the part that was played in World War II by soldiers of the Philippines, a territory of the United States at that time.

They were drafted in World War II by President Roosevelt. They did not say no. They fought bravely and gallantly, in the battles of Bataan and Corrigidor, and the bullets did not distinguish between those who were U.S. citizens at the time and those who were citizens of the Philippines. Death did not make a distinction. The participation of the Filipino soldiers was critical to the successful outcome of the war in the Pacific. We owe them a great deal.

And yet, in 1946, the Congress said thank you, but no thank you. Congress withdrew the benefits that these brave men were promised. Although some positive steps were taken in the six decades since the war, we have not properly redeemed that promise.

Congressman CUNNINGHAM and I have introduced H.R. 302, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, and Senator INOUE has introduced a companion bill in the Senate, S. 146. These bills will complete the job and restore all the benefits that were rescinded by Congress. The passage of these bills will benefit the Filipino veterans in a substantial way.

But, at a deeper level, these bills are also about restoring dignity and honor to these proud veterans. Sixty years of injustice burn in the hearts of the Filipino World War II Veterans and in the hearts of their sons and daughters. It is time that our nation recognizes their contributions, recognizes the injustice, and acts to correct it. To those who say that we cannot afford to redeem this debt, I answer that we cannot afford not to! The historical record remains blotted until we recognize these veterans.

In passing these bills, we can make good on the promise of America.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS
OF JENNIFER WELMA, HAYS
CSID SPECIAL EDUCATION
TEACHER OF THE YEAR

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 16, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the contributions of Jennifer Welma, Hays CSID Special Education Teacher of the Year.

Growing up, Jennifer always knew that one day she wanted to be a teacher. Yet it was the 1991 State Competition for the Special Olympics in San Marcos which sparked a special passion. She was emotionally touched by

the bravery, courageousness, and beautiful spirit of the Olympians, and instantly knew she needed to be involved with such amazing individuals.

Jennifer Welma now teaches Phys Ed., and has a great time dancing, moving, laughing, and learning with her students.

Special Education has become even more important to Jennifer now that she has a son who is visually impaired and considered disabled. She continues her fight to promote the active participation of disabled students, ensuring their role as a visible part of a school campus. She thanks her son Kameron for the continued inspiration to become a better teacher, friend, and person.

I am honored to recognize Jennifer Welma, Hays CSID Special Education Teacher of the Year. Jennifer's passion and dedication to teaching enriches the lives of all around her.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS NATIONAL MARINE REFUGE ACT OF 2005

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 16, 2005

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a truly novel and revolutionary proposal to create the largest marine protected area in our world. I offer for this Congress' consideration and prompt action the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands National Marine Refuge Act of 2005, which would provide the maximum level of permanent protection for a magnificent marine system and international treasure, larger even than Australia's Great Barrier Reef Marine Protected Area. In so doing, my proposal would do for our country's, and world's, oceans what another then-novel and revolutionary action—our 1872 set-aside of what later became the foundation of our National Park System, Yellowstone National Park—did for permanent protection of our treasured and endangered terrestrial ecosystems.

This "Ocean Yellowstone" lives and breathes in the waters of our country surrounding the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI), an equally magnificent chain of islands starting at Nihoa Island lying just northwest of the main Hawaiian Islands and stretching fully 1,200 miles northwest across the Pacific to Kure Atoll. In these waters and among their reefs, banks, and seamounts, and existing as an integrated ecosystem with their terrestrial neighbors, lie some 70 percent of our nation's coral reefs.

This remote and incredibly diverse ecosystem is also home to some 7,000 species, at least one-quarter of which (some scientists say as much as half) are endemic to this area and found nowhere else on earth. It also serves as a pu'uhonua (place of refuge) to many species of coral, fish, birds, and marine mammals, including the highly endangered Hawaiian monk seal, threatened green sea turtle, and the endangered leatherback, loggerhead, and hawksbill sea turtles. An estimated 14 million seabirds thrive in these islands and their waters, including 99 percent of the world's Laysan albatrosses and 98 percent of the black-footed albatross population. This also may be the last predator-dominated ma-

rine ecosystem left on the planet—some 55 percent of the total fish biomass is made up of predator species, the natural way of our oceans.

Yet this incredible remnant of a purer world will not survive absent affirmative protective action, for by its isolation it is a fragile world, one where the most seemingly insignificant and benign human interaction can have the most magnified effect. As a prime example, the islands and waters of the NWHI have developed a unique ecosystem whose isolation at one time provided protection from invasive species. Yet today some invasives have become established due not only to marine debris from the Northern Pacific but from fishing, transiting, and other vessels. And commercial fishing and other human interaction is itself inherently invasive, as is evident in the introduction of rats (now eliminated) and the consequences of overfishing, leading the near-extinction of the black-lipped pearl oyster and other species and, more recently, the crash of the lobster fishery. Just last February, as another example, our Marine Mammal Commission reported that the world's dwindling Hawaiian monk seal population of an estimated 1,400, based in the NWHI, has "no tolerance for additional mortality associated with fisheries or other human activities."

Jurisdiction of the NWHI and waters has been shared by our federal and Hawai'i state governments. As an overall template, the islands themselves (with the exception of Midway Island, an unassociated federal possession) are part of the State of Hawai'i (and my Second Congressional District) along with the waters around those islands out to the three-mile limit. Beyond three miles and out to the fifty-mile boundary is the current Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve (Reserve), established by President Clinton and under the jurisdiction of the National Ocean Service (NOS) within the Department of Commerce's National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration. The waters beyond the Reserve out to the extent of our country's 200-mile exclusive economic zone are also administered by the Department of Commerce in non-reserve status. Midway and its waters out twelve miles constitute the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1988 and administered by the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). With the exception of Midway, the islands of the NWHI and certain offshore waters, including some Hawai'i waters and some Reserve waters (except for waters off Kure Atoll), also constitute the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, originally established as a bird reservation by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1909 and now under joint FWS-Hawai'i management.

On the face of it, if one's end-goal is, as is mine, to provide the highest level of permanent protection to the total ecosystem of the NWHI and waters, this structure can work and is, in most cases, working. The FWS is managing its jurisdiction within the Midway Atoll and the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuges toward the goal of full protection and preservation under longstanding and well-established federal mandates and mechanisms.

And just last Friday, May 13th, the State of Hawai'i's Board of Land and Natural Resources, responsible for the administration of all state lands and waters, voted to establish throughout Hawai'i's NWHI waters the North-

western Hawaiian Islands Marine Refuge, together with rules prohibiting commercial or recreational fishing within refuge waters. The Board's action followed a public input process which yielded some 110,000 comments supporting the most stringent protections. As Peter Young, Chair of the Board, said at the time: "We are dealing with a special place, and it's different." For this action, Chair Young and the Board deserve our lasting gratitude.

To complete now this penumbra of protection and truly discharge our responsibility of stewardship, we must turn our attention primarily to the Reserve. Following its establishment, subsequent legislation mandated that the Reserve be converted to a National Marine Sanctuary. Public scoping meetings began in 2002, and the National Marine Sanctuary Program published "Advice and Recommendations on Development of Draft Fishing Regulations" in September 2004.

Essentially, in an effort to forge compromise between the interests of fishermen who operate in the Reserve, the desire of the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WESPAC) to retain control over the Reserve, the opinion of scientists and conservationists that the area remains vulnerable, and the overwhelming sentiment of the people of Hawai'i for protection, the Program proposed a management plan that would allow current fishing to continue and keep WESPAC involved in Reserve fishery management. WESPAC, however, subsequently proposed alternative Reserve regulations that would expand current fishing, open a fishery for precious corals, and provide only a temporary closing of the lobster fishery. Final Program Reserve regulations are pending.

This is an opportune, in fact optimum, time, before the Program acts any further, for us all to first stop, look, and listen, and second move to a whole different beat. And in doing so we must first ask this basic question: shouldn't there be some special places in our marine world which are in fact true reserves—truly off-limits, where our marine species can live and thrive in their natural state, without the invasive, extractive hand of humankind? I know in my heart that the answer is yes, and that the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and their waters are where we should just do it.

The challenge, however, is that we simply do not have an existing federal marine statutory and regulatory regime that encompasses this goal. We do have a National Marine Sanctuary Program run by good people with good intentions, administering a number of national marine sanctuaries. But the basic statutory and regulatory authority under which the Program operates and the sanctuaries are administered requires a balancing of sometimes-competing uses, including extractive uses, which is why some form of extractive use, fostered by fisheries management councils such as WESPAC, is allowed in all of our nation's national marine sanctuaries. There is simply not the regime in place to create what truly would be a sanctuary in the literal sense of the word, to forge a world such as my State of Hawai'i just proudly did in creation in its waters of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine Refuge.

My Northwestern Hawaiian Islands National Marine Refuge Act of 2005 would do just that: establish the public policy of this country that there should exist in the waters of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands one place that is