

community and worldwide. In 1985, Rotary International launched Polio Plus and spearheaded efforts to immunize the children of the world against polio. Since then, polio cases have dropped 99 percent, and the world now stands on the threshold of eradicating this dreaded disease.

Mr. Speaker, Rotarians live by the 4-way test: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build good will and better friendships? And will it be beneficial to all concerned?

Would not we all be better off if we adopted this creed? Congratulations Rotary International.

THE UNITED NATIONS

(Mr. GOHMERT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I do applaud the comments being a Rotarian. Rotary International has done a great deal.

But I rise today because, yesterday, we heard and read news reports of the United Nations efforts to keep secret the very information with which it should have been most forthcoming. At a time when the United Nations' reputation for trust, justice, fairness and following its own rules is at an all time low, it should be doing everything it can to bring information to light, whether it is good or bad.

However, this United Nations and apparently its leader has far more guilty culpability than many of us ever suspected. The United Nations' leadership seems united in one thing: Do not let people discover the truth. The U.N. leadership, if it spent half the time lining the fabric of freedom as it is alleged to have done in lining the pockets of his family and friends, we would not have these problems.

If the U.N. is going to cover up the wrongs it has done from those who pay for the U.N., then it is high time we cover our U.S. bank account from them. We are literally paying them to hire guns, to hide information from us. Organized crime is said to have cleaners that come in and clean up after illegal activity. Sounds like the Secretary General himself has full-time cleaners on his staff.

It is time to hold the U.N. accountable.

TAX CUTS

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, at the end of last week, we got reports of an unanticipated surge in revenues to the Federal Treasury. Many people on this House Floor from the other side of the aisle for a long period of time decried the prospects of the Bush tax cuts, saying that they would take our economy right into the tank and ensure that we would never be able to balance the Federal budget.

Well, the fact of the matter is, Democrats and Republicans alike now talk about the need to focus on fiscal responsibility and turning the corner on the massive Federal deficit that we have. The single most important thing that we can do is to make sure that the economy is growing.

And we, by virtue of putting into place the tax cuts in the last 3 years, have actually dramatically increased through those tax cuts by 29 percent the flow of revenues to the Federal Treasury, beyond what had been anticipated. Our policy of making sure that we grow the economy is critically important.

Another component of that will be passage of the Central American Free Trade Agreement, which we will be voting on in the not-too-distant future. It is critically important that we keep this pro-growth agenda moving so that we can, in fact, have the revenues we need to balance the budget.

COMMUNICATION FROM CHAIRMAN OF JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE LIBRARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KOLBE) laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable BOB NEY, Chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE LIBRARY,
Washington, DC, May 6, 2005.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
H-232 The Capitol, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to Public Law 101-696 Section 801 (40 USC para. 188a(b)) the Chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library is provided a position on the Capitol Preservation Commission.

I am appointing Mr. JOHN MICA of Florida to be my designee as provided for in Public Law 101-696 section 801 (40 USC para. 188a(c)).

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
BOB NEY,
Chairman, Joint Committee on the Library.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken after 6:30 p.m. today.

CHARLES "PETE" CONRAD ASTRONOMY AWARDS ACT

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1023) to authorize the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to establish an awards program in honor of Charles "Pete" Conrad, astronaut and space

scientist, for recognizing the discoveries made by amateur astronomers of asteroids with near-Earth orbit trajectories.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1023

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Charles 'Pete' Conrad Astronomy Awards Act".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

For the purposes of this Act—

(1) the term "Administrator" means the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration;

(2) the term "amateur astronomer" means an individual whose employer does not provide any funding, payment, or compensation to the individual for the observation of asteroids and other celestial bodies, and does not include any individual employed as a professional astronomer;

(3) the term "Minor Planet Center" means the Minor Planet Center of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory;

(4) the term "near-Earth asteroid" means an asteroid with a perihelion distance of less than 1.3 Astronomical Units from the Sun; and

(5) the term "Program" means the Charles "Pete" Conrad Astronomy Awards Program established under section 3.

SEC. 3. PETE CONRAD ASTRONOMY AWARD PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall establish the Charles "Pete" Conrad Astronomy Awards Program.

(b) AWARDS.—The Administrator shall make awards under the Program based on the recommendations of the Minor Planet Center.

(c) AWARD CATEGORIES.—The Administrator shall make one annual award, unless there are no eligible discoveries or contributions, for each of the following categories:

(1) The amateur astronomer or group of amateur astronomers who in the preceding calendar year discovered the intrinsically brightest near-Earth asteroid among the near-Earth asteroids that were discovered during that year by amateur astronomers or groups of amateur astronomers.

(2) The amateur astronomer or group of amateur astronomers who made the greatest contribution to the Minor Planet Center's mission of cataloguing near-Earth asteroids during the preceding year.

(d) AWARD AMOUNT.—An award under the Program shall be in the amount of \$3,000.

(e) GUIDELINES.—(1) No individual who is not a citizen or permanent resident of the United States at the time of his discovery or contribution may receive an award under this Act.

(2) The decisions of the Administrator in making awards under this Act are final.

(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—From sums otherwise authorized to be appropriated, there are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) and the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. UDALL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within

which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1023, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, during my recent tenure as chairman of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics of the Committee on Science, one of my top priorities was to mitigate the threat posed by near-Earth objects. The hearings of our subcommittee have revealed that monitoring and tracking near-Earth objects, that is, NEOs, such as comets and asteroids, not only advance astronomy but are critical to identifying the near-Earth objects that may threaten the Earth.

Mr. Speaker, just as recently as last December, an asteroid 350 yards in diameter, named 2004 MN4, was discovered to have an orbit that will take it less than one-tenth of the distance from here to the moon. That is right in the region of where our artificial satellites are, and that will happen in the year 2029.

According to NASA JPL and the Minor Planet Center at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, several additional close encounters are possible in the next decade or two, and thus, we have one coming very close soon. And we have some that are predicted shortly thereafter. The hazard associated with such an asteroid hitting this planet is fairly well known. It could flatten an area the size of Texas or perhaps Colorado, I would say to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. UDALL), or Tennessee or any of the other States and cause significant tsunami damage to coast lines throughout the world.

We cannot assess the risk or likelihood of such an event unless we know what is out there. Accounts of asteroids passing close to the earth have raised public awareness of the possibility that one day one of these objects could hit the earth with potential catastrophic consequences. Given the vast number of asteroids and comets that inhabit the Earth's neighborhood, greater efforts for tracking and monitoring these objects is critical.

This is why I authored H.R. 1023, the Charles "Pete" Conrad Astronomy Awards Act. This bill is strongly supported by NASA, the Smithsonian Institute and our colleagues across the aisle. This is truly a bipartisan effort. I thank them all. H.R. 1023 authorizes the NASA administrator to give one award each year to the amateur astronomer or group of amateur astronomers who discover the intrinsically brightest near-Earth asteroid among the near-Earth asteroids discovered in that preceding year by amateur astronomers. Another award will go to the amateur astronomer or group of amateur astronomers who made the

greatest contribution during the preceding year to the Minor Planet Center's catalog of known asteroids. The recipients of the awards will receive \$3,000, and it is limited to U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

This bill is a tribute to Pete Conrad for his tremendous contributions to our country, to the world and to the aerospace community over four decades. Pete Conrad was a pilot, an explorer, an entrepreneur of the highest caliber. He was a friend of mine who lived in Huntington Beach. He commanded *Apollo XII*, and during that mission, he became the third man to walk on the moon. He saw space as a place to get to and to explore and to do business. Space exploration and commercialization is what he was all about. It was his job to explore the moon and to get to know the heavens better. He then worked to develop a new spacecraft and a new space transportation system. That is when I got to know him the best, a few years ago.

An interesting aside, the analysis of an orbiting object identified by an amateur astronomer, and that is just recently, suggests that instead of a near-Earth object being an asteroid, what was identified were the remains of the Saturn V rocket, third stage, which most likely came from Pete Conrad's Apollo mission.

So I find no better way to honor Pete Conrad, who died just a few years ago tragically in a motorcycle accident, than to establish this annual astronomy award for future asteroid discoveries in his name. He always wanted people to be looking up. He always wanted people to be positive. He was a can-do American with a very positive spirit, American spirit. He, in fact, exemplified the American spirit more than any person I have ever met. He was often remembered of course not only for his walk on the moon but his historic description of the moon landing and also, I might add, his historic description of the take off of his rocket, which was, "whoopee". Well, that was the Pete Conrad we knew. And he was excited about life and excited about technology as expanding the horizons of our people and the safety of this planet.

Films like *Armageddon* and *Deep Impact* of a few years ago excited large audiences, but it is vital for all of us to realize that this is not just the movies we are talking about. This is not science fiction. We all know that Earth's moons and other planetary objects are covered with impact craters. Most people have heard of the dinosaur extinction theory or perhaps seen a picture of this meteor and crater in Arizona suggesting that the craters on the moon and these other places could well have had serious impact on the Earth and may well have that impact in the future. However remote the possibility of a near-Earth object striking the Earth and causing a worldwide calamity, no matter how obscure or how remote that is, there is a calculable

threat, and we should know what that threat is.

And while the asteroid that is believed to have killed the dinosaurs is estimated to have occurred many many years ago and will only occur once every 100 years, smaller, yet still hazardous asteroids could impact Earth much more frequently. For example, the destructive force of an asteroid that struck Siberia in 1908 was roughly equal to a 10-mega-ton blast of TNT.

Ironically, if we look at asteroids from the perspective of our national goals in space, they offer us not just a threat that we are looking at but also a unique opportunity. This is one reason that we should be tracking these asteroids, because in terms of pure science, asteroids are good geological time capsules from the era when our solar system was formed. Even better, they are orbiting mines for metal, for materials and other resources that can be possibly used to build large structures in space without having to carry up the materials to build those structures from the Earth. So far, NASA has surveyed 650 asteroids. But this is a fraction of the projected total population of asteroids and near-Earth objects. What needs to be done now is to fully understand near-Earth objects and the potential threat and, yes, the potential use that they could pose for the world.

In closing, asteroids deserve a lot more attention from the scientific community and from the American people. The first step to tracking them and tracking sizable near-Earth objects is H.R. 1023, and it is a modest step. But what we are doing is mobilizing the amateurs and the young people and the private sector, if you will, and students throughout the country to look up and enlisting them in this effort. Nothing could be better for encouraging young people to get involved in the space program, to have them involved in trying to win this award and looking out into the heavens and identifying what they see. I would suggest that this small award will have an enormous impact on the number of young people that are involved in astrology and thus involved in America's space program.

□ 1430

I would urge my colleagues to vote for H.R. 1023 which will encourage young people, in particular, as I say, to look up; and let us all as we pass this bill remember Pete Conrad and the great space entrepreneurs and the great space explorers that are leading the way for the next generations of Americans which will go a long way towards filling and fulfilling the legacy left by Pete Conrad.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I rise today with my good friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER), to speak in favor

of H.R. 1023, the Charles "Pete" Conrad Astronomy Awards Act.

This bill is a thoughtful measure that establishes an awards program to encourage efforts by amateur astronomers to detect and catalog near-Earth asteroids.

As the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) pointed out, near-Earth asteroids are of interest for a number of reasons. Scientifically, they provide a window into the earliest days of the solar system. Some of the near-Earth asteroids are also thought to contain valuable minerals and ores that could be mined by future generations. Finally, there is a growing consensus that near-Earth asteroids have impacted the Earth at various times in its history, resulting in widespread extinction of animals and plants. For that reason alone, I think it makes very good sense to learn more about these objects.

NASA, of course, has been conducting research on asteroids and comets for a long time. I agree with the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) that the amateur astronomy community offers an important additional source of observations. Moreover, as one who is very interested in promoting science education and outreach, I believe that H.R. 1023 offers a constructive, low-cost way of stimulating public interest in astronomy.

I want to congratulate the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) on his initiative. I think it is a sensible measure. I urge my colleagues to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 1023.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me note that there are a lot of people who poo-pooed this idea of near-Earth objects and said, you are just trying to scare people, or whatever. And after the movie "Deep Impact" and such, that maybe this is some sort of scare tactic or you are trying to get attention by talking about something, a threat that is so minuscule that why should we worry about it.

Well, several years ago, I chaired a hearing into the near-Earth object issue, and one of the witnesses who was poo-pooing this idea and downplaying the risk suggested that the chances of me dying from this near-Earth object striking the Earth were the same chances that I would have of going to Las Vegas and having a royal straight flush. And it was a shocking thing for him to tell me that because, Mr. Speaker, I did go to Las Vegas once and had a royal straight flush and it was amazing.

I said that happened to me, and the fact is that, yes, it is unlikely that people will get royal straight flushes and it is unlikely that we will have near-Earth objects destroying all of hu-

mankind, but we should nevertheless be prepared if there is a possible way to avert a catastrophe by having knowledge of a near-Earth object heading in our direction.

Also, as the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. UDALL) described, if near-Earth objects are coming close to the Earth, they pose a great opportunity for us as well as create a threat if they were headed towards us. We should be prepared, number one, to try to alter the course if it is a dangerous course towards the Earth of a near-Earth object; but we should also be prepared to take advantage of the potential if there is a near-Earth object coming near the Earth to utilize it for a number of things like mining or studying the nature of the universe.

With this said, I cannot think of a better tribute to Pete Conrad who fought in World War II and who protected our country but also moved on and made great contributions to his country through the space program than to have this, as a civilian, I might add, in a civilian entrepreneur mentality that Pete exemplified. All of these are encompassed in this bill: safety and prosperity and accomplishment.

With that said, I ask my colleagues to join me in voting for this Pete Conrad bill, H.R. 1023.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I will be brief. I just want to second what the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) has outlined here, that the Earth has been hit over geologic times by a number of asteroids and bodies outside the orbit of the Earth. And it would be a smart thing for us to do to better understand the potential impacts and effects.

Secondly, I just wanted to lend my voice to those of us here who admired Pete Conrad and think this is a very suitable way to keep his legacy alive and to inspire, particularly young people, as we have discussed here today, to go into this exciting world of astronomy and space exploration. Pete Conrad is a shining example of that.

It is with pride and excitement that I want to acknowledge the efforts of the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER). I urge all the Members to vote for this important piece of legislation.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise as a strong supporter of H.R. 1023, a bill that authorizes the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to establish an awards program in honor of Charles "Pete" Conrad, who was an astronaut and space scientist, for recognizing the discoveries made by amateur astronomers of asteroids with near-Earth orbit trajectories. Let me thank my colleague on the Science committee, Mr. ROHRBACHER for introducing this resolution and seeing it through for final pas-

sage. This resolution honors the scientific contributions of the past, while also recognizing the scientific discoveries of the future.

Known for his sense of humor and infectious grin, Charles P. Conrad, as commander of the Apollo 12 mission, was the third person to walk on the moon. Not a tall man, Conrad stepped down onto the lunar surface in November of 1969 and cheerfully commented, "Whoopie! Man, that may have been a small one for Neil, but that's a long one for me." Born June 2nd, 1930 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he graduated from Princeton University in 1953 and went on to become a Navy test pilot. Selected as a NASA astronaut in 1962, Conrad in 1965 went on his first space flight—the endurance record setting Gemini 5 mission. His final space flight was to Skylab in 1973.

Unfortunately, Conrad died from injuries in a motorcycle accident on Thursday, July 8, 1999. Today, we have a chance to ensure that his legacy lives on. In addition, we have the opportunity to recognize the discoveries made by amateur astronomers of asteroids with near-Earth orbit trajectories. This is indeed a worthwhile resolution because it allows us to celebrate a great man of science and recognize the amateur astronomer of today. So, I urge my colleagues to support this meaningful legislation.

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague, Congressman DANA ROHRBACHER, introducing this important legislation honoring our late California constituent, Charles "Pete" Conrad, for his remarkable achievements in spaceflight as well as his contribution to the U.S. aerospace industry. Pete was a great American and this is a tribute to his contributions to space and to science.

Pete Conrad was an individual who was always pushing the envelope with an exuberance that matched his animated personality and sense of humor. Pete's first flights were in the Gemini program, where he established both the record for endurance and for altitude in space. Then, as the commander of *Apollo XII*, he became the third man to walk on the Moon—to which he exclaimed in his typical enthusiastic manner, "Whoopie! Man, that may have been a small one for Neil, but it's a long one for me." His final National Aeronautics and Space Administration mission was a commander of Skylab II, the first United States space station.

Once he left the Astronaut Corps, Pete delved into what was then the nascent aerospace industry. He worked to sell the industry to the American people and to excite them on the possibilities of the return to and the colonization of the Moon, the development of single-stage-to-orbit vehicles, and in the exploration of the solar system. During this time, Pete stayed with his love of anything that would go fast—airplanes, helicopters, cars and motorcycles. He raced helicopters across the country; he raced airplanes in air shows; and he raced motorcycles in local races. Tragically, he died from injuries resulting from a motorcycle accident in 1999 and at the age of 69 in Ojai, CA.

This bill, which honors Pete Conrad and is a tribute to his wife Nancy, encourages young people to get involved in astronomy by offering prizes to amateurs for their contributions to

astronomy by either discovering the brightest near-Earth object or by the cataloging of near Earth objects. What better way to get our children interested in science and in paying tribute to this great American.

Mrs. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KOLBE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1023.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT OF THE HISTORIC MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY TO PROMOTE THE CIVIL SOCIETY IN CUBA

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 193) expressing support to the organizers and participants of the historic meeting of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba on May 20, 2005, in Havana.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 193

Whereas Fidel Castro's terrorist regime has continued to repress all attempts by the Cuban people to bring democratic change to Cuba and denies universally recognized liberties, including freedom of speech, association, movement, and the press;

Whereas thousands of political prisoners are currently imprisoned by Fidel Castro's totalitarian regime;

Whereas in March 2003 Fidel Castro carried out a massive, island wide crackdown on members of Cuba's pro-democracy movement, under which pro-democracy activists were arrested, subjected to "summary trials", and sentenced to up to 28 years in prison for their pro-democracy activities;

Whereas the Department of State's 2004 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, in referring to Castro's Cuba, states: "Members of the security forces and prison officials continued to beat and abuse detainees and prisoners, including human rights activists. . . . Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening, and the Government restricted medical care to some prisoners as a method of control. Prisoners died in jail due to lack of medical care.";

Whereas on May 20, 1902, the Republic of Cuba obtained its independence;

Whereas in the spirit of Jose Marti, many of the future leaders of a free Cuba have called for a meeting of the Assembly of the Civil Society in Cuba, an organization that consists of over 360 opposition and civil society organizations in Cuba;

Whereas on May 20, 2005, the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba seeks to convene an historic meeting in Havana on the 103rd anniversary of Cuban Independence;

Whereas the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba will focus on bringing democracy and liberty to the enslaved island of Cuba;

Whereas the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba is led by three coura-

geous pro-democracy opponents of the Castro regime—Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello, Felix Bonne Carcasses, and Rene Gomez Manzano;

Whereas organizers and participants are convening a meeting of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba at great risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas President George W. Bush stated in his second inaugural address on January 20, 2005: "All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you. Democratic reformers facing repression, prison, or exile can know: America sees you for who you are—the future leaders of your free country." Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) extends its support and solidarity to the organizers and participants of the historic meeting of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba on May 20, 2005, in Havana;

(2) urges the international community to support the Assembly's mission to bring democracy to Cuba;

(3) urges the Administration and international community to actively oppose any attempts by the Castro regime to repress or punish the organizers and participants of the Assembly; and

(4) shares the pro-democracy ideals of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba and believes that this Assembly and others will hasten the day of freedom and democracy for the people of Cuba.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEXLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 193.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 193, and I commend the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) for writing this important measure and bringing it to the floor. I would like to also thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) and the ranking member of the Committee on International Relations, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), as well as the House leadership, for helping us bring this resolution to the floor in such an expeditious manner.

Mr. Speaker, even the most violent and repressive dictatorships cannot extinguish freedom when it lives in people's hearts, and Cuba is no exception. The dictator Fidel Castro has always used fear to keep himself and his cronies in power.

Two years ago, the tyrant again attempted to silence the cries for liberty and democracy that emanate from every corner of the Cuban gulag. He arrested over 75 dissidents and sentenced them to prison terms each up to 25 years. What were their crimes? Simply daring to exercise their fundamental freedoms, for daring to be free men and women.

These 75 are just some of the most recent ones. There are many more Cuban prisoners of conscience who languish in squalid jail cells. However, Mr. Speaker, all of Cuba is an island prison; and today we rise to commend and support the activities of Cuba's peaceful internal opposition.

On May 20, Cuba's democratic opposition will convene in an Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba. This historic meeting will discuss ways to bring democracy and liberty to the nation of Cuba, which has suffered under a brutal dictatorship for more than four decades. May 20, 2005, will also mark the 103rd anniversary of the Cuban Republic, of Cuba's birth as a free nation.

Yet the Cuban opposition is determined to correct this injustice and reclaim their rights as free people in a free, democratic, and sovereign nation. The May 20th Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba is an important step toward the fulfillment of this goal.

Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello, Felix Bonne Carcasses, and Rene Gomez Manzano and many others are the organizers of this landmark meeting. Despite the risks and the constant threats that the dictator holds over their heads, they are living examples to their countrymen of courage and determination, of how to follow in the footsteps of Pope John Paul, II, and be not afraid.

Just recently, a group of young Cubans held an essay contest focusing on a democratic transition in Cuba. One of the finalists, Edgar Lopez Moreno, struck a chord that doubtless resonates with the vast majority of his countrymen. He wrote: "After 46 years of political ostracism and imposition by the Communist Party and its maximum leader, today the process of transition to democracy on the island is closer than ever."

The winds of freedom are behind the Cuban opposition. The just nature of their cause has given them wings. Soon democracy will take flight in Cuba. Soon the Cuban people will free themselves from the grip of this dictator, but they need our help. They need our support, and it begins here and now.

I urge my colleagues to stand with these brave Cubans by joining me in voting for the resolution of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WEXLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution. Mr. Speaker, I too