

Cuba. His peaceful, pro-democracy activities and truthful articles have helped the world to learn the facts about the nightmare that is the Castro regime. Unfortunately, the dictatorship forcefully represses those who bravely support freedom and rise in resistance to the despotic regime.

According to Reporters Without Borders, on March 24, 2005, Mr. González was summoned and questioned by regime agents, who threatened that he would not be able to see his family again if he continued practicing as an independent journalist. Despite these gangster tactics and heinous threats, Mr. González continued to demand basic human rights for the people of Cuba.

As part of the tyrant's heinous July 2005 crackdown on peaceful pro-democracy opponents, on July 22, Mr. González was arrested as he tried to participate in a peaceful demonstration outside the French Embassy in Havana, demanding the release of political prisoners in Cuba. As part of this vicious crackdown, over 30 brave opponents were arrested at home, on their way to the demonstration or on the sidelines of the gathering.

According to CubaNet, Mr. González has been charged with violating Law 88. This is the same brutal, sham law that the tyrannical regime used to wrongly convict many of the pro-democracy activists arrested in March 2003. According to Reporters Without Borders, Mr. Gonzalez is still awaiting trial for supposed "crimes."

On April 26, 2006, The Miami Herald published the following moving letter from Mr. González to his daughter:

In all the years that I have been by your side, you have never known me to pose a threat to anyone or anything, yet today I am writing to you from prison.

Neither one of us, in writing to each other for so many years, ever imagined we be doing it from a prison cell.

Such is life around these parts! Anything and everything can happen in this green island that so few really know about, weaving instead fantasies fed by the Cuban government's propaganda.

The reasons for my imprisonment would be incomprehensible to anyone living in the society you live in, but they are totally understandable to a Cuban.

I had the temerity to criticize and question the government of my country and to denounce its totalitarian character before the world. I did it in the only way I know, peacefully, with words.

For that, the Cuban government classifies us as criminals and calls us mercenaries and agents of U.S. imperialism. I swear to you that I have never had so much as a private conversation with any official of the United States or of any other country, for that matter.

Also, the only monies I have been paid from the only press agency for which I have ever worked, Cubanet, scarcely cover my few material needs.

The real reason for my confinement is to have denounced my country's government to a Cuban press agency in Miami, since the news media inside Cuba are closed to those, who like myself, exhibit independent criteria. Cuban media are only open to sycophants and apologists for the regime.

My conscience impels me to expose the abuses to which Cubans have been subject for more than 47 years now.

I never thought my modest contribution to the future of Cuba would go very far.

I'm a simple citizen who tried to make public the brutal nature of the Cuban gov-

ernment, thinking that would be my small contribution to the future of Cuba.

How was I to know my humble purpose would land me in prison at age 62 and in poor health?

My love for my country, for liberty and democracy, are the real causes for my imprisonment.

If some day you hear me say something that contradicts what I have said so far here, know that it is not your father speaking. It would be another man, reduced, drugged or in the throes of fear, and obligated to say whatever they wanted him to say under pressure of threats and blackmail.

I hope some day we can see each other again in our country, with liberty to walk down the street holding hands and looking to the future, without fear or hate.

Teach my grandson, next to the love of God and neighbor, the devotion to human rights and liberty so that he will never put up with injustice and abuses.

May God bless you, and may He allow me to kiss you soon.

Mr. González is a brilliant example of the heroism of the Cuban people. His letter exemplifies the Cuban desire to live in liberty, free of the tyrannical repression imposed on them by the murderous despot. Read the strength of this letter, Mr. González knows the violence, abuse, and repression that will be used to try to break him. Yet he stands strong in the strength of his conviction: "My conscience impels me to expose the abuses to which Cubans have been subject for more than 47 years now." Mr. González is an apostle of freedom for Cuba.

Despite incessant repression, harassment, incarceration and abuse, he remains committed to the conviction that freedom of the press and individual liberty are the inalienable right of the Cuban people. It is a crime against humanity that Castro's totalitarian gulags are full of men and women, like Mr. González, who represent the best of the Cuban nation.

Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear, Mr. González is languishing in the grotesque squalor of the gulag because he desires freedom for all Cubans. My Colleagues, read his letter often. We must demand the immediate and unconditional release of Oscar Mario González and every political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba.

INTRODUCTION OF THE JOURNEY THROUGH HALLOWED GROUND NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA ACT

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to create the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area. Senator ALLEN is introducing companion legislation in the Senate.

We remember the words of Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address:

We cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have hallowed it far above our poor power to add or detract.

The Journey Through Hallowed Ground winds its way along U.S. Route 15 from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, to Jefferson's home of Monticello, in Charlottesville, Virginia. Starting

as a trail used by the Susquehannock and Iroquois, America's early history can literally be traced along this corridor. Jefferson's Monticello, Madison's Montpelier, Monroe's Oak Hill and Ashlawn Highland, Zachary Taylor's homes, Eisenhower's Cottage, Teddy Roosevelt's Cabin, John Marshall's home, General George Marshall's home, and Camp David are situated along this route also dotted with numerous Civil War battlefields and sites from the underground railroad.

Designation of this historic route as a National Heritage Area will create a partnership between the Federal, State, and local governments as well as local civic organizations to commemorate, conserve and promote the history and resources along the Route 15 corridor between Gettysburg and Monticello. It will help link national parks to historical sites, package tourism opportunities, and provide financial and technical support for sites in the corridor.

This historic corridor includes a significant part of the 10th District of Virginia, which I am proud to represent. I echo the sentiments of author and historian David McCullough when he said that "[t]his is the ground of our Founding Fathers. These are the landscapes that speak volumes—small towns, churches, fields, mountains, creeks and rivers with names such as Bull Run and Rappahannock. They are the real thing, and what shame we will bring upon ourselves if we destroy them."

This bill is modeled after the legislation Senator WARNER and I introduced which created the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District in the Shenandoah Valley in 1996. Through that legislation, the Civil War battlefield sites in the Valley are being preserved. As with that bill, local, State and Federal officials, working along with landowners and business leaders will be able to better promote the history of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground attracting tourism and an appreciation for the unique history of this area.

I would like to thank the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership which has been working to forge partnerships that span the four States that fall within the proposed boundaries of the heritage area. This group has laid the groundwork in identifying the significant historical properties within such a concentrated area along U.S. Route 15. Dozens of towns and counties along the corridor have offered letters of support as have local civic groups. The Virginia General Assembly also has approved a resolution of support.

Thomas Jefferson in his Notes of the State of Virginia said:

You stand on a very high point of land. On your right comes up the Shenandoah, having ranged along the foot of the mountain a hundred miles to seek a vent. On your left approaches the Potomac, in quest of a passage also. In the moment of their junction, they rush together against the mountain, rend it asunder, and pass off to the sea. The first glance of this scene hurries our senses into the opinion that this earth has been created in time, that the mountains were formed first, that the rivers began to flow afterwards, that in this place, particularly, they have been dammed up by the Blue Ridge of mountains, and have formed an ocean which filed the whole valley; that continuing to rise they have at length broken over this spot, and have torn the mountains down from its summit to its base. The piles of rocks on each hand, but particularly on the Shenandoah, the evident marks of their

disrupture and avulsion from their beds by the most powerful agents of nature, corroborate the impression. But the distant finishing, which nature has given to the picture, is of a very different character. It is a true contrast to the foreground. It is as placid and delightful as that is wild and tremendous. For the mountain being cloven asunder, she presents to your eye, through the cleft, a small catch of smooth, blue horizon, at an infinite distance in the plain country, inviting you, as it were, from the riot and tumult roaring around, to pass through the breach and participate in the calm below.

The landscape Jefferson depicts has been inspirational to American leaders for hundreds of years. From Susquehannock Indian trading routes and to Revolutionary War battles; from the homes of the founding fathers to the first brave pioneers to make a home beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains; from the Civil War battles which threatened to divide the union to the underground railroad, our Nation was forged along this route. From Blue Ridge Mountains to the west and the fertile Piedmont to the east of the corridor the route in many ways exhibits the birth and development of our Nation's economy, social movements and political landscape. Perhaps even more significant than the battlefields that cluster along the route are the documents penned in the homes along the corridor. The Declaration of Independence, the Monroe Doctrine and the Marshall plan have influenced not only this Nation, but the entire world.

Every American citizen should take a trip along this route so that they know not only from where our Nation has come, but also to where we are going.

As we come upon the 400th anniversary of America's birthplace at Jamestown, I urge my colleagues to join with me in supporting this legislation.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA TAX INCENTIVES IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2006

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to introduce the District of Columbia Tax Incentives Improvement Act of 2006. The legislation builds on and adds to federal tax incentives I first got through Congress in 1997 in order to help produce residential and business stability and growth. These tax credits have surpassed the city's highest hopes with a renewed and replenished residential and business tax base to show for it. However, this bill is necessary if this growth is to continue to make up for the fact that the District is not a state.

Studies and investigation by experts widely agree that the D.C. credits have been very successful and have been the single most important factor both in stemming residential flight and in stimulating commercial development in the applicable neighborhoods. However the changes are appropriate to: reduce but target the credits to poor neighborhoods not yet reached; increase the efficiency of the incentives; achieve increased leverage from city and other federal resources; and provide

more incentive to purchase homes given the large increase in housing prices in the District.

The legislation would extend the life of the D.C. Enterprise Zone (EZ) Benefits to 2009 to put the District on par with the other cities that have empowerment zones and will allow the city to fully realize and assess the effectiveness of the incentives and eliminate the continuing uncertainty that has plagued the program. There was a disruption of economic activity and planning by the business sector when Congress did not immediately renew those provisions that expired at the end of 2003. The District is experiencing this setback again as H.R. 4297, the Tax Reconciliation Act of 2005, has not yet been passed and the District tax provisions are extended in that bill.

The improved EZ incentives will target the areas of greatest need; align the Zone boundaries with areas designated for concentrated investment by the Mayor's Great Streets Initiative; and more effectively connect the unemployed with job opportunities by limiting the Employment Credit to those businesses that employ persons residing in those census tracts that have unemployment rates twice that of the national average.

The legislation also asks for a triple tax exemption for District bonds which would allow the District to issue bonds at lower interest rates and put D.C. on par with other "stateless" jurisdictions, including Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands, with no loss of revenue to the federal treasury. Currently, bonds issued by the District are exempt from federal and District taxes, but subject to taxation by state and local governments for bondholders located outside the District.

With the first-time homebuyer tax credit, this bill raises the \$5,000 credit for a first-time homebuyer in the District to \$10,000 to help meet sharply increased home prices that are driving many lower middle and middle income taxpayers from the city. Senator TRENT LOTT raised the amount in the Senate bill several years ago, but that bill did not pass the House. The homebuyer credit and the economic development occurring in the District have been almost entirely responsible for significantly stemming taxpayer, residential and business flight, bringing both in significant numbers to the District. However, the improvements in my bill are essential if the District is to achieve the 100,000 new residents necessary to sustain its stability that the former D.C. control board said was necessary.

The federal tax incentives provided under the Enterprise Zone and homebuyer credit programs will be critical to the continuation of the District's essential fiscal partnership with the federal government, which seeks to diversify the D.C. economy, reverse the continuing rise in the unemployment rate in significant portions of the city, strengthen and diversify the District's narrow tax base, and address its structural fiscal imbalance.

The D.C. Enterprise Zone tax incentives and the homebuyer credit alone cannot solve these problems. But by extending and improving these measures, Congress can continue to make a low-cost, efficient and effective contribution to the District's economic well being.

COMMEMORATING THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CIVILIAN DEATHS AT QANA, LEBANON

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, the violent death of innocent civilians not involved in military hostilities is an appalling human tragedy. For decades, the violence in the Middle East has claimed a multitude of innocent civilian victims: Men, women and children, Arab and Israeli. It is with great sorrow that we remember one such incident that occurred just over ten years ago in Qana, Lebanon. A number of my constituents lost precious relatives on that day, April 18, 1996. Aboudi and Hati Bitar of Dearborn, Michigan, ages 7 and 9, were visiting their grandmother at Qana when they were killed. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Qana incident, we solemnly remember and mourn the loss of these innocent children and the hundreds of others who were killed or wounded on that tragic day. On behalf of Michigan's 14th Congressional District, my family and I offer our support and prayers to the Bitar family and to the many others who lost loved ones at Qana.

When it comes to civilian deaths, violent hostilities play no favorites. I call on my colleagues to pause to remember the civilian victims that the violence in the Middle East has claimed on all sides. Let us remind ourselves that this carnage among the innocent will continue until America makes a stronger effort to help resolve the issues that have bred the violence there.

HONORING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE POLISH AMERICAN WAR VETERANS

HON. JERRY F. COSTELLO

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the 60th Anniversary of the Polish American War Veterans located in Caseyville, Illinois.

The year 1946 saw our Nation's veterans return home from serving their country during World War II. During that year, a group of Polish American veterans in East St. Louis, Illinois gathered to form an organization that would recognize the contributions of Polish Americans during the war, celebrate their Polish heritage and assist veterans, their families and other organizations within their community.

The first discussions took place at Steve Mizulski's S.M. Tavern and the first organizational meeting was held at the Polish Hall in East St. Louis. Soon after this meeting, the Polish American War Veterans organization was chartered by the State of Illinois.

With the formation of the PAWV a slate of officers was installed. Stanley Gula was the first Commander and other officers were: Stanley Boryczko, Vice Commander, Joseph Skowron, Adjutant, Michael Bartosz, Quartermaster and Adam Wondolowski, Sergeant-At-Arms. Initial charter members were: Walter