

"Whereas the findings of the Chernobyl Forum, issued in September 2005, significantly added to the understanding of the health consequences and economic impact caused by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster;"

The Chernobyl Forum study understates the health consequences of Chernobyl. The authors excluded more than 30,000 anticipated cancer deaths from the collective doses in all other countries in the Northern Hemisphere. Over 6,000 thyroid cancer cases have been diagnosed so far in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, and more are anticipated. Recent scientific studies are revealing an increased incidence of solid cancers, including breast cancer, as well as cardiovascular and ophthalmic effects. These effects have long latency periods of more than 20 years.

In the Rivne region of Ukraine, 310 miles west of Chernobyl, doctors say they are coming across an unusual rate of cancers and mutations. There is a 30 percent incidence rate amongst people in the highly radiated areas that have physical disorders, including heart and blood diseases, cancers and respiratory diseases. Nearly one in three of all the newborn babies have deformities.

It took some 600,000 workers for recovery and clean-up operations, all of them exposed to high levels of radiation. Studies show that almost 35,000 people who took part in the cleanup of Chernobyl have died in the years since the catastrophe. The rate of death from cancer was nearly three times as high as in the rest of the population.

The conflicting scientific studies suggest much more research needs to be done. But it is essential that we do not minimize the effects of this disaster without cause.

I am concerned that any effort to downplay the effects of this disaster may jeopardize the U.S. financial commitment to Ukraine and the innocent victims. I cannot support anything that might permit the U.S. to abandon the Belarus, Russia and Ukraine victims of Chernobyl.

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 703.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT AND CONTINUED POLICE REFORM IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 744) expressing support for the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 as the blueprint for lasting peace

in Northern Ireland and support for continued police reform in Northern Ireland as a critical element in the peace process.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 744

Whereas the Good Friday Agreement, signed on April 10, 1998, in Belfast, was endorsed in a referendum by the overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland;

Whereas the parties to the Good Friday Agreement made a clear commitment to "partnership, equality, and mutual respect" as the basis for moving forward in pursuit of lasting peace in Northern Ireland;

Whereas the parties to the Good Friday Agreement also affirmed their "total and absolute commitment to exclusively democratic and peaceful means" in pursuit of lasting peace in Northern Ireland;

Whereas inclusive power-sharing based on these defining qualities is essential to the viability and advancement of the democratic process in Northern Ireland;

Whereas paramilitary activity by both traditions in a democratic society undermines the trust and confidence that are essential in a political system based on inclusive power-sharing in Northern Ireland;

Whereas on September 26, 2005, the International Independent Commission on Decommissioning (IIICD) confirmed the Irish Republican Army had destroyed its full arsenal of weapons;

Whereas the Good Friday Agreement called for police reform and establishment of a "new beginning" in policing in Northern Ireland with an effective, accountable, and fair police service capable of attracting support from the entire community, maintaining law and order, and adhering to the principle of the protection of human rights;

Whereas the new Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has made great strides in becoming an integrated, professional, and impartial police force under civilian control and responsive to all community concerns, and has worked to protect both communities from violence;

Whereas significant further work in police reform, and in fostering community acceptance of the PSNI, must still be accomplished;

Whereas the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Ireland continue to strongly support the Good Friday Agreement as the way forward in the peace process and have committed themselves to its implementation; and

Whereas the Government of the United States continues to strongly support the peace process in Northern Ireland: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) the House of Representatives—

(A) reiterates its support for the Good Friday Agreement, signed on April 10, 1998, in Belfast, as the blueprint for a lasting peace in Northern Ireland;

(B) commends the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Tony Blair and the Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern for their leadership and persistence in seeking a peaceful resolution in Northern Ireland;

(C) commends the Sinn Féin leadership in successfully urging the Irish Republican Army to end its armed struggle and verifiably put its weapons beyond use;

(D) commends Sir Hugh S. Orde, Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), for his leadership and for working to protect both communities;

(E) commends the PSNI for the institution of the Historical Enquiries Team, which will provide a thorough and independent examination of unresolved deaths that occurred in

connection with the Troubles from 1968 to 1989;

(F) commends Nuala O'Loan and the Police Ombudsman's Office for the work they have done in promoting human rights in law enforcement and in fostering community confidence in the PSNI; and

(G) commends the work of the Northern Irish Policing Board and its District Partnerships for promoting genuine community policing in Northern Ireland; and

(2) it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(A) all groups and organizations should end their involvement in paramilitary activity;

(B) all political parties in Northern Ireland should—

(i) agree to share power with all parties according to the democratic mandate of the Good Friday Agreement; and

(ii) commit to work in good faith with all the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement, which established the Northern Ireland Assembly and an inclusive Executive, the North-South Ministerial Council, and the British-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference, for the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland;

(C) since policing reform is a significant part of winning public confidence and acceptance in the new form of government in Northern Ireland, all political parties should cooperate fully with the PSNI in preventing and investigating crimes; and

(D) the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Ireland should work to achieve full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, including devolution of policing and justice, the normalization of the security presence, and of the Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland reforms, including long-term senior-level exchanges between the Garda Síochána, the police service of the Republic of Ireland, and the PSNI.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Iowa.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 744, a resolution introduced by International Relations Committee Chairman HENRY HYDE. H. Res. 744 expresses support by the House for the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 as the blueprint for lasting peace in Northern Ireland. In addition, it supports continued police reform in Northern Ireland, which is a critical element in the implementation of the Good Friday Accords.

At this time, I would like to commend Chairman HENRY HYDE, as well as Representatives ELTON GALLEGLY and CHRIS SMITH as well as our distinguished ranking members TOM LANTOS and JOE CROWLEY for their work on

this measure and more importantly their commitment to this singularly important peace process. I would like to also note the important role of Mr. WALSH of New York and Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts as the Chair and Co-chair of Ireland-related caucuses. H. Res. 744 also has broad-based support among those House Members who long have been concerned about finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Madam Speaker, since 1969, over 3,200 have died as a result of terrorism and political violence in Northern Ireland. For years, the British and Irish governments, assisted by the United States, sought to facilitate a peaceful settlement to the conflict. Finally, in April of 1998, the long-warring Catholic and Protestant factions in Northern Ireland signed the Good Friday Agreement. Just over a month later, strong majorities in both the north and south of Ireland endorsed the agreement in a referendum.

The Good Friday Agreement calls for the transfer of power from London to Belfast and the establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive Committee, in which Unionists and Nationalists share power. It also contains provisions on disarmament, reformed policing, human rights, prisoners, and demilitarization by British Armed Forces.

Madam Speaker, while the Good Friday Agreement provides a blueprint for achieving peace and justice in Northern Ireland, its full implementation has proved difficult. The devolved Northern Ireland government has been suspended since October 2002 amid a loss of trust on both sides of the conflict.

Unionists remain skeptical about the IRA's commitment to disarmament and nonviolence. As a result, they have so far refused to join the power-sharing institutions such as the Executive Committee, which was created by the Good Friday Agreement for the purpose of exercising executive authority in Northern Ireland.

On the other hand, Nationalists worry about the pace of police reforms. They have refused to join the Policing Board, the independent oversight body that ensures the Police Service of Northern Ireland is effective, accountable and impartial.

That leaves us at a standstill in the peace process. The Unionists do not have confidence as to the IRA's intentions and commitment to nonviolence. The Nationalists still do not have confidence in the police service and they question the Unionists' commitment to share power with Catholics.

This legislation directly addresses these issues and clearly endorses the Good Friday Agreement as the exclusive framework for a lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

Specifically, House Resolution 744 states that it is the sense of the House that all groups and both communities should end their involvement and paramilitary activity.

Second, the legislation calls on all political parties to agree to share power and work in good faith with the power-sharing institutions established by the Good Friday Agreement.

Third, since police reform is a significant part of winning public confidence in the new government in Northern Ireland, all political parties should cooperate fully with the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Lastly, House Resolution 744 calls on the governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland to work together to achieve full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

The language of the resolution puts a shared onus on both sides, Nationalists and Unionists alike, to take the difficult next steps that will move the peace process forward and lead to the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

Madam Speaker, this is an important piece of legislation that provides support for the Northern Ireland peace process at a critical time.

Again, I commend Chairman HYDE for introducing this resolution and for quickly bringing it to the floor for consideration.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution. I would first like to thank my good friends and colleagues, Chairman HYDE and Congressman CHRIS SMITH, for their tireless advocacy of peace and justice in Northern Ireland.

Madam Speaker, over the past several years the peace process in Northern Ireland has taken many twists and turns. The Good Friday Accord, designed to bring an end to the conflict in Northern Ireland, has been declared dead time and again. During the past few months, however, we have witnessed very promising developments in our efforts to fully implement the Good Friday Accord, which was signed almost 8 years ago.

In July of last year, the Irish Republican Army announced that it would forswear violence. The IRA followed up on that announcement by decommissioning a substantial portion of its weapons cache last fall. After these dramatic events, we all hoped and expected that the Good Friday Accord would be fully implemented.

It is becoming increasingly clear now that we have reached another impasse. Sinn Fein has refused to support the police in Northern Ireland or to encourage Catholic Republicans to join the police service. The Democratic Unionist Party has refused to enter local government with Sinn Fein or even to talk with them.

Meanwhile, Madam Speaker, despite the positive moves on the part of Sinn Fein, the Unionist paramilitary groups have yet to follow up with a no-violence pledge and disarmament agreement.

Our resolution addresses all of these outstanding issues. It challenges all the parties to renounce violence and to disarm, and it calls on all sides to fully engage in police reform.

Madam Speaker, after many setbacks, substantial pressure has finally developed to fully implement the Good Friday Accord. Our resolution is designed to support this forward movement and to help pave the way to a time when the conflict in Northern Ireland is only a subject for the history books.

I strongly support this resolution, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), who chairs the Friends of Ireland Committee and who has played such a central role on Irish issues in this Congress.

Mr. WALSH. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Iowa for yielding time to me and for his leadership on all issues relating to the International Relations Committee. I would especially like to thank Chairman HYDE and Ranking Member LANTOS for their leadership and the entire International Relations Committee and their staff for their hard work and effort in getting this important resolution to the floor at such a critical period in the Northern Ireland peace process.

The timing of this resolution could not be more appropriate. We are fast approaching the eighth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, and recent media reporting suggests that the British and Irish governments are working to restore a devolved government that has been under suspension since the police raids and the Unionist walkout of October 2002.

As one of 35 million Irish Americans in this country, I can't tell you how pleased and encouraged I am with these developments. For far too long, the people of Northern Ireland have been denied an equal voice and equal representation in government. It is time for the Assembly and Executive to be up and running and the people's business to be addressed.

Her island's citizens have spoken. They expressed their views for a shared future by overwhelmingly approving the Good Friday Accords by a margin of 95 percent in the Republic of Ireland and 71 percent in Northern Ireland. It is time for Northern Ireland's political leadership to acknowledge their wishes and fully carry them out.

In the last few years, progress has been spotty, but, nonetheless, there has been progress. That progress must continue without any backward steps or delays. I believe recognizing a few key leaders that have nurtured this progress can help highlight and strengthen this initiative.

First I would commend Prime Minister Tony Blair of Great Britain and

the Republic of Ireland's Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern. Northern Ireland has no better friend than these two men. They have been understanding to all viewpoints and fair to all political denominations and respectful of all traditions. They have been firm in conviction and steadfast in their beliefs; and, most importantly, they have been true leaders committed to a lasting peace. Both men deserve recognition and praise for their work.

Second, the leadership of Sinn Fein for their role in facilitating the complete decommissioning of the IRA's weaponry. This was certainly no small task. Sinn Fein has never received the full credit it deserves for delivering this historic moment. Sinn Fein made the commitment, the commitment was delivered in full, and that commitment has been verified by the International Monitoring Commission and the International Commission on Decommissioning led by General de Chastelain.

I have read reports of individuals being skeptical and wary of this declaration, but the facts speak for themselves. The IRA has abandoned its armed struggle in pursuit of its goals by political means. This must be fully acknowledged. Continued challenge does nothing but obstruct and inhibit the peace process.

I would like to add also, Madam Speaker, that the members of the Democratic Unionist Party, the DUP, led by Dr. Ian Paisley, will be here today meeting with Members of Congress, and we welcome them. We are delighted that they are here. We are excited about hearing their vision for the future of Northern Ireland, and they will be here to express that and develop personal relationships. Many of them are members of Parliament, in addition to being elected members of the legislative assembly in Northern Ireland.

Finally, the Policing Service in Northern Ireland, under the leadership of Hugh Orde and Nuala O'Loane, deserves recognition. Northern Ireland has experienced a dramatic improvement in policing over the last 8 years, with the current Catholic to Protestant employment percentage up 18 percent since the restructuring, and the police recruit ratio holding firm at 50-50.

It is imperative that people in all communities recognize that the Policing Service, while not perfect, is certainly not the Policing Service of old. They must begin to develop a relationship of trust and confidence in their police. It is only through this type of relationship that the community will be best served.

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Madam Speaker, again it gives me great pleasure to stand before you today in order to praise the Good Friday Agreement as the framework for peace in Northern Ireland and to recognize the remarkable progress that has been achieved.

I would also like to recognize the efforts of all the Members of Congress, House and Senate, and Presidents of both parties for their commitment to this process. I commend the efforts of all past leaders who have put personal and political ramifications aside for the greater good of Northern Ireland and urge all current leaders to continue to move forward. I urge adoption of this resolution.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to our distinguished colleague and my good friend, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY).

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from California for bringing this important legislation and resolution to the floor and I thank my colleagues that have been working on this for years.

I have been in Congress for 10 years now and during that 10 years we have been working on peace in Ireland. Many of us that are Irish call it "the troubles" which have continued over these years. And every time there seemed to have been a little bit of sunlight and we actually thought that peace would finally come to Northern Ireland, and we certainly fought and worked for that. But the Good Friday Agreement is certainly an important piece of legislation and it gave the goal and certainly the hope to the people of Ireland, and I think that is probably the most important thing.

There have been many bumps in the road over the years with the Good Friday Agreement, but it was the people of Northern Ireland, it was the people that basically said, let's go forward. So each time that we saw, as I call it, a bump in the road or a stop sign, it was the people of Ireland that said let's go forward. I happen to think we are at the crossroads now. And I happen to think that with all the people here in Congress especially, I support the things that have been said from my colleagues that we are honestly going to see hopefully peace come.

Ireland economically has done very well and we will continue to support them to do that. But I have to say when the IRA agreed to give up its weapons last February, I think that was certainly the biggest step that we could have asked. The people remain cautious in Ireland, but I do believe the IRA is showing good faith.

In February the Independent Monitoring Commission released a report. The report found that security forces believe that the IRA held on to weapons and is still intelligence gathering. In spite of that, the IMC stated that the IRA seemed to be moving in the right direction.

It is important that the people in Ireland who are working towards peace know that they have the support of the United States in these efforts. I encourage the Irish people to continue their work in the peace process, and I am proud to support this legislation.

We here in Congress carry a great deal of weight. The people of Ireland do

trust us. They appreciate us being with them during the good times and the bad times. I would like to say thank you to my colleague, Mr. WALSH, for all the great work in bringing us over to Ireland to meet with all political groups so we can try to see peace in our lifetime.

The Policing Commission has always been a stumbling stone, and yet when we have gone there and we have met and we have seen young Irish Catholic men and women joining the police force and the same on the Protestant side and learning how to be together, there is great hope in the future for all of us. But Northern Ireland and Ireland is going to win in the end, and the United States, I am happy to say, had a lot to do with that.

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), who has been such a leader on so many issues, including those that relate to Ireland.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I thank my good friend, Chairman LEACH, for yielding me time and for his leadership on this and on so many other resolutions and initiatives as well on behalf of human rights.

Mr. LANTOS, it is great to see you again on the floor, not unexpected. You are always here fighting the good fight on behalf of human rights.

Madam Speaker, I especially want to commend Chairman HYDE for offering this resolution. I am very proud to be one of the original cosponsors of it. It is a collaborative effort that strongly restates U.S. support for the Good Friday Agreement signed 8 years ago this month.

Madam Speaker, the Hyde resolution also underscores our unyielding support for the establishment of peace, justice, reconciliation and prosperity in Northern Ireland which we have all hoped for and we have all prayed for. While we are not there yet there has been some very encouraging signs.

On March 15, Madam Speaker, I chaired my eleventh hearing on the Northern Ireland peace process. All of these hearings have been comprehensive and insightful but this one was the first since the IRA's full renunciation of arms struggle and the decommissioning of its weapons.

Our resolution today makes note of that historic milestone, a remarkable development in the path to peace. Of course, equally significant for the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement is true, durable and transparent police reform. Here, too, Madam Speaker, there has been progress.

Today there is a vigorous and fiercely independent Police Ombudsman's Office, whose chief, Nuala O'Loane, has been a catalyst for reform. There is now a Policing Board in Northern Ireland composed of independent and party representatives to design and provide civilian control and fair non-sectarian policing. The Chairman, Sir Desmond Rea, and retiring Vice Chairman, Dennis Bradley, testified at our

most recent hearing. There is a new Historical Enquiries Team established by the PSNI Chief Constable Hugh Orde, which will provide a thorough and independent examination of unresolved deaths that occurred in connection with the troubles from 1968 to 1989.

H. Res. 744 rightly commends Nuala O'Loane, Sir Hugh, and the new policing institutions for the progress that they have made, often under very adversarial conditions. Even with these improvements, Madam Speaker, significant work further remains to be done in order to ensure acceptance by all the communities of the PSNI. A key stumbling block to that greater acceptance has been the lack of resolution of charges of official collusion in the murder of human rights lawyer Patrick Finucane. In 2001 the British and Irish governments jointly appointed Judge Peter Cory, a preeminent retired justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, to determine whether independent commissions should investigate possible state-sponsored collusion in six notorious and horrific murders. They also pledge to abide by his recommendations.

Two years ago Judge Cory, and he too testified at one point before our committee, 2 years ago he issued his report; and it called for five of the six murderers to be investigated independently. Yet, I am sorry to say, the British government has still not appointed an inquiry commission into the murder of the human rights attorney, Pat Finucane, who was gunned down in his home in front of his wife and three small children in 1989.

Every one of the 11 hearings that I have chaired on human rights and police reform in Northern Ireland has dealt with Pat Finucane's murder in whole or in part, yet still nothing has been done. The U.K. government must find a way to institute a credible inquiry which will be stepped by all, by Judge Cory, the Irish Republic, by the world community, but most of all, by the Finucane family.

If the population of Northern Ireland is to cease relying on paramilitaries for protection, which they absolutely must do, they must never rely on that, and transfer its trust to the police, it must have the confidence that the police and the authorities deserve trust. That is the major reason why these inquiries must be done and done right as soon as possible.

Again, I want to commend Chairman HYDE, Chairman GALLEGLY, Mr. WALSH, Mr. KING, of course Mr. LANTOS again, and Chairman LEACH, and also many of our staffs, including Mary Noonan, Richard Mereu and Dennis Curry for their work in writing and crafting this resolution which will put us in a bipartisan way on record for saying that the peace process must continue and the Good Friday Agreement must be fully implemented.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I want to commend all of my colleagues who have worked on this legislation.

We have no further requests for time and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, but I would like to conclude with just one reference to a distinguished American that is a member of your side, Senator George Mitchell, who did so much to work to achieve and develop the accord that we are now referencing in this resolution.

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this legislation introduced by Chairman HYDE.

Chairman HYDE, I would like to commend you for your continued support of the Good Friday Agreement and a lasting peace in the north of Ireland.

A few weeks ago during the Saint Patrick's Day festivities I had an opportunity to meet with many of the actors involved in creating a lasting peace in the north of Ireland.

When I met with the Taoiseach and Gerry Adams about the ongoing situation, I stressed the importance of bringing about representational government to the people of the north.

It has been over three years since free and fair elections took place in the north.

The people spoke and elected leaders to represent them, but I am sad to say when they went to the voting booth in November of 2003, their vote was not respected.

This issue needs to move forward so the people of the north can finally have democratic rule.

If a true and lasting peace is ever to be achieved the people must be able to feel they are invested in the process.

All parties must begin to put aside their differences and work toward the common goal of peace and reconciliation in the north.

This battle has been allowed to go on for too long with seemingly both sides knowing what the other is doing.

The IRA has lived up to its obligations and fully decommissioned and now it is time for Unionist paramilitary groups to for their example.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation and would urge all of my colleagues to send a strong message to the parties involved in the peace process.

The House of Representatives is engaged and would like to forward movement.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the resolution.

In doing so, I want to commend the tremendous work of an organization known as the Washington Ireland Program, or "WIP." Every year since I came to Congress in 1999, I have hosted a WIP student and I have found these students from both the North and the Republic of Ireland to be exceptional future leaders. WIP is a six-month program of personal and professional development that brings outstanding Protestant and Catholic university students from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to Washington, DC, for summer internships and leadership training. The program begins and ends with practical service in Northern Ireland and Ireland. In Washington, participants get firsthand experience with U.S. government and politics and an immersion in American culture by living with area Host Families. Through an intense eight-week schedule, young people from different sides of the political divide are challenged to work and

learn as a team and to create an environment of mutual respect. The program aims to send students home with enhanced professional interpersonal skills and a new confidence in their own leadership abilities which they are expected to demonstrate through service to their own communities.

To date, 300 young adults have graduated from the program. Many WIP graduates moved into important careers in politics, business, media, and education. These include: a research officer to the NI First Minister in Westminster; television and radio news journalists; reporters for major newspapers in Belfast and London; barristers and solicitors; university professors and primary school teachers; consultants with Accenture and Price WaterhouseCoopers; Dublin PR firm managers; assistant to Members of the NI Assembly and the Irish Parliament; political party operatives in Northern Ireland and the Republic; and Executive Officer for the Home Office in London.

This dynamic program should serve as a model for many of the geographically and religiously conflicted areas around the world. WIP is helping to ensure a lasting peace throughout the Emerald Isle. I congratulate its officials, staff, and volunteers, and hope that my colleagues will join me in supporting its efforts in the years to come.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong and enthusiastic favor of H. Res. 744, which expresses support for the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 as the blueprint for lasting peace in Northern Ireland and support for continued police reform in Northern Ireland as a critical element in the peace process.

Throughout my tenure in Congress, I have been a strong supporter of reinforcing the strong ties between Ireland and the United States. As a member of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Irish Affairs, one of my top goals is the achievement of peace, justice, human rights, and political stability in Northern Ireland.

Since the completion of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the U.S. has worked with all interested parties to help with its implementation. With over 40 million Americans being of Irish heritage, it is vital that the United States continue to play an active role in this process and contribute both the political and economic support needed to ensure that peace continues in Northern Ireland.

Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize the efforts of the involved parties who are working daily to make the promise of the Good Friday Agreement a reality. In recent months, there has been a promising softening of the Unionist position with relatively more favorable comments toward the Agreement. And, of course, the Sinn Fein has backed and overseen the IRA's abandonment of its armed campaign.

These are exciting steps toward a sustained and lasting peace in Northern Ireland. And, I remain very hopeful that the parties can make further progress toward a fully functioning government that operates in regular order to meet the needs of the Irish people.

I commend the Irish people on all of its successes and hard work and encourage all of my colleagues to support this important resolution.

Mr. HYDE. Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to offer H. Res. 744, which expresses

support for the Good Friday Agreement as the blueprint for lasting peace in Northern Ireland and support for continued police reform in Northern Ireland as a critical element in the peace process. I compliment the work of Subcommittee Chairmen ELTON GALLEGLY and CHRISTOPHER SMITH for improving and making the originally-introduced version even more constructive and stronger on policing. The Good Friday Agreement needs U.S. support and a push to fully implement all of its terms.

On the important issue of policing reform, the resolution before us wisely reflects the overall view of the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) for the north of Ireland, which has closely monitored paramilitary activities and made many critical suggestions for reform and change, especially in the area of a new beginning on policing.

The IMC is made up of highly respected representatives appointed by both the Irish and British Governments, and includes an American as well. In its May 2005 report to the two governments and interested parties, the IMC stated some key findings on the responsibilities of all of the political parties on criminal justice, and it has just reiterated these again in its February 2006 report.

The IMC said that all the parties should, among other things:

"Give credible vocal and practical support to all parts of the criminal justice system, including policing . . ."

"Play a full and constructive role in the participative organs of the criminal justice system, such as the Policing Board and the District Policing Partnerships."

These are some wise and constructive suggestions, which this resolution supports and fully endorses. We would encourage Sinn Fein and all the parties in the north to honor and live by these ideas for a better, more secure and democratic north of Ireland. There is no place for violence in the process.

Finally, my resolution also calls on both the Irish and British governments to fully implement the important Patten Commission police reform provision which calls for senior-level police officer exchanges between the Republic of Ireland and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). These exchanges are clearly needed so that some of the cultural, religious, and other long-standing issues dividing communities and the police in the north can fully benefit from senior-level understanding and diversity.

I urge adoption of the resolution.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of House Resolution 744, which honors the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 for being what I believe is, as the resolution states, "the blueprint for lasting peace in Northern Ireland."

Next Monday, April 10, 2006 will mark the 8th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, which has helped to bring nearly a decade of peace to Northern Ireland. As a result of the historic Good Friday Agreement, there is perhaps a greater potential for lasting peace in Northern Ireland now than perhaps ever, since the establishment of the Irish Republic. The Good Friday Agreement has outlined a plan for peace and reconciliation in the 21st century.

I believe the most significant result of the Good Friday Agreement was the revival of the Northern Ireland Assembly, a devolved government body that has facilitated important de-

bate between the political parties. Consequently, problems have been directly and civilly addressed through free and open debate. Unfortunately, as my colleagues know, due to disagreements between the political parties—the Social Democrat and Labor Party, the Ulster Unionist Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, and Sinn Fein—the Northern Ireland Assembly has been suspended since October of 2002. Ever since, the British government has taken direct control over the government to ensure stability. I would hope all sides can agree to terms in order to allow the Assembly to be reestablished.

Madam Speaker, I have met with the leaders of Sinn Fein, the DUP, the UUP and the SDLP, both here in the U.S. and in Ireland. All parties have conveyed to me that they agree it is vital for the future security of the North that new elections be held, an Executive put in place, and the legislative assembly reconvened. I agree with this view, and express the support of the U.S. House of Representatives to facilitate the peace process.

I thank the distinguished Chairman of the International Relations Committee, Mr. HYDE, for authoring this resolution.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, today I rise in strong support of H. Res. 744, a resolution that expresses support for the Good Friday Agreement as the blueprint for lasting peace in the North of Ireland. H. Res. 744 is an expanded version of a resolution written by my colleagues JIM WALSH, RICHARD NEAL, JOE CROWLEY, and I last November. I appreciate Chairman HYDE sponsoring this new bill with its additional language which I believe strengthens our initial endeavor and moving it to the House floor promptly. I am also grateful for the opportunity to work with the Chairman and his staff on the drafting of this resolution.

H. Res. 744 expresses our strong commitment to the ideals of the Good Friday Agreement, a referendum that was endorsed by an overwhelmingly majority of the people living both in the North and the Republic of Ireland on April 10, 1998. As we approach the 8th anniversary of this date, I think it is important to recognize those groups and individuals who have committed themselves to peace, justice, and equality and worked to fully implement this agreement. Much progress has been made since 1998 but much still more needs to be done.

First, I'd like to commend (UK) Prime Minister Tony Blair and the (Irish) Taoiseach Bertie Ahern for their leadership in securing a peaceful resolution in the North of Ireland. We would certainly not be where we are today if it were not for these two great statesmen. I'd also like to thank our own government, including both the Clinton and Bush Administrations, for their dedication and efforts to move this process forward. We have been lucky to have fine diplomats such as George Mitchell, Tony Lake, Richard Haass, and Mitchell Reiss play vital roles during the past decade.

One of the most significant changes in the North recently related to the changes in policing. The new Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has adopted many of the Patten recommendations to become a much more integrated, professional, and impartial police force. Under the leadership of its chief constable, Sir Hugh Orde, and its ombudsman, Nuala O'Loan, the PSNI is a much more effective and accountable law enforcement agency

that promotes human rights and fosters community confidence.

Finally, I'd like to commend the leadership of Sinn Fein, specifically Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, for successfully urging the Irish Republican Army to end its armed campaign and verifiably put all of its weapons beyond use. This was a crucial step in the peace process to demonstrate the Republicans' commitment to an exclusively democratic and peaceful process. There is no place for any paramilitaries in the North of Ireland and it is my hope that the remaining private armies will follow the IRA's lead by destroying their weapons and signing up to the peace process.

Now is a critical time for the people and the political parties in the North of Ireland. This Thursday the British and Irish governments intend to publish their plans for a resumption of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive. It is long past due for this government to be back up and running. But for this to happen, all parties must agree to share power and commit themselves to the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 744.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

COMMENDING THE PEOPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS FOR THE CONTRIBUTIONS AND SACRIFICES THEY MADE TO THE UNITED STATES NUCLEAR TESTING PROGRAM IN THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 692) commending the people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands for the contributions and sacrifices they made to the United States nuclear testing program in the Marshall Islands, solemnly acknowledging the first detonation of a hydrogen bomb by the United States on March 1, 1954, on the Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, and remembering that 60 years ago the United States began its nuclear testing program in the Marshall Islands, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 692

Whereas between 1946 and 1958, the United States conducted 67 nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands, 66 of which resulted in atmospheric fallout;

Whereas the most powerful of these tests was the hydrogen weapons test codenamed