

Our Constitution sets forth the written set of fundamental principles about which this U.S. Government, the United States, is to be governed. It establishes the three branches of the government that function here at the Federal level. And it is considered the supreme law of the land.

It is also the world's oldest written national constitution, and it confers upon Members of this body and the other body certain honors and certain great responsibilities.

We in Congress write laws constantly to implement those fundamental principles, and every once in a while we propose amendments to change those fundamental principles. I, therefore, think it is important that each one of us be intimately familiar with what is in the Constitution. It is a relatively short document, about 2,500 words, and I would not consider it an onerous task for my colleagues and I to at least once a year read that Constitution.

Before I came to Congress, I practiced as a CPA, Certified Public Accountant, and I still maintain that license. I am required as part of the licensing process of the State to participate in 40 hours of continuing professional education each year. I just finished that up this week for my license renewal. And I think that most professions have that.

I think that it is a modest step toward a continuing education process or program for Members of Congress, that being required or being encouraged, excuse me, to read the Constitution once a year would be a good thing to do. So this resolution, which I am hoping to gather support for, because I am curious as to who would push back or what the arguments would be from our colleagues as to why we shouldn't know what is in the Constitution, why we shouldn't be familiar with what is in the Constitution, why that is in the best interest of the 651,000 people that they represent here in this body.

So I would encourage other Members to sign on to this legislation that would encourage each one of us and our staffers, the senior staffers and others, to read the Constitution once a year and help us understand the differences between the way this government looks today versus what that Constitution requires.

OMAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the President transmitted legislation to implement the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement. The Senate Finance Committee will mark up this legislation tomorrow, and the word is the Senate is going to try to rush this through on the floor of the Senate in the afternoon. And the House Ways and Means Committee will take up this bill on Thursday.

This agreement is a test of globalization. Globalization is under major pressure today, in part because as it has spread, the benefits of increased trade between nations too often have not been widely shared among people within the nation. Workers rights matter, especially the ability of workers to represent themselves in the workplace because they are an important economic tool to spread more widely the benefits of expanded trade.

To help make globalization work, a view widely held by House Democrats is that trade agreements should include squarely within the text of the agreement a requirement that there be adherence to basic ILO standards within a reasonable transition period.

We have strongly opposed the standard that USTR has tabled for worker rights, and the environment, in FTAs, which requires that a nation must only enforce its own laws. It is a standard that USTR does not propose for any other provision of an FTA and would never dream of using for other economic issues, whether intellectual property or investment rules or any other.

Where an FTA has been negotiated with a nation using that standard, but at the time of the FTA vote the basic ILO rights were in operation in practice and in law, many of us have voted for the agreement despite opposition to the standard. That was the case in Chile, Singapore and Morocco.

With the Bahrain FTA, there was clear evidence that the ILO standards were there in practice so that there was a foundation for assurances that the laws would be swiftly brought into conformity with existing ILO-compliant practices. In accordance with law, unions in Bahrain enjoyed autonomous status, independent of the employer, beyond interference. In addition, as long as the union existed under law in an enterprise, the law provided that an employer must recognize it and engage with it in collective bargaining. So many of us voted to approve the U.S.-Bahrain FTA.

The conditions in Oman are very different than those prevailing in Bahrain and in those other countries where we have supported FTAs.

As one approaches consideration of the U.S.-Oman FTA, there are some clear truths. Oman is a nation in the volatile Middle East with good relations with the U.S.

Secondly, the amount of trade is small. It would likely grow under an FTA, but remain small, and thus any economic negative dislocations for either side would be small.

In practice and law, thirdly, realities in Oman today do not remotely meet the five basic ILO standards, including the right of workers to associate and bargain collectively.

Workers cannot be represented in the workplace unless they have their own representatives and their own organizations. This basic condition is not close to being true in Oman today.

Where there is an organization in an establishment, a representative committee, representatives of the employer belong as well as employees. There is an umbrella committee of representatives committees called the Main Representative Committee. From available information, of the 13 members currently on the MRC, the vast majority are high-echelon officials of companies.

For 8 months our staffs have been in touch with Omani and U.S. Government officials simply to get the facts on the table. We have put together two documents trying to obtain basic information. When the response to the first detailed inquiry came back incomplete, we took the time to send a second document, still without a response in detail. I ask that the second document be entered into the RECORD.

Any fair reading of these documents leads to one conclusion.

From all available information, there are no organizations of workers in Oman today. There are no organizations representing workers and bargaining on their behalf, so it is not surprising that there is not a single collective bargaining agreement today.

In reality, there are organizations made up of management and workers who operate mainly like joint committees to discuss labor management relations and problems.

The recent communication from the U.S. ambassador glosses over this basic fact.

It says: "Although the MOM recognizes the potentially problematic participation of senior officers in some of the committees, a move away from this tendency will take some time, given deeply ingrained cultural traditions that still place importance on tribal affiliations and highly value an individual's personal influence with decision-makers (termed "wasta"). Historically speaking, workers with issues have generally approached human resource representatives or committee members with problems because of these individuals known connections and ability to get things done. The MOM, as well as the committees, believes that it is more important to now raise awareness about the MRC and the RC's roles and promote membership rather than focus on technical limitations of the law."

There are two serious problems with this approach. First, no matter how it is spun, the organizations today representing workers are not organizations of and led by workers. They do not begin to meet the basic worker rights of association and bargaining.

Second, according to the Ambassador's own document, today 70 percent of the workers in Oman are foreign nationals. Of these 80 percent are from the Indian subcontinent (60 percent from India).

Present Omani laws say that members of an RC must be persons who have been there for a year and speak Arabic to be a leader. The Omani government says that the law is not enforced. It is difficult to tell what this means since people do not apply for membership in an RC or pay dues and since there have not been full responses to our questions. But in any event, if foreign workers are active participants in RCs, the vast majority comes

from nations where the laws and cultural conditions have given workers rights to form labor unions for decades.

Since Oman's practices are not in conformity with the basic ILO standards—most noticeably that workers lack the basic right to join worker organizations that are free from employer and government interference—it is vital that the changes in law be in place before we vote on the FTA. The Government of Oman has stated that it could not make these changes before October 31, 2006. If the Government acts before then—and the changes conform to basic ILO standards—we would be faced with circumstances similar to those that existed where we have supported free trade agreements.

The Ambassador says in his letter that Oman is “already complying with ILO core labor standards in practice, if not yet in law,” and it is a matter of bringing technical limitations “of the law” into conformity with practice. This is simply not true. Neither practices nor the laws come close to meeting basic international standards. To say otherwise twists both standards and reality. Doing so does not serve the purpose of carrying out cordial relationships between our nations. It does not represent an effective path for globalization.

MAY 24, 2006.

To: Andy Olson, Cynthia Plath.
From: Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee
Minority Staff.

Re Follow-Up Questions Concerning Current Practices With Respect to Labor Rights in Oman.

Thank you for providing information relating to our questions of May 12, 2006, in the cable from the U.S. Embassy in Muscat dated May 17, 2006. The information was responsive to some, but not other, questions. Thus, we have a number of follow-up questions. The following is a list of questions that were not answered in the cable, either in whole or in part, as well as questions seeking further clarification of information provided in the cable.

I. WORKER REPRESENTATION

1. What kinds of organizations are there representing workers?

c. In what industries or occupations in the public sector?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: “There are no committees in the public sector, which is covered by Civil Service Law.” Unclassified Cable dated May 17, 2006 from U.S. Embassy, Muscat (UC) at ¶4.

Follow-up Question: Does the Civil Service Law provide for the formation of representative committees? If so, what is the extent of any exception (e.g. “essential services” such as firefighters or police)?

d. How many workers do they cover in each sector? What is the percentage of represented workers compared with the overall workforce? As a percentage by sector? Please verify how this information is collected.

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: “Since committees do not yet require applications for membership, and do not have established procedures to collect dues, RCs currently represent de facto the entire workforce of a company, including those who have been employed less than a year. A February statistical bulletin confirmed the current private workforce of Oman to be 102,455 Omanis and 438,531 expatriates, meaning that approximately nine percent of the workforce is now represented by a union.” UC at ¶5.

Follow-up Questions: Since there are no applications for membership and no dues,

how do workers, comprising the entire workforce of a company where a representative committee is established, know that they are members of such an organization or represented by it? By what methods does the RC notify the workforce? Why does the Ministerial Decree set forth criteria for membership if every worker is a member? Do any of these committees have by-laws, if so how are they written and who votes for them?

e. Are there categories of workers that are not allowed to have organizations representing them? If so, what are they?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: “* * * the labor law does not prohibit any category of worker from establishing worker committees.” UC at ¶4.

Follow-up Question: This statement appears to conflict with another statement in ¶4 which states that “there are no committees in the public sector.” Please explain whether public sector workers are able to form representative committees.

12. How do workers form such organizations, what procedures must they follow?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: “As there are no official MOM application forms for establishing committees, employees wishing to establish a committee simply notify the MOM with a letter of intent and a list of elected officials comprising their leadership board.” UC at ¶3.

Follow-up Question: Based on the above response, what would happen if two different groups wished to form a committee? Are there any minimum threshold requirements?

3. Are employers/managers members in these organizations?

a. If so, in how many of the organizations are they? Which ones? Are they allowed to be officers? What offices do they hold?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: “Of the committees established, company management holds officer positions of Saud Bahwan Group, Omantel, Port Services, and Suhail Sahwan Group committees.” UC at ¶4.

Follow-up Questions: Are these the only representative committees where employers/managers are members? Do employers/managers hold offices in the RCs established at Petroleum Development Oman, Intercontinental Hotel, and El Hassan Co. Group? If so, what positions do they hold? Of the representative committees listed in the cable, what offices do the company management officers hold?

4. Is membership in these organizations limited to those workers who have been employed for more than a year? Are there any members of such organizations who have been employed less than a year? If so, which ones and how many?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

6. Are leadership positions in these committees limited to those who:

a. Have “good spoken and written Arabic language”?

b. Are permanent workers?

c. Have not been suspended from work for committing grave misconduct in the government or private sector?

d. Are there any leaders who do not meet the criteria listed above? If so, which criteria do these leaders fail to fulfill? How many such leaders are there? If there are non-Arabic speakers, where are they from?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to the above questions: “While Ministerial Decree 135/2004 delineates qualifications for leadership, such as the ability to speak and write Arabic . . . and not have been convicted of a felony, the MOM has not denied candidacy to anyone failing to meet these regulations, and, in fact, has encouraged people to participate regardless of proscriptions.” UC at ¶5.

Partially Answered: Please indicate whether there are any current leaders who do not meet the criteria listed above. How many such leaders are there? If there are non-Arabic speakers, who are they and where are they from? Can you provide evidence that the MOM has “encouraged people to participate regardless of proscriptions”? Are the workers informed that they should disregard the Ministerial Decree? If so, how has this been done in specific instances?

9. Has the government issued specific rules for the formation and functioning of these organizations, or otherwise participated in their activities? If so, what are these rules and in what way does the government participate?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to the above questions: “Labor committee members and government officials assert that, in practice, the government neither interferes with nor unduly involves itself in committee activities, but continues actively to support establishment of labor committees through private sector outreach and educational awareness.” UC at ¶1.

“The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) asserts that it is not intrusively overseeing labor union representative committee (RC) activities as permitted in Ministerial Decisions 125/2004, and claims that the actual application of the labor law is already ILO-consistent.” UC at ¶2.

Follow-up Question: Please provide examples of how the MOM “actively supports the establishment of” representative committees. How involved has the MOM’s activity been with respect to outreach and public awareness? Is the term “labor committee” anywhere found in communications from the MOM?

c. Does the MOM restrict the right of these organizations to belong to any organization or authority with headquarters outside the Sultanate or receive delegations?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

d. Does the MOM ban these organizations from holding public festivities or presenting public lectures without prior approval?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

10. Is there an umbrella organization or larger federation for these organizations? If so, how many are there?

a. Are all workers’ organizations required to be members of an umbrella organization or federation? If so, can they select among several or must they join one mandatory organization?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: “All established committees may participate in the national federation of unions, referred to as the Main Representative Committee (MRC). The MRC is currently the only umbrella organization to represent Omani unions internally and abroad, and members are chosen through secret ballot elections.” UC at ¶6.

Follow-up Questions: You indicate that established representative committees “may participate in the national federation of unions,” but it is our understanding that participation is mandatory. Please clarify what is provided for in law and current practice, for example, how many representative committees currently are members of the Main Representative Committee? Also, have secret ballot elections been held? If not, have elections been scheduled?

b. Are employers/managers allowed to be members of such umbrella organizations? If not, are employers/managers in fact members?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

c. Does the government participate in the selection of members of this umbrella organization including establishing the eligibility criteria? Has the government established the grounds for termination of these

members? Has the government terminated any members?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

d. Is this umbrella organization required to seek approval from the government (i.e. MOM) for administrative decisions, such as the approval of a logo? Does this organization provide notice to or send agendas (including other documents and papers) to the MOM in advance of meetings?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to the above questions: "Similar to the situation of the representative committees, members of the MRC do not give notice to MOM prior to general meetings; nor do they provide the MOM with a copy of their agendas or meeting minutes." UC at ¶6.

Follow-Up Question: Has the MOM ever requested that the MRC give advance notice of its meetings or provide related documents? Has the MOM asked to review a logo being prepared by the MRC?

e. Does the MOM send a delegate to the meetings of this umbrella organization? If so, how frequently?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to the above questions: "Moreover, no MOM official has ever attended any committee meetings or banned the MRC from meeting without prior approval. Members of the MRC maintain open relations with the MOM to discuss ongoing changes in the labor law and possible means to strengthen the labor unions." UC at ¶6.

Follow-up Question: Please explain the nature of the "open relations with MOM" to discuss the labor law and means to strengthen unions.

f. Does the MOM restrict the right of this umbrella organization to belong to any organization or authority with headquarters outside the Sultanate?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

g. Does the MOM ban this umbrella organization from holding public festivals or presenting public lecturers without prior approval?

Not Answered: Please provide a response. h. Where are the meetings of the umbrella organization held?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

i. Who are the current members of this umbrella organization? Please provide names and positions they hold within the umbrella organization, as well as the positions that they hold at the enterprise level(s).

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "... recent personnel changes at establishments have meant the addition of Issam al-Sheibany of Oman Oil Refinery and Aida al-Hashmy of the Al-Bustan Palace Hotel to the MRC, bringing the total number of MRC representatives to 13." UC at ¶7.

"As part of its outreach and organization, the MRC recently established four sub-committees to focus on specific areas of concern: —External Relations—This committee manages conferences and is headed by mid-level officer Saud al-Jabri of Petroleum Development Oman;

—Rights and Duties—This committee is headed by Oman's busiest labor advocate, Nahhan al-Battashi, of the Grand Hyatt Hotel Muscat;

—Articles of Association and Membership—Abdullah al-Araimi heads this committee, which serves as a resource for newly established committees; and

—Women's Issues—New MRC member Aida al-Hashmy of the Al-Bustan Palace Hotel heads up this important committee promoting women in the workforce." UC at ¶8.

Partially Answered: Please provide a complete and current list of all MRC members. Please include their names and the positions they hold within the MRC (including posi-

tions in any executive committee), as well as the positions that they hold at the enterprise or company level(s).

II. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS

1. Are there any?

a. If so, in what sectors?

b. Covering how many workers?

c. Covering what areas (i.e. wages, hours, working conditions, terms of employment, etc.)?

d. Are there areas that are outside the scope of bargaining? If so, what are they?

2. Have employers refused a workers' organization's request to negotiate collectively? If so, when and with what recourse?

3. Are there individual contracts between employers and non-managerial employees? If so, of what nature and to what extent?

Not Answered: The cable did not contain any information relevant to this section. Please provide a response.

III. ANTI-UNION DISCRIMINATION

1. What protections are provided to workers for exercising their rights to participate in organizing activities?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

2. What penalties are available to be assessed against employers who violate these rights?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "Although there are no penalties yet for anti-union discrimination (still under discussion), as evident by the Salalah example, the MOM and Oman's labor courts do not tolerate wrongful termination." UC at ¶12.

Follow-up Question: Are there any examples of cases where court action was taken against employers who have engaged in wrongful termination? If so, please provide details of the action taken.

3. How are workers informed of their rights?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

a. Have there been any reports that workers are reluctant to assert their rights because they fear being dismissed or otherwise retaliated against because they are unsure of their rights?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "While the MOM does keep a variety of labor statistics, there have been no reported cases of workers suffering retaliation for participating in worker committee activities." UC at ¶13.

Follow-up Question: What type of labor statistics does the MOM keep? Does it specifically track instances or cases of retaliation taken against workers for forming or engaging in representative committee activities? If so, please provide these data and/or examples. Is it possible that there are cases involving worker retaliation of which the MOM is unaware?

b. Are there any activities related to organizing workers or forming a worker organization that are grounds for dismissal or arrest? If so, what are they?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

c. Do employers or managers challenge the right of workers to have or form workers' organizations? If so, on what grounds do they challenge this right? What is the process for doing so and what methods of challenging the right to form a worker organization are permissible?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to the above questions: "Neither employers nor managers have challenged the right of workers to form a representative committee, moreover, labor organizing is not grounds for dismissal or arrest." UC at ¶13.

Follow-up Question: Does the MOM keep specific records to verify the statement that "neither employers nor managers have chal-

lenged the right of workers to form a representative committee"? How can the MOM be certain that it is aware of all pertinent instances involving an effort to form a representative committee or to engage in specific activities?

4. Does the MOM keep records of how many workers have been dismissed or otherwise retaliated against for participating in worker organization activities and what sanctions have been imposed against the employer and what remedies have been awarded the affected workers? If so, please provide these data.

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "To date, there has been only one case of an individual terminated who was also a member of a representative committee (reftel)." UC at ¶13.

Partially Answered: Please provide additional details regarding this individual's termination. For example, did the worker challenge his or her termination? If so, what remedies were provided to the worker? What penalties imposed against the employer? Was this case documented through any records?

5. What are the processes available to workers who believe they have been dismissed or otherwise retaliated against for engaging in organizing activities?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "As with any labor dispute, workers are encouraged to submit complaints to the MOM and may sue employers for wrongful dismissal. Labor courts favor the worker in the majority of cases, regardless of the reason for termination." UC at ¶13.

Follow-up Questions: Can you provide examples of labor courts rendering favorable determinations to workers who have been wrongfully dismissed? How many cases have there been? Can you provide evidence to support the assertion that "labor courts favor the worker in the majority of cases . . . ?"

IV. RIGHT TO STRIKE

1. Does the law explicitly permit workers to strike?

a. If so, is the right available to all workers or only to specific categories of workers?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

b. Have workers exercised this right? If so, on what specific occasions?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "While the law does not explicitly permit workers the right to strike (to be amended by October 31), there were 33 strikes involving 6,000 workers in 2004 and 4 strikes involving 1,083 workers in 2005." UC at ¶12.

Follow-up Questions: What were the outcomes of these strikes? Per the question below, were they considered legal?

2. Are there specific procedures that workers must follow to declare a legal strike? Have any strikes been declared illegal? If so, on what grounds?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

4. Is there a practice or a requirement for arbitration to settle disputes? If so, under what circumstances and under what procedures?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

5. Did a strike occur at the Port of Salalah? If so, was any participant disciplined? If so, was there subsequent reinstatement and when?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "In 2005, there was one reported collective complaint that occurred during one of Oman's most widely publicized strikes. As reported in refTel, workers at Salalah Port closed Oman's largest seaport for two days while the MRC and the MOM negotiated the reinstatement of a committee representative

who had been fired. In addition to the strike, workers took the opportunity to successfully renegotiate working hours and split-shift schedules." UC at ¶12.

Follow-up Question: When was the worker reinstated? Was this worker also a representative committee leader? Please provide corroborating evidence. Also, what is "reftel"?

V. FOREIGN WORKERS

1. What approximate percentage of Oman's labor force is comprised of foreign workers in key sectors? Please identify the key sectors.

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "Foreign workers in Oman make up roughly 50 percent of the labor force and are concentrated in the following sectors:

Construction—28.2 percent; wholesale/retail—20.1 percent; domestic servants—13.4 percent; manufacturing—11.8 percent; agriculture—10.7 percent; hotels/restaurants—5.9 percent; and health/education/community/real estate, misc.—10 percent" UC at ¶14.

Follow-up Question: Does the 50 percent figure representing the number of foreign worker in Oman pertain to both public and private sectors? Based on information provided in ¶5 of the cable, it appears that approximately 80 percent of the private sector is comprised of foreign workers. Please confirm that these figures are consistent.

2. Are foreign workers participating in workers' organizations?

a. If so, what percentage of workers' organization members are foreign? What countries are they from (if possible, please provide an approximate break down of percentages)? With what companies are these foreign workers affiliated?

Not Answered: Please provide a response. Please also indicate whether the information provided as an attachment to e-mail correspondence of May 9, 2006 (specifically, the Table with Members of the General Assemblies of Representative Committees and the Number of Workers (Omanis and Expatriates) in Establishments Which Have Representative Committees) is accurate. Please also explain how the information in this chart compares or relates to information provided in the cable at ¶5, which states that "approximately nine percent of the workforce is not represented by a union."

b. How many foreigners or non-Arabic speaking workers hold leadership positions? Who are they? What countries are they from? What companies do they represent?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

3. Do employers withhold foreign workers' legal documents, including employment contracts, employment letters, passports or visas?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "While some employers have reportedly held passports of foreign workers, the MOM asserts that this practice is illegal and that legislation formalizing that will be forthcoming." UC at ¶15.

Follow-up Question: Through what accounts or by what means is it known that employers "reportedly" are holding passports? Does the MOM keep statistics? Have any instances been reported through the 24-hour hotline? Can you provide reports/accounts of any action taken against an employer for illegally holding a passport or other foreign workers legal documents?

VI. FORCED LABOR

2. Have there been any circumstances where forced labor has been exacted for public purposes in circumstances other than those enumerated in ILO Convention 29?

Not Answered: Please provide a response.

VII. WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

3. Does Oman's labor law specifically prohibit harmful child labor? If so, what provision?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "Forced or compulsory labor by children is specifically prohibited by law." UC at ¶17.

Follow-up Question: Please provide the citation to the specific relevant law, either in the Basic Statute or the 2003 Labor Law, or elsewhere. In addition, please also note where Oman's labor law specifically prohibits the following forms of harmful (or worst forms of) child labor: (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

VIII. INSPECTIONS AND REPORTING OF WORKING CONDITIONS

1. Is there a government-level organization charged with inspecting conditions of labor? If so, what is the number of personnel charged with this task? What enterprises do they cover? In what sectors? In what regions? What is the size of their budget?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "The Labor Care Directorate of the MOM is responsible for enforcement of, and compliance with, workplace laws and regulations. Its responsibilities include: occupational safety and health, labor inspections, dispute settlement, female employment, liaising with the Main Representative Committee, issues related to child labor and forced labor, and resolution of individual and collective labor disputes." UC at ¶19.

Partially Answered: What is the size of the Labor Care Directorate's budget?

2. Please provide additional information about the extent and nature of inspections into conditions of labor, such as number of total inspections, number of random inspections, in what areas, in what regions, number of enterprises and workers involved. Please also provide a relevant universe to serve as a point of comparison.

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "The MOM employed approximately 82 labor inspectors who conducted 4,541 workplace inspections, including an unknown number of random inspections, in 2005 that represented 19 percent of the workforce. Labor inspectors are spread throughout the Sultanate." UC at ¶19.

Follow-up Question: Can you provide an estimate or percentage of the number of random inspections? If not, are there any criteria by which the Labor Care Directorate considers when conducting random inspections? Are they more prevalent in any particular sector or area? How many workers were involved in the 4,541 workplace inspections?

3. Is there communication channel or other type of means for workers to contact the government to report labor-related complaints or grievances?

a. If so, by what means?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "The MOM operates a 24-hour hotline (English and Arabic) for workers throughout Oman to report complaints, offer suggestions or seek responses to questions about the labor law." UC at ¶19.

Follow-up Question: Are the majority of foreign workers in Oman English-speaking or

from English-speaking or Arabic-speaking countries? Has the MOM given any thought to including other languages?

b. Do workers utilize this means? If so, what statistics are available with respect to use, types of complaints and number of resolutions?

The cable provides the following information that is relevant to this question: "The MOM estimates that while it takes thousands of general inquiries a year on the hotline, it only receives about 150 complaints that require formal processing and action." UC at ¶19.

Follow-up Question: Does the MOM keep official statistics of complaints? Please provide examples of the types of complaints that have been made that require formal processing and action.

CONGRESSIONAL CONSTITUTION CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin this evening with a quote that I think pretty well sums up very neatly the theme for this week's Congressional Constitution Caucus time here on the floor as we are here each week at this time. That quote is: "For most Americans, the Constitution has become a hazy document cited on ceremonial occasions, but forgotten on the daily transactions of life." Arthur Schlesinger.

As we have come to this floor in the past and pointed out, we will continue into the future, until this Congress and future Congresses reverse the course of straying from the Constitution, straying and drifting away from the original intent of this constitution, that very finally crafted document with its sections and verses, its guidelines, its limitations on powers of the government that it is written to impose. We do this because we realize that this Congress has turned from what the Founding Fathers had originally intended from the times of the original debates with the anti-Federalists of the day.

We may wonder why we have turned from this original course of this Nation. We wonder is it because of times and age, is it different today than in the past? Is it because we have lost the fact that at one time we were under tyrannical rule and we no longer are? Maybe.

But perhaps, Mr. Speaker, it is because we simply don't cherish this document, the U.S. Constitution, like the Founders once did.

So through these weekly constitutional hours, we are here to help educate, help illuminate, help to inform this body and the American public on the intricacies, the nuances, the rule of law, the circumstances and the times that inspired the Founding Fathers, all those things that make up the United States Constitution. It is the single most ingenious political document ever devised. And while we will continue to come to the floor to give these orations on the deeper meanings of this document and what this body can do to better live by them, tonight let me come