

“strategic partnership” based on shared values such as democracy, multiculturalism, and rule of law. In addition, numerous economic, security and globally focused initiatives, including plans for “full civilian nuclear energy cooperation,” are currently underway. I support these initiatives but I remain deeply concerned about the numerous serious problems that remain when it comes to India’s respect for the rights of all of her citizens.

In fact, according to the Department of State’s 2006 Human Rights Report for India: “Major problems included extrajudicial killings of persons in custody, disappearances, torture and rape by police and security forces. The lack of accountability permeated the government and security forces, creating an atmosphere in which human rights violations often went unpunished. Although the country has numerous laws protecting human rights, enforcement was lax and convictions were rare.”

Again, these are not my words; this is from the State Department’s official report on Human Rights. I firmly believe that as the United States and India move towards greater cooperation in numerous endeavors we must at the same time continue to insist that India adhere to the full expression of democracy and basic human rights; especially for members of ethnic or religious minorities.

For example, according to reports, on April 20, 2006, Sikh activist Daljit Singh Bittu was arrested after making a speech. He was charged with sedition and “making inflammatory speeches.” Mr. Bittu’s crime was to speak out against the acquisition of the land of poor farmers by the State of Punjab on behalf of private business firms. Fortunately, Mr. Bittu was ultimately released on bail. The issue of government taking land by eminent domain for private usage is also extremely controversial in this country, but to the best of my knowledge no one has ever been charged with sedition for speaking out about it. On June 2nd of this year, Daljit Singh Bittu, was again arrested and charged with sedition. What did Mr. Bittu do this time? He participated in a peaceful march protesting government inaction on several issues where some of the marchers—and by all accounts not Mr. Bittu—allegedly expressed their desire—unrelated to the topic of the march—for an independent Sikh nation of Khalistan by shouting “Khalistan Zindabad.”

As I understand it, according to the Indian Supreme Court in the case Balwant Singh vs. State of Punjab, the mere public use of the slogan “Khalistan Zinabab” is not illegal; and as the march itself was peaceful, it is difficult to understand how the Indian Government believes Mr. Bittu did anything that can, to the best of my knowledge, be legitimately considered a crime—much less sedition—under United States, International, or Indian law.

What is really at issue here, Madam Speaker, is the fact that India is a nation comprised of a hodgepodge of ethnicities, some of whom do not wish to be a part of Hindu-dominated India. The conflict over the Muslim-majority region of Jammu and Kashmir is perhaps most familiar to Americans as it has sparked three major wars between India and Pakistan, but it is by no means the only ethnic or religious conflict roiling India. In 1948, India promised a free and fair plebiscite on the status of Kashmir. No such vote has ever been held. As our Nation fights to spread democracy to oppressed people across the globe, why don’t we insist on a simple democratic vote, with

international monitors, in Kashmir, in Punjab, Khalistan, in predominantly Christian Nagalim, and wherever people seek their freedom from India? The answer tragically is all too obvious, in the world of international diplomacy and geopolitics, sometimes expedience and “good relations” trump freedom and human rights.

I do not know whether the plebiscite promised to the people of Kashmir will ever happen, and I do not know whether a Sikh nation of Khalistan or a Christian nation of Nagalim will ever come into existence; but I do know that the Muslims of Kashmir, the Sikhs of Punjab/Khalistan and the Christians of Nagalim should never have to live in fear for freely and peacefully expressing their opinions.

PUBLIC SAFETY EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE COOPERATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 17, 2007

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 980, the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act.

I am a cosponsor of H.R. 980, which ensures that police officers, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and other public safety officers have basic collective bargaining rights. Americans depend on public safety workers and first responders to keep us safe and healthy. These critical personnel should be able to depend on Congress to provide them basic rights, including the ability to negotiate for the wages and benefits that they deserve.

This bill promotes the development of labor-management partnerships, which are frequently established through collective bargaining. These partnerships enhance public safety by increasing communication and cooperation between employees and employers, leading to more effective and efficient delivery of services.

It is important to note that the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act in no way undermines existing State laws. It simply establishes a basic minimum standard that most states already meet and many exceed. This balanced legislation does not force parties to reach agreement, but rather opens the door for dialogue and negotiation. Additionally, H.R. 980 recognizes that public safety officers play a significant role in emergency situations, and for that reason includes a provision Outlawing strikes.

This bipartisan bill is widely supported by the American public, and it is endorsed by the International Association of Fire Fighters, Association of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Fraternal Order of Police, International Union of Police Associations, and the National Association of Police Organizations.

It is essential for all workers to have a voice at work. Please join me in supporting collective bargaining rights for public safety officers.

HONORING THE DEDICATION OF EMIL “LUCKY” REZNIK OF SOUTH BEND, INDIANA

HON. JOE DONNELLY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 23, 2007

Mr. DONNELLY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Emil “Lucky” Reznik’s dedication to the community of South Bend, Indiana. Since its conception 40 years ago, Lucky has served on the South Bend Public Transportation Board of Directors which established the successful TRANSPO bus service in the greater South Bend area. This service, cultivated in part from Lucky’s vision, provides over three million rides each year to area residents.

When not working hard with TRANSPO, Lucky is a popular advocate for higher education, specifically at Indiana University and Indiana University South Bend. His service with the Indiana University Alumni Association, the Indiana University South Bend Board of Advisors and as president of the Indiana University South Bend Alumni Board earned Lucky the Indiana University South Bend Distinguished Alumnus Award in 1982 and the very first Sue H. Talbot Distinguished Hoosiers for Higher Education Member Award in 2006.

This month, TRANSPO is honoring Lucky with a celebration dinner and the presentation of a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol. Mayor Steve Luecke of South Bend will be presenting Lucky with the keys to the city. Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels will also present Lucky with the Outstanding Hoosier Award. Lucky will receive other commendations from Indiana Speaker of the House B. Patrick Bauer and Mayor Jeff Rea of Mishawaka.

It is my pleasure to join these dignitaries and the people of St. Joseph County by paying tribute to the many years of unselfish dedication of this tireless and devoted civil servant, Lucky Reznik. The South Bend and Mishawaka communities have been forever changed thanks to his commitment.

TRIBUTE TO DURANGO CITY MANAGER BOB LEDGER

HON. JOHN T. SALAZAR

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 23, 2007

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a distinguished civic leader from my district. After 25 years of service, Robert F. Ledger Jr. will retire as the City Manager for Durango, Colorado. His long history as a public servant has been marked with dedication and integrity at every stop.

Mr. Ledger has led Durango through both troubled and prosperous times, always with a passion for progress and in a way that preserved the historic and environmental ethic of the community. He championed numerous public works projects, encouraged community policing, opened city government to the citizens of the community and encouraged the public workforce to be the best that it could be.

Durango has come a long way under Bob Ledger. During his time with the City of Durango he oversaw the construction of public

recycling buildings, water and wastewater treatment facilities, police substations, parks, a world class recreation center and many trails including the renowned Animas River trail. Programs started by Mr. Ledger include publicly accessible geographic information systems, recycling collection and processing, historic preservation efforts, planning and community development operations, broad-based public safety reorganization, and award-winning financial management and reporting. Bob Ledger has led the City of Durango in its efforts to build or expand public library facilities, public transit, wastewater facilities, airport infrastructure, and numerous recreational opportunities.

Mr. Ledger could not have accomplished all that was done in Durango over the last 25 years without the support of a strong staff, visionary city councils and the community of Durango as a whole. But without his drive, talents and skills many of the changes that have occurred in the Durango community would never have been realized. A man of passion and compassion, his legacy will live long. I salute Mr. Bob Ledger for his long and distinguished career of public service and wish him well in all his future endeavors.

IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 50, THE MULTINATIONAL SPECIES CONSERVATION FUNDS REAUTHORIZATION ACT AND H.R. 465, THE ASIAN ELEPHANT CONSERVATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT

HON. CHRISTOPHER SHAYS

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 23, 2007

Mr. SHAYS. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 50, the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Reauthorization Act, which reauthorizes the African Elephant Conservation Act and the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act through 2012, and in support of H.R. 465, the Asian Elephant Conservation Reauthorization Act. These conservation funds have a tremendous impact on the survival of threatened species.

The ivory and bushmeat trades, as well as competition from humans for space and resources, continue to threaten the survival of the African Elephant. Rhinos and tigers similarly fall victim to these black market trades. In addition, deforestation and overworking have had devastating impacts on Asian Elephant

populations. The grants awarded through the MSCF have proven to be effective in creating nature reserves, enhancing wildlife and ecosystem management, and developing antipoaching campaigns, helping to combat the practices that endanger these species the most.

As of January, the Department of Interior had approved 280 conservation grants in 23 African countries to assist African elephants, 321 grants for rhinos and tigers, and 171 grants for Asian elephants. By using \$17 million in federal funding, the African elephant program has leveraged \$72 million in private matching funds, and the rhino and tiger program has generated nearly \$20 million in private funds to match its federally allocated \$7.8 million. The Asian elephant program has been almost as successful, leveraging \$10 million in private matching funds from \$7.8 million in federal funding.

H.R. 50 and H.R. 465 would reauthorize the Multinational Species Conservation Fund to support three important international conservation laws and help to protect these animals on a federal level. I strongly urge their support.