

after dark. Those with means use generators. Poorer folks rely on candles.

Another milestone occurred when water was turned on in some areas. "Our children danced in the streets. Some who only knew that water came out of a bucket realized that it could come out of a tap," Sirleaf recalled.

Seldom has any country sunk as far as Liberia did under Taylor and the predecessor regime of Samuel Doe. During that 25-year period, per-capita income dropped from \$1,000 to \$120, according to the World Bank. Donor countries have been generous with pledges of assistance to Sirleaf's government but slow to fulfill them. She says: "We need to shorten the road between commitments and cash."

Health and education have been among Sirleaf's priorities. Official figures show that during her first year in office, the government increased school enrollment by 40 percent and provided school furniture throughout the country. Also, service is reported to have been restored to 350 health facilities in the country.

In a speech on March 27 in Toronto, Sirleaf highlighted other advances: deactivation of 17,000 members of the old security forces, enrollment of more than 75,000 excombatants in reintegration programs, accommodating the return of over 100,000 people who had been forced from their homes during the war, balancing of the budget and increasing government revenues by 48 percent.

Women are occupying more high government posts than ever before. Sirleaf, 68 and a grandmother of six, also is doing battle against Liberia's culture of corruption, requiring all senior level government officials to publicly declare their assets.

She has repeatedly told her countrymen that the most reliable path to prosperity is relief from Liberia's huge international debt. The subject is discussed on radio talk shows, street corners, bars and even hospitals.

Except for the periods of civil strife, the United States has had exceptionally close ties with Liberia, both symbolic and otherwise, almost from the founding of the country by freed American slaves in the 1840s. The capital, Monrovia, was named for James Monroe, the fifth American president. Liberia uses the dollar as its currency and may be the only country besides the United States and Burma to shun the metric system. A Liberian major general named George T. Washington once served as the country's top military officer. When the United States entered World War II, Liberia quickly announced its support. Among African countries, Liberia has often been among the major recipients of U.S. assistance.

The United States has been eager to help Sirleaf succeed. Appearing at an international donor conference sponsored by the World Bank in February, Rice announced the cancellation of Liberia's \$391 million U.S. debt. Other countries eliminated an estimated \$300 million in bilateral debt. When Sirleaf returned home from the conference, Liberians cheered her successes as they lined the road on her 30-mile ride from the airport to the capital. The cancellations reduced Liberia's debt to \$3 billion, the largest share of which is \$1.6 billion owed to international lending institutions. There is also a \$1 billion commercial debt.

For technical reasons, Liberia does not yet qualify for relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative, a 1996 International Monetary Fund-World Bank program designed to assist poor countries with unmanageable debts.

Anwarul K. Chowdury, an advocate at the United Nations for the interests of the world's poorest countries, says Liberia should be entitled to HIPC benefits because

of its "recent tumultuous history and current postconflict reconstruction efforts."

The Campaign to Cancel Africa's Debt, an activist group, believes it is an outrage that Liberia is being asked to continue making payments on the "odious and illegitimate" debt accumulated by Sirleaf's authoritarian predecessors. "Liberia needs 100 percent debt cancellation without harmful conditions in order to invest in its economy, rebuild the nation's infrastructure and fund essential public social services," the campaign said in a recent report.

In her Toronto speech, Sirleaf said Liberia's total liability is equal to over 3,000 percent of the country's exports. She is urging wealthy countries to come up with a formula for a prompt easing of the debt burden.

Even with generous debt relief, progress would be slow in coming. As an example, Sirleaf points to the decay of the tourism infrastructure. "The roads, the hotels, the lights, the water, all of those things that tourists will require for their comfort are not there yet," she says. Also, she adds, there is no easy path for securing electricity for rural areas. Painstaking studies will be required just to determine whether hydroelectric power is the most suitable option.

Sirleaf believes that Liberia could become an agricultural power, citing its abundant fertile soil and rainfalls. Liberia has been a principal world market supplier of latex, derived from rubber trees. The country also is believed well suited for rice, oil palm, pineapples, cassava, citrus, coffee and cocoa. Other potential revenue producers are gold, iron ore, timber and diamonds. And U.S. investors are showing interest. A one-day conference on private investment opportunities, held in conjunction with the donors conference in February, drew an overflow crowd of 400 registrants.

Exports of timber were banned during Taylor's government by the U.N. Security Council because revenues were being used to finance the war in Sierra Leone. The ban was lifted last year, opening the way for a potentially lucrative market for Liberia. A Security Council prohibition on diamond exports remains in place pending certification that the stones are not used to finance conflict—as they were under Taylor's rule.

Shortly before Sirleaf's visit to Washington, she welcomed China's president, Hu Jintao, to Monrovia. There was no official account of the outcome but a Liberian official said beforehand that plans called for the signing of commercial agreements involving rubber, timber and minerals. Further demonstrating China's interest in the resource-rich country is the presence of 500 Chinese peacekeepers in Liberia. Sirleaf says she's happy to receive assistance from China, so long as it doesn't increase her country's debt.

#### HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF DR. SPINO

**HON. TIM MURPHY**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, September 14, 2007*

Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the medical career of Dr. Pascal Daniel Spino of Greensburg, PA.

After 60 years of serving the citizens of Greensburg as a pediatrician, Dr. Spino is retiring from practice. The genuine concern and compassion Dr. Spino gave his patients on a daily basis is appreciated more than words

can say. The sincere love and care his patients received should serve as a model to all who practice medicine.

Dr. Spino has had a truly remarkable career. But he is a modest man who would not boast about his many accomplishments or awards. So let me mention just a few. Always having a big heart for the less fortunate, Dr. Spino founded the first Well Baby Clinic in Westmoreland County which serves indigent children from birth to 6 years of age. The clinic provides free exams and immunizations to the indigent children of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Dr. Spino has personally manned the clinic since it began in 1954.

In 1970, when a patient, Jacob, was suffering from biliary atresia (a rare condition in newborn infants in which the common bile duct between the liver and the small intestine is blocked or absent), the townspeople of Greensburg, PA, responded generously with donations to help with the high medical costs. This tradition has carried on and the "Joy of Jacob" fund is still active and successful in helping to treat children with birth defects.

Dr. Spino took notice of abused children with no place to go. He felt for them and decided to take action in 1972, by founding the RANCH, or Render Any Needy Child Help program. A program designed solely to provide medical care for abused children. Dr. Spino then went on to create a Level II Nursery at Westmoreland Regional Hospital for the care of infants and helped create a modern pediatric department at Westmoreland Regional Hospital with intensive care capabilities.

Dr. Spino has received a number of awards including: Man of the Year by the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review for his outstanding service to the community; the Pennsylvania Pediatrician of the Year in 1989 by the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics and was honored with "Doctor Spino Day," in Westmoreland County for his lifetime commitment to helping others. Over 4,000 people—1/4 of the City's residents were in attendance—despite a downpour of rain.

In my practice as a child psychologist, our paths have crossed several times over the years through our patients. I know first-hand the tremendous respect and affection patients and professionals alike have for Dr. Spino. I understand first-hand the joy of helping a child. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Dr. Spino's career, personal sacrifice and devotion to improving our health care system and helping others.

#### SUPPORT OUR FRIEND AND ALLY: TAIWAN

**HON. DONALD M. PAYNE**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, September 14, 2007*

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I rise in solidarity with the Republic of China (Taiwan). For over 50 years, Taiwan has been a flourishing, independent and sovereign government in the developing world and Southeast Asia. Taiwan has developed a world-class democracy, serving as a model for countries in the region. The people of Taiwan inspire others in Southeast Asia and around the world who desire freedom and prosperity. America should stand with our friends who engage in peaceful democracy and Taiwan deserves our support.

Taiwan plays an important role in the international community because of its democratic and economic success. Other nations are benefiting from Taiwan's access to markets and technology. It defies logic and the principle of fairness that the Taiwanese people and government are not given the same voice as everyone else throughout the world.

Madam Speaker, I urge this body to stand with our friends and allies in Taiwan and hope that you will join me in supporting strong democracy in the world.

**BILL LANSFORD: WAR HERO AND CHAMPION FOR HISPANIC VETERANS**

**HON. JANE HARMAN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, September 14, 2007*

Ms. HARMAN. Madam Speaker, if the United States were a house, our veterans would be its foundation. The structural integrity of our homeland has always relied on the selfless service and sacrifice of the women and men in our Armed Forces. Today I rise to honor a veteran, war hero, resident of the 36th congressional district, and my friend—retired Marine Corps Sergeant and Army combat correspondent Bill Lansford.

The Second World War required endurance and courage from our Nation. Normal lives were put on hold, and the future of democracy rested on the shoulders of America's young soldiers. As a 20 year-old Marine, Bill Lansford fought his way through the Pacific Theater—at Guadalcanal, Bougainville and Iwo Jima, three of the bloodiest battles of the war. Bill served with "Carlson's Raiders," an elite Special Forces unit, and earned numerous decorations for valor in combat.

The conclusion of World War II would not mark the end of Bill's military service. He joined the Army to write radio shows for the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service, would that would be interrupted by the Korean War—and his transfer to the 11th Airborne Division where he ultimately achieved the rank of Lieutenant.

The bonds that Bill Lansford forged in battle influenced his life, and he has devoted himself to representing the interests of Hispanic veterans, particularly through the work of the American GI Forum—which celebrates its 60th anniversary next year. Through membership and service, Bill has made a major contribution to the Forum's success. In Los Angeles, he is working to install a monument to recipients of the Hispanic Congressional Medal of Honor. And an upcoming PBS documentary on World War II will feature him and a fellow "Carlson's Raider" discussing their wartime experiences.

Bill is married to the wonderful Ruth Lansford, an environmental activist and local legend in her own right. As founder of the Friends of Ballona, Ruth has been instrumental in preserving the beautiful Ballona Wetlands located in my district. The couple resides in Playa Del Rey, California.

I am proud to have Bill Lansford as a constituent, and pleased to commend him for his patriotism and lifelong service to country and community.

**SUPPORT FOR THE MEETING BETWEEN THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES AND THE AFRICAN UNION**

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, September 14, 2007*

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce an article published in the New York CARIB News on July 24, 2007 entitled, "OAS-African Union Meeting Ends." This article is about the first working meeting between the Organization of American States (OAS) and the African Union (AU). The goals of this meeting were to strengthen the cooperation and to build on the democratic partnership between the member states of these two organizations. Secretary Rice was present during this meeting.

The working sessions of the OAS-AU meeting covered several topics including: Promoting Democracy in Latin America and Africa: From Rhetoric to Reality; The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and the Inter-American Democratic Charter; Strengthening Democratic Institutions and Promoting Democratic Values; Political Dialogue and Conflict Prevention; Protection and Promotion of Human Rights; and Santiago to Bamako: Democracy Promotion within the Community of Democracies Process.

"For democracy to be truly meaningful, the fruits of democracy must also nurture and feed the social and economic well being of our citizens," Ramdin went on to state, noting that "expectations in both Africa and the Americas are high."

During the meeting, the participants heard from a range of speakers, including United States Undersecretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky; former President of Cape Verde Antonio Mascalhanhas Monteiro; Guatemala's Vice President Eduardo Stein; OAS Assistant Secretary for Political Affairs Dante Caputo; and AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Said Djinnit.

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**CELEBRATING THE 300TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VILLAGE OF SAG HARBOR**

**HON. TIMOTHY H. BISHOP**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, September 14, 2007*

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 300th anniversary of one of the most beloved and historic villages in the First Congressional District of New York, the Village of Sag Harbor.

Sag Harbor is a village of two square miles, settled in 1707 and rich in American history; from its early Algonquin Indian inhabitants to historical Revolutionary War battles which took place on the land. Sag Harbor is further distinguished by being the first official port of entry in the State of New York. It was officially established as a state port of entry in 1789 by the First Congress of the United States and approved by President George Washington, just one day before New York City.

The area grew in those early days as a result of its thriving whaling industry. Local men, together with foreign whalers, brought culture and customs from distant lands to Sag Harbor. During this time period Sag Harbor became a truly international port town, where diverse cultures came together. Sag Harbor was even prominently mentioned in Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick*.

Today finds the village of Sag Harbor split between the Long Island towns of Southampton and East Hampton. With a population of about 2,300 friendly residents, bustling main streets and beautifully scenic areas, Sag Harbor Village has become a premier tourist destination in the United States.

It is with great pleasure and pride that I rise to recognize the unique contributions of the Village of Sag Harbor, and to commemorate its 300th Anniversary.

**OAS-AFRICAN UNION MEETING ENDS**

WASHINGTON.—The Organization of American States (OAS) and the African Union (AU) recently ended their first working meeting, resolved to strengthen their cooperation around the promotion of democracy, amidst calls for an Americas-Africa Summit to consolidate the "democratic partnership" of these regions.

OAS Assistant Secretary General Albert R. Ramdin wrapped up the historic two-day working session, calling for "a meeting" of both regions at the highest political level—an Americas-Africa Summit," which would help translate the noble objectives and intentions articulated at the two-day meeting, into "real action to the benefit of both regions" in the areas of trade, economy, security, health, and other areas. "An Africa-Americas Summit could provide a valuable platform from which to build this democratic partnership between our regions; with a targeted, realistic and executable action agenda," Ramdin explained. Asserting that the strengthening of cooperation by regional organizations is even more relevant today than ever before, he said the just-concluded meeting focused on shared experiences and challenges faced by the Americas and Africa alike as they seek to promote and defend democracy.

According to Ambassador Ramdin, the discussions underscored how challenges such as poverty, inequality, and social exclusion can undermine positive efforts to build democracies and peaceful societies in both continents.