

well as fight for gender equity. I must certainly agree with the Chief Executive Officer of the MCC, who stated that "gender inequality is a constraint on economic growth and poverty reduction, and is related to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and that inattention to issues of gender inequality could undermine the potential impact of the Compact proposed to be entered into between the MCC and the Government of Lesotho."

Madam Speaker, the MCC is currently implementing a new gender policy to integrate gender into all phases of the development and implementation of the Compact between the MCC and the Government of Lesotho. It is now the responsibility of the United States House of Representatives to support the goals of Lesotho's International Women's Day, commend them on their strong commitment to improving gender equity, as well as applaud their enactment of the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act.

Lesotho's actions aimed at guaranteeing equity for women under the law ought to serve as a model for many other African nations, where women have been subjected to discriminatory laws in the areas of civil, economic, and property rights. This resolution will certainly go a long way in reducing the risk of women and their children falling into extreme poverty, eventually reducing their risk of exposure to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. I ask my colleagues to support this measure. Let us continue to encourage the Kingdom of Lesotho in its ongoing efforts to ensure gender equity. Let us commend the Millennium Challenge Corporation for developing and implementing policies to advance gender equity.

I thank you once again, Congresswoman WATSON, for your efforts in introducing this piece of legislation.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 294, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The title was amended so as to read: "A resolution commending the Kingdom of Lesotho for the enactment of a law to improve the status of married women and ensure the access of married women to property rights."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HONORING WORLD RED CROSS RED CRESCENT DAY

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 378) honoring World Red Cross Red Crescent Day, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 378

Whereas World Red Cross Red Crescent Day was observed on May 8, 2007;

Whereas May 8 marks the birth of Henry Dunant, the founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who began advocating for the humane treatment of the wartime sick and wounded after witnessing the atrocities at the Battle of Solferino in 1859;

Whereas World Red Cross Red Crescent Day is celebrated by many of the 185 Red Cross, Red Crescent, and Magen David Adom National Societies throughout the world and more than 750 chapters throughout the United States;

Whereas through the motivation and action of its volunteers and donors, the American Red Cross and its partners worldwide pay tribute to Henry Dunant's legacy by helping those in need and protecting human dignity for all;

Whereas the American Red Cross helps vulnerable people and communities around the world to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters, complex humanitarian emergencies, and life-threatening health conditions;

Whereas the American Red Cross is uniquely positioned to save lives through the Red Cross, Red Crescent, and Magen David Adom National Societies network of 97,000,000 volunteers located in nearly every country in the world;

Whereas in 2006, the American Red Cross responded to 23 international disasters, contributing more than \$16.1 million in financial support, deploying delegates and providing relief supplies and other emergency assistance to millions affected by disasters;

Whereas the American Red Cross continues to help affected communities recover from the tsunami that resulted from the earthquake that occurred off the west coast of northern Sumatra, Indonesia, on December 26, 2004, by providing assistance to more than 3.3 million people through long-term recovery programs and more than 80 million people through disease control activities in the tsunami-affected countries;

Whereas since 2001, the American Red Cross and its partners in the Measles Initiative have vaccinated more than 372 million children in 48 countries against measles; and

Whereas World Red Cross Red Crescent Day will honor the efforts of Red Cross, Red Crescent, and Magen David Adom employees and volunteers who work tirelessly to alleviate human suffering: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives commends the humanitarian efforts of Red Cross, Red Crescent, and Magen David Adom National Societies worldwide on the occasion of World Red Cross Red Crescent Day.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent for all Members to 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 gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. WATSON. 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 commend our distinguished colleague, Mr. FORTUNO of Puerto Rico, for introducing this resolution.

More than 140 years ago, the great Henry Dunant founded the International Committee of the Red Cross after witnessing the atrocities of the Battle of Solferino in 1859.

Mr. Dunant's heroic advocacy on behalf of the humane treatment of wartime sick and wounded spawned a global movement dedicated to helping those in need and protecting human dignity for all.

Today, there are more than 185 Red Cross, Red Crescent and Magen David Adom societies throughout the world and more than 750 chapters in the United States alone. These organizations help vulnerable people in communities prevent, prepare for and respond to and recover from disasters, complex humanitarian emergencies and life-threatening conditions. The red symbols of these great organizations are unambiguous, internationally recognized, signs of comfort, hope and protection.

The American Red Cross, in particular, is a vital lifeline for many people, both in this country and abroad. In conjunction with its sister national societies throughout the world, it has assisted millions of distressed individuals.

In 2006 alone, the American Red Cross responded to 23 international disasters and contributed more than \$16.1 million in financial support. Often beyond the lens of cameras or public view at some of the most devastated corners on Earth, the American Red Cross represents our country and our national spirit of generosity and hope.

To honor Mr. Dunant's legacy and the work of thousands of volunteers and donors, the American Red Cross and its partners will celebrate World Red Cross Red Crescent Day. This resolution pays tribute to this event and to the work of thousands of volunteers internationally. It reaffirms our country's support for the world's largest humanitarian network and celebrates the values of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent, and Magen David Adom societies.

I am pleased to note that for the first time World Red Cross Red Crescent day will include Magen David Adom, Israel's national Red Cross society, which became a full member of the international movement in 2006.

I strongly support this resolution and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 378 introduced by my good friend and colleague from Puerto Rico (Mr. FORTUNO).

This resolution commends the humanitarian efforts of Red Cross, Red Crescent and Magen David Adom societies worldwide on the occasion of World Red Cross Red Crescent Day.

These organizations and their 97 million volunteers worldwide make invaluable contributions every day. They provide relief and humanitarian assistance to the world's most vulnerable people, alleviating the suffering of citizens afflicted by war, natural disasters and other crises.

More than 233 million people worldwide received assistance from Red Cross, Red Crescent and Magen David Adom societies each year. When a tsunami hit southeast Asia in 2005, those societies were there. When hundreds of millions of children require vaccination against measles and others diseases, those societies are there. When the need arises in the future for humanitarian aid and relief, those societies will be there.

As a Member of Congress from Florida's 18th District, I have witnessed firsthand the good works of the Red Cross throughout its efforts to help the victims of numerous hurricanes and tropical storms that have afflicted the residents of south Florida.

I have also witnessed firsthand, in my numerous trips to Israel, the relief work and the humanitarian assistance that the Magen David Adom has provided to so many, including, tragically, the many innocent victims of terror.

Therefore, I am particularly pleased that in 2006, in a long overdue development, the International Committee of the Red Cross officially recognized Magen David Adom as Israel's national aid society. With much appreciation for the good work of Red Cross, Red Crescent and Magen David Adom societies everywhere, I urge the House to adopt House Resolution 378, introduced by my good friend, Mr. FORTUÑO.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to voice my strong support for this resolution honoring the humanitarian work of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent.

In February of this year, southern Iowa was hit by a devastating ice storm that caused massive damage and left tens of thousands of people without electricity or heat in the middle of winter, some for more than ten days.

The Red Cross moved expeditiously to set up vitally needed shelters and coordinated with state and local governments to ensure that the needs of those affected by the storm were met.

In the immediate aftermath of the storm, I had the opportunity to tour Red Cross shelters throughout my district and to meet with Red Cross volunteers. I was enormously impressed with the Red Cross's rapid, thorough, and compassionate response to the disaster, which affected everyone of my constituents.

On behalf of the Second District of Iowa, I would like to extend my thanks to the Red Cross for the services they provided in the aftermath of the February storms.

This resolution recognizes the type of work I saw the Red Cross carrying out first-hand, and I strongly urge its passage.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of our time.

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 378, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The title was amended so as to read: "Resolution commending the humanitarian efforts of Red Cross, Red Crescent, and Magen David Adom National Societies worldwide on the occasion of World Red Cross Red Crescent Day."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1545

PASSPORT BACKLOG REDUCTION ACT OF 2007

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 966) to enable the Department of State to respond to a critical shortage of passport processing personnel, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The text of the Senate bill is as follows:

S. 966

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Passport Backlog Reduction Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. REEMPLOYMENT OF FOREIGN SERVICE ANNUITANTS.

Section 824(g) of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (22 U.S.C. 4064(g)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by striking ";" or" and inserting a semicolon;

(B) in subparagraph (B), by striking the period at the end and inserting ";" or"; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph—

"(C)(i) to provide assistance to consular posts with a substantial backlog of visa applications; or

"(ii) to provide assistance to meet the demand resulting from the passport and travel document requirements set forth in section 7209(b) of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-458; 8 U.S.C. 1185 note), including assistance related to the investigation of fraud in connection with an application for a passport.;" and

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) by striking "The authority" and inserting "(A) The authority"; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

"(B) The authority of the Secretary to waive the application of subsections (a) through (d) for an annuitant pursuant to subparagraph (C)(i) of paragraph (1) shall terminate on September 30, 2008.

"(C) The authority of the Secretary to waive the application of subsections (a) through (d) for an annuitant pursuant to subparagraph (C)(ii) of paragraph (1) shall terminate on September 30, 2009."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this bill and yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, the U.S. passport system is broken and the average Americans are paying the price. We have heard their call for help and are here today to pass the Passport Backlog Reduction Act to help the State Department address this bureaucratic crisis.

Every citizen of our Nation has the right to hold a passport and getting one should only take a few weeks at most, but millions of Americans have had to wait for months on end simply for the right to travel abroad. People are lining up at dawn every day at passport offices around the country trying to salvage trips at the last minute. They are desperate to get the one document that will let them see ailing relatives overseas, conduct important business, or begin studying abroad programs.

A passport is much more than a travel document, and these delays are much more than an inconvenience. A passport is proof of American identity and, for many Americans with immigrant heritage, a passport is proof of their identity and commitment to America and the American idea. A passport must be available to any American citizen who requests one, and delays that are currently clogging our system are preventing American citizens from fully exercising their right of citizenship as well as freedom of travel.

Three years ago, Congress passed the law requiring travelers to show passports if they were returning from anywhere in the Western hemisphere. Demand for passports in the last year has been at record highs, but poor planning by top officials meant that the State Department was unprepared to cope with the surge in applications.

My colleagues and I on the Foreign Affairs Committee have been outraged by this poor planning and the resulting bottleneck. Last week the committee held a hearing on passport delays, and we heard testimony about the hard-working employees who are working through the night and giving up their weekends to clear the backlog of applications. At passport bureaus across the country the State Department has shipped in junior staff, government fellows, and rehired retirees to meet the crushing demand. Yet, phone calls to regional passport bureaus and to consular affairs offices have often gone unanswered on tens of thousands of occasions. Meanwhile, congressional offices