

Counties in rescuing two gentlemen from the flooded Boone River in Iowa.

On Monday, June 9, at 2:45 p.m., Charlie Davis noticed two men floating down the Boone River. He quickly dialed 911 on his cellular phone and got through to the Hamilton County Dispatch Center. He relayed the message but got disconnected because he was in a limited cellular signal area. When Charlie redialed 911, this time he was connected to the Webster County Dispatch Center. As a result, Fire and Rescue Departments in Kramer, Stratford, Stanhope and Webster City, the Boone County Search and Rescue Team, Hamilton County Conservation staff, Hamilton County Chief Deputy Scott McConnell, First Iowa Methodist Medical Center, Mercy AirLife helicopters, pilot Ralph Storm, and others were all on the scene to help.

As the two men floated down the river, rescue crews set up on the Stagecoach Road Bridge waiting for the men to float to them. After waiting for a period of time, Ralph Storm flew his spray plane up and down the river until he spotted them. Once spotted, the Boone Rescue Team; Brian Pontius and Dallas Wingate, were notified to put their boat in the river and then retrieved the brothers from the water at 3:50 p.m.

The diligent team effort of all involved in this rescue effort is a testament to the bravery and compassion of Iowans; willing to do whatever is necessary for a neighbor in need. I commend all those involved for their heroism and cooperation. I am honored to represent each of them in the United States Congress, and wish each of them health and happiness in the future.

THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY SESSION IN KAZAKHSTAN

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2008

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I hereby submit, for the RECORD, the text of my report to you on the activities of the U.S. Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, held in early July in Astana, Kazakhstan. I want to thank you for allowing me to serve as the head of this delegation, and to express my gratitude to our colleague in the other chamber, Senator BEN CARDIN, for serving as the deputy head of the delegation.

I will refrain from repeating here the details of our trip, which can be found in the report, but I would like to make three brief points.

First, I want to praise the work of my 10 colleagues who participated on the delegation, namely Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. MCINTYRE, Ms. SOLIS and Mr. BUTTERFIELD who serve with me on the Helsinki Commission, as well as Mr. WAMP, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ, Ms. WATSON, Ms. BORDALLO and Ms. MOORE. All were active at the meeting, either speaking or introducing resolutions on issues of concern or making amendments to the initiatives of other delegations. Our colleague HILDA SOLIS deserves special praise for seeking and being elected to chair a committee in the OSCE PA this coming year, as does GWEN MOORE for her many initiatives that kept her busy.

Second, I want to stress to all my colleagues how useful engagement in world af-

fairs is, and the degree to which it advances U.S. interests by being out there, ready to discuss, to debate and ultimately to cooperate in making this a better world. In the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation for Europe, or the OSCE as it is often known, there is a strong parliamentary dimension that allows us to engage our allies and friends in Europe and Canada, and including the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia. We discuss everything from human rights and democracy, to energy and the environment, to regional security and terrorism. I invite my colleagues to consider joining me for next year's session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Third, I want to say a word about Kazakhstan, which served as this year's host. Kazakhstan is a large, resource-rich and strategically located country, and a country that wishes to play a stronger role in the OSCE and in world affairs generally. The U.S. delegation used its presence in Astana to welcome that fact, and to express our willingness to work with Kazakhstan to that end. At the same time, the Assembly meeting provided an opportunity to stress the need for Kazakhstan to make greater progress regarding human rights and political reforms, in line with its OSCE commitments but also with specific promises its leaders made when the OSCE designated Kazakhstan to chair the organization in 2010.

The final declaration of the OSCE PA Annual Session can be found on the Assembly's website or by contacting the Helsinki Commission, which I chair. Again, thank you Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to lead this delegation, which accomplished a great deal.

JULY 21, 2008.

HON. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: I write to thank you for designating me Head of the U.S. Delegation to the Seventeenth Annual Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA), and to report to you on the work of our bipartisan delegation. The delegation participated fully in the activity of the Assembly's Standing Committee, the plenary sessions and the Assembly's three General Committees.

Joining me in leading the delegation was the Helsinki Commission Co-Chairman, Senator Benjamin L. Cardin. Other Helsinki Commissioners who also participated include Representatives Robert B. Aderholt, Mike McIntyre, Hilda L. Solis and G.K. Butterfield. They were joined by Representatives Zach Wamp, Loretta Sanchez, Diane Watson, Madeleine Z. Bordallo and Gwen S. Moore.

This year's Annual Session, hosted by the Parliament of Kazakhstan from June 29 to July 3, brought together 227 parliamentarians from 50 of the 56 OSCE States. The designated theme for this year's gathering was "Transparency in the OSCE."

The Standing Committee, which is the leadership body of the Assembly composed of the Heads of Delegations representing the OSCE participating States and the elected officers, met prior to the Annual Session. Chaired by the OSCE PA President, Swedish parliamentarian Goran Lennmarker, the committee heard reports from the Assembly's Treasurer, German parliamentarian Hans Raidel, and from the Secretary General, R. Spencer Oliver of the United States. The Assembly continues to operate well within its overall budget guidelines and to

receive positive assessments from auditors on financial management. The Standing Committee unanimously approved the proposed budget for 2008/2009, which provides for increased expenditures of just under seven percent to cover inflation and a small increase in secretariat staff.

The Standing Committee also heard reports from the Special Representatives of the OSCE PA on a variety of issues of concern. I presented a summary of my activities as Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, which included a recent Commission hearing, a briefing on the plight of Iraqi refugees and my participation on the congressional visit you led to Israel in May, marking that country's 60th anniversary. Similarly, Rep. Solis spoke in her capacity as the Special Representative on Migration, highlighting recent Commission hearings on women migrants and on regional impacts and opportunities for migrants. Rep. Christopher H. Smith, the Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues, was unable to be present in Astana and asked that his written report be circulated to delegations. It highlights visits to Bosnia, Romania, Russia and Ukraine as well as a recent Commission hearing on combating the sexual exploitation of children. Senator Cardin attended the Standing Committee in his capacity as an OSCE PA Vice President.

In my capacity as Head of the U.S. Delegation at the Standing Committee, I welcomed the decision of the Assembly to hold an event in Washington on the upcoming U.S. elections immediately following a September meeting of the OSCE PA in Toronto, Canada.

With the Standing Committee's business concluded, Assembly President Lennmarker opened the Inaugural Plenary Session, noting the importance of holding its first Annual Session in the Central Asian region. The delegates were, in turn, welcomed by Kazakhstan's President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who noted the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in democracy-building and further humanitarian and legal norms. The two Speakers of the Kazakhstan Parliament, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of the Senate and Aslan Mussin of the Mazhilis, also addressed the delegates. OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut of France reviewed the work of the OSCE and took questions from the parliamentarians.

Members of the U.S. Delegation actively participated in the work of the Assembly's three General Committees: Political Affairs and Security; Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment; and Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions. Each committee considered a draft resolution as well as 18 supplementary items circulated by delegates prior to the opening of the Astana meeting. One additional supplementary item was considered during the opening plenary.

Five of the supplementary items were resolutions proposed by members of the U.S. Delegation: Encouraging Transparency in the Extractive Industries, by Senator Cardin; Recognizing the Economic, Civic and Social Contributions of Migrants, by Rep. Solis; Strengthening Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and Addressing the Special Needs of Child Victims by Rep. Smith (and, in his absence, Rep. Wamp); Urging Adoption of the Paris Club Commitment Regarding Vulture Funds by Rep. Moore; and my own resolution Expressing Concern Over the Security Environment in Georgia. All were adopted with few if any amendments.

Parliamentarians from Russia, I should note, very strongly opposed my resolution on Georgia, as did some European parliamentarians, but I remained firm, pointing to the

moderately worded text and noting past willingness of U.S. delegates to consider and support as warranted resolutions critical of U.S. policies. Recent Russian action in the Caucasus was of sufficient concern to a majority of the delegates present that the resolution was ultimately adopted.

U.S. delegates were also instrumental in garnering support for Supplementary items by others, including a Canadian resolution on Afghanistan, a Ukrainian resolution on Holodomor (Ukrainian Famine-Genocide), and a Belgian resolution on Combating the Sexual Exploitation of Children. In addition, the U.S. Delegation introduced 20 amendments to various resolutions, covering issues from pollinator decline to religious freedom. Virtually all of them were adopted, and by dividing our work almost every member of the U.S. Delegation managed at least one resolution or amendment in committee. I would like to particularly note the exceptionally strong effort made by Rep. Moore, who had her own supplementary item and numerous amendments, including those calling for international action to reduce maternal mortality which were agreed to be a basis for a resolution at next year's Annual Session.

Belgian Senator Anne-Marie Lizin presented a report in committee on her latest activity as the OSCE PA Special Representative on Guantanamo Bay. Rep. Butterfield responded for the U.S. Delegation, expressing appreciation for her work and describing the latest Supreme Court, congressional and non-governmental efforts dealing with this stain on the U.S. human rights record.

Rep. Solis served as Acting Chair of the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions during the Annual Session, and she was subsequently elected to be the committee chair for the coming year. Rep. Solis is the first female Member of the U.S. Congress to hold a leadership position in the OSCE PA.

The OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues, Tone Tingsgaard (Sweden), hosted a working lunch to discuss gender issues during which she presented her thoughts for future action in the OSCE PA on these issues. The U.S. Delegation was well represented at this event.

The final Astana Declaration, attached, was adopted by the participants at the Assembly's closing plenary and reflects the initiatives and input of the U.S. Delegation. In line with the theme for the session, it calls for greater transparency in numerous fields, such as political or historical archives and the use of private military contractors, as well as within the OSCE itself. The declaration also calls for concrete steps to address global climate change, improve waste management and prepare for potential nuclear accidents and natural disasters.

Mr. Joao Soares, a parliamentarian from Portugal, was elected to serve as OSCE PA President for the coming year. Soares brings to the office extensive experience, having been a member of the Portuguese parliament from 1987 to 1990 and again since 2002, formerly a member of the European Parliament and of the Bureau of the European Parliament, and the mayor of Lisbon from 1995 to 2002. The delegates at the Annual Session also re-elected Pia Christmas-Moeller of Denmark, as a Vice president of the Assembly with three new Vice Presidents: Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan; Wolfgang Grossruck of Austria and Oleh Bilorus of Ukraine.

The OSCE Chair-in-Office, Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb, addressed the delegates during the closing plenary. He urged movement from managing unresolved conflicts in Georgia and Moldova to solving them. He also asked for continued support

for OSCE border-management training in Central Asia as well as for bolstering cooperative security in the Euro-Atlantic region.

While the Delegation's work focused heavily on OSCE PA matters, the venue presented an opportunity to advance U.S. interests and express U.S. concerns with our Kazakhstani hosts. The U.S. Delegation had meetings with President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Prime Minister Karim Masimov and Secretary of State Kanat Saudabayev as well as with prominent Kazakh human rights activists and opposition leaders. Members of the delegation also visited Beit Rachel, the largest synagogue in Central Asia, and met with the chief rabbi and the deputy imam from the Islamic community to discuss inter-faith tolerance and protection of religious freedom in Kazakhstan, especially for religious minorities.

The U.S. delegation held a press conference in Astana, during which we conveyed our willingness to work with Kazakhstan throughout its OSCE chairmanship in 2010. We strongly urged, however, greater progress regarding human rights and political reforms in keeping with the commitments Kazakhstan made at the Madrid OSCE Ministerial in November 2007, where the decision on the 2010 chairmanship was made.

Senator Cardin also used the visit to Kazakhstan as an opportunity to visit nearby Pakistan. He was joined by fellow Commissioners McIntyre and Aderholt as well as Representatives Wamp and Sanchez. The delegation met with President Pervez Musharraf, Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani, and U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne W. Patterson. During the meetings, the delegation focused on U.S.-Pakistan relations, regional security, as well as human rights and democratic development.

I hope this summary of the U.S. Delegation's activity is useful to you, and let me thank you and your staff again for making this trip possible. The Eighteenth Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will be held early next July in Vilnius, Lithuania, and I hope we can count on your continued support in ensuring that U.S. interests abroad are advanced through active congressional participation in the OSCE PA.

Sincerely,

ALCEE L. HASTINGS,
Chairman.

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE WHALING CONVENTION AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2008

HON. DON YOUNG

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2008

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing, along with Alaska's Senators, legislation to authorize the Secretary of Commerce to set the bowhead whale quota for the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission in the event the International Whaling Commission does not set an Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling quota for the bowhead whale.

Madam Speaker, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) is at a crossroads. Many observers of the IWC have raised concerns that the Commission will either fall apart in the next few years or it will turn into a whale protection organization that will allow no take of whales—even for subsistence purposes. In either case, without an alternative mechanism for authorizing the Alaska subsistence harvest of bowhead whales, the Alaska Eskimo Whal-

ing Commission could find itself with no quota authorized by the IWC. In the event that this were to occur and the Alaskan hunters tried to fulfill the communities needs for whale meat, they could find themselves in violation of the Whaling Convention Act of 1949 for attempting to feed their people.

And even if the IWC remains a viable management entity, the Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling quotas have been rejected by the IWC several times in recent memory due to political fights between the whaling nations and those nations that are opposed to any whaling. These fights have used the Alaskan Natives as political footfalls and left the Native people of Alaska without a quota of whales. This happened most recently in 2002 when the IWC rejected the Alaskan quota for no other reason than politics. And at this year's IWC meeting, the Greenland Natives submitted a request to substitute humpback whales for the current quota of fin whales—something the IWC's Scientific Committee had already considered and determined that the harvest of 10 humpback whales would not endanger the stock. Despite the Scientific Committee's determination, the IWC did not have enough votes to allow this quota. In both of these cases, the IWC did not act on Native quotas despite recommendations or determinations by the Scientific Committee that the quota was sustainable and would not endanger the stocks. In both cases, the Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling quotas were rejected because of politics and not science.

Madam Speaker, it is clear that in the fight to outlaw scientific whaling and commercial whaling, many IWC member countries are being pressured by animal rights groups to stop all whaling. These animal rights groups do not understand the subsistence needs of Native people—or they don't care.

Alaskan Native whalers have already been held hostage during these fights over scientific and commercial whaling and that is not right.

Today, the Alaska delegation is introducing legislation to regulate domestic Native subsistence whaling under domestic law in the event that the IWC cannot authorize a quota for the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission's bowhead whale harvest.

The legislation will allow the Secretary of Commerce to set the annual quota for the bowhead harvest in the event that the IWC is unable to set the quota. Under the legislation, the Secretary must set the quota based on science and the needs of the Alaska Natives.

The Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission's harvest has always been sustainable, based on science, based on harvest levels approved by the IWC's Scientific Committee, and set at a level that has allowed the bowhead whale population to increase to the point where some scientists are now calling for the downlisting of the stock.

The Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission has continually had to justify their harvest—both their cultural need and their nutritional need. They have done this and have also responded to every hurdle that anti-whaling nations have put in their way. In addition, they probably have provided more scientific information to the IWC on the bowhead whale than the IWC has on any other whale species. All of this was done to justify a harvest that has gone on for centuries.

The Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission has continued to respect the IWC, continued