

TRIBUTE TO POLICE CHIEF
ALBERT W. BELL

HON. JOHN T. SALAZAR

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 2, 2008

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I pay tribute to a respected leader from southwest Colorado, Police Chief Albert W. Bell of Durango, Colorado. Chief Bell has served the community of Durango with distinction for 14 years and has now announced his retirement, effective April 5, 2008.

Chief Bell's career in law enforcement started 37 years ago as a patrolman for the Topoka Police Department. On July 1, 1999, then Colorado Governor Bill Owens appointed Chief Bell to the Colorado Peace Officer Standards and Training, POST, Board. Chief Bell served that Board with distinction and in the highest traditions of the law enforcement profession.

Chief Bell is a member of the Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police and has served on numerous boards that serve the interests of the citizens of Colorado. In service to his local community, Chief Bell has served as Undersheriff in the La Plata County Sheriff's Department and also served on the Community Connections Board at Hilltop House.

Chief Bell has demonstrated an outstanding level of professionalism and is recognized as a leader among law enforcement professionals in the Third Congressional District, fostering cooperative relationships amongst the Federal, State, and local law enforcement communities.

Madam Speaker, I commend Durango Police Chief Al Bell for his outstanding leadership, service, and dedication to the residents of Durango, Colorado. While we will all miss Chief Bell's service and dedication, I ask that you join me in wishing him well upon his retirement.

INTRODUCTION OF THE "GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2008"

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 2, 2008

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, the "Government Accountability Office Act of 2008" (the Act), is intended to improve the oversight, administration, and pay adjustment functions at the Government Accountability Office, GAO.

The former Comptroller General has asserted that Federal agencies should have "modern, effective, credible, and, as appropriate, validated performance management systems in place with adequate safeguards, including reasonable transparency and appropriate accountability mechanisms, to ensure fairness and prevent politicization and abuse." Some of the safeguards recommended by the Government Accountability Office, GAO, include a performance management system that makes meaningful distinctions in individual employee performance; involves employees and stakeholders in designing the system; and achieves consistency, equity and non-discrimination.

Over the last 24 months, the subcommittee has conducted oversight, and more recently investigated, the implementation of GAO's new personnel system to determine if it meets the aforementioned criteria. The subcommittee found that it did not. In addition, based on its investigation the subcommittee concluded that, contrary to legislative intent, GAO employees who met and exceeded expectations in 2006 and 2007 did not receive the annual across-the-board increase that other GAO employees received.

The Act would restore the 2006 and 2007 annual across-the-board increase to GAO employees who met expectations but did not receive the adjustment. It would also set a "floor guarantee" that would preserve GAO's performance-based compensation system, while ensuring that GAO employees receive an annual increase in their permanent pay, provided they "meet expectations," that is at least equal to the Congressionally approved across-the-board increase.

The floor guarantee will be comprised of the annual adjustment to the GAO pay schedule plus the permanent merit pay increase received by an employee under GAO's merit pay system. At a hearing the subcommittee held on March 23, 2008, on this legislation and GAO's personnel reforms, the subcommittee learned from the Ivy Planning Group, a consulting firm hired by GAO to conduct an African American Performance Assessment Study at GAO, that there are significant differences between the ratings for African American analysts and Caucasian analysts. Therefore, the personnel reforms at GAO had a significant negative impact on African American staffers. Furthermore, a survey that was administered to GAO employees at my request, found that 81 percent of respondents thought morale in general at GAO is worse or much worse than before the reforms and a majority of the respondents felt that not having an across-the-board increase for all staff is very or somewhat unreasonable. While the subcommittee recognizes that more work needs to be done at GAO, the Act will help improve the morale at GAO and remedy the inequities that resulted from the denial of the 2006 and 2007 across-the-board adjustments.

Other provisions in the Act include creating a statutory Inspector General for GAO; permitting the Comptroller General, CG, greater flexibility to administer oaths to witnesses when auditing and settling accounts; enabling the CG to accept gifts and to make expenditures for meals and other expenses in connection with recruitment; and eliminates the statutorily imposed GS-15 pay cap to allow the CG the authority to pay employees up to the rate for Executive Level III. The Act has the support of GAO and its union, the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers.

"ALL IN A NAME," GREECE'S CONCERNS REGARDING THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA'S ACCESSION TO THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 2, 2008

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, later this week the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will hold a Heads of State and Government summit in Bucharest, Romania. One of the major issues considered will be the expansion of NATO and the possible extension of membership invitations to Albania, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). In this context, I would like to bring to the House's attention excerpts from the April 1, 2008 Op-ed in the Wall Street Journal titled "All in a Name," written by Greece's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dora Bakoyannis.

[FROM THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, APR. 1, 2008]

ALL IN A NAME

(By Dora Bakoyannis)

ATHENS.—The NATO summit comes to Southeastern Europe this week, and Greece is looking forward to it . . . As the region's oldest NATO and EU member, Greece feels a profound obligation to be constructive, supportive and practical regarding our neighbors. We wholeheartedly espouse the policy of enlargement, and I am happy to say that two members of the so-called "Adriatic Three," Croatia and Albania, are today in a position to further the principles of the North Atlantic Treaty and earn their invitation to NATO in Bucharest. However, it saddens me that we cannot so far say the same about our neighbor, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

For over 15 years, our two countries have been involved in United Nations-sponsored negotiations regarding FYROM's name. Greece has real and concrete concerns over the issue. What's in a name, you may ask? A great deal, I can assure you. The term "Macedonia" has always been used to delineate a wider geographical region, approximately 51% of which is part of Greece, 38% of which is in FYROM, and 9% of which is in Bulgaria.

Not only does the government in Skopje insist on being the sole claimant to the name of an entire area—the largest part of which lies outside its borders—but authorities in FYROM insist on portraying Greek Macedonia as "occupied" territory. While government leaders declare they have no designs on Greek territory, they refuse to remove such claims from textbooks, state maps and national documents . . .

And we are not alone in our quest. In the U.S. Congress, 115 members, both Republicans and Democrats, recently co-sponsored House Resolution 356, which expressed the "sense of the House of Representatives that FYROM should stop hostile activities and propaganda against Greece, and should work with the United Nations and Greece to find a mutually acceptable official name."

NATO has consistently encouraged full normalization of relations not only with aspirants themselves but with neighboring third countries not belonging to the Alliance. Greece will spare no effort in reaching a real and viable solution for the sake of peace and stability in the region. Alliances and partnerships, however, can only be fostered among countries if there is mutual trust and goodwill.