

Ms. BERKLEY. Earlier today, this House passed the concurrent resolution recognizing the 60th anniversary of the founding of the modern State of Israel and reaffirming the bonds of close friendship and cooperation between the United States and Israel.

I was not yet born in 1948 when the State of Israel declared its independence, but I grew up and was born into a family where the fact that Israel had been created meant everything to us, and I want to share with you why that is.

I am the granddaughter of immigrants to this country that couldn't speak English. My mother's side of the family comes from Salonica, Greece. Prior to World War II, there was a vibrant Jewish community in Salonica. Over half the population, 80,000 people, were Jewish. By the time the Nazis finished with the Jews of Salonica, there were only 1,000 out of the 80,000 Jews left.

On my father's side of the family, we who come from the Russian-Poland border, the entire culture, a vibrant culture that had existed for over 1,000 years, was exterminated along with most of the Jewish population of Poland.

I grew up hearing stories from my grandmothers about what it was like in the countries that they came from and how happy they were to be Americans, to be Jewish Americans. My family had a profound sense of patriotism and pride in being Americans, but they also, and we also, are Jewish.

And the fact that there is a country uniquely belonging to the Jewish people said something to us about the ability of surviving so that anything like what happened in World War II never happened again.

A couple of years ago, I had the privilege of attending the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. I had never wanted to go to Auschwitz before because of all of the horrors that took place there during World War II: People systematically slaughtered for the very mere fact they were Jewish; starved, killed, exterminated, gassed.

But I did go to this commemoration. And I was told by the late Tom Lantos, my dear friend, a story while we were sitting there. Two weeks before this commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz, the Israel Defense Force had their own commemoration. And the head of the Israel Defense Force got up at Auschwitz, and he said the following words. He said to the members of the Israel Defense Force who were there participating in this ceremony, We are 60 years too late, but we are here now; and with that, four Israeli jets buzzed over Auschwitz.

That symbolism was not lost on anybody sitting there. If Israel had existed 60 years ago, perhaps hundreds of thousands of Jews could have been saved and kept from the gas chambers.

If I wasn't Jewish and Israel didn't mean so much to me in a highly personal way, as an American, I would cel-

brate the birth of Israel and its existence. The modern State of Israel has rebuilt a nation, forged a new and dynamic democratic society, created a thriving economic, political, cultural, and intellectual life despite the pain of war and almost constant terrorist attacks, attacked in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973, and all the time moving forward and expanding their economy, expanding their way of life, living in a thriving and vibrant democracy.

□ 2045

Our strongest ally, America's strongest ally on the planet is that little State of Israel; votes with us all the time in the United Nations, supports us, and we, in turn, support it because it is mutually beneficial to both the United States and to the State of Israel.

It would be my fervent dream that before the next anniversary of Israel, that there would be a Jewish State of Israel living side by side in peace with a Palestinian state that was also democratic, with a free press, free speech, and a vibrant economy and a way of life where people could reach across those divides and live a better life together.

And with that, I yield back the balance of my time with great pride in the 60th anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DONNELLY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MARTIN GUITAR COMPANY CELEBRATES ITS 175TH ANNIVERSARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. DENT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, while the music of Tom Petty, Sheryl Crow and Jimmy Buffett represent dramatically different styles, these three famous musicians and countless others throughout the world share one unique characteristic, they all play a Martin guitar.

Founded in 1833, Martin Guitar Company is celebrating its 175th anniversary in 2008. Headquartered in beautiful Nazareth, Pennsylvania, I'm very proud to have this remarkable business located in my district.

The fascinating origins of Martin Guitar date back to the late 18th century, when the company's founder and namesake, Christian Frederick Martin, Sr., was born in Germany. The son of a prominent local cabinet maker, Martin traveled to Vienna, Austria at the age of 15 to apprentice with Johann Stauffer, a renowned guitar maker.

After honing his craft in Austria, Martin returned to his native Germany to open his first shop, but became entangled in a bitter dispute between the local Cabinet Makers Guild and Violin Makers Guild. This clash ultimately drove Martin to emigrate to the United States in 1833, where he opened a shop in New York City's lower West Side.

Six years after arriving in New York City, Martin moved his family and business to Nazareth, Pennsylvania, where the shop flourished and evolved from a one-man operation into a company that employed over a dozen skilled craftsmen. In 1859, a plant was constructed on Maine and North Streets in the heart of Nazareth. Having undergone numerous expansions and modifications over time, this facility is still used by the company for shipping and storage. It also houses a retail supply store for instrument crafting and repair.

In its 175-year existence, Martin Guitar Company has used innovation and foresight to survive many tumultuous periods of American history. The company actually flourished during the Civil War due, in part, to the simple fact that many guitars were destroyed during fighting and needed to be replaced.

Later, in the 1890s, business boomed when Martin began producing mandolins that were widely popular among the growing number of Italian immigrants arriving in the United States from Europe. The company struck gold in the 1920s when the American public suddenly became captivated by the tiny ukulele. Spurred by the overwhelming sales of ukuleles, which at the time were being produced at nearly double the rate of traditional guitars, Martin was forced to expand the capacity of its Nazareth plant and substantially increase its workforce.

The advent of the Great Depression in 1929 imposed incredible hardships on American households. While every industry in the Nation was impacted by the economic downturn, Martin found it exceptionally difficult to sell guitars and musical supplies to a public desperately trying to make ends meet.

During the Depression, the company reluctantly abandoned aspirations for increasing sales and focused exclusively on economic survival. To avoid scaling back the already reeling workforce, Martin diversified its production and began manufacturing violin components and even wooden jewelry. Desperate for a concept to reinvigorate sales, the company explored numerous product modifications which ultimately led to two important developments, the creation of the now famous "Dreadnought" guitar, and the invention of the 14-Fret Guitar Neck, which today is an industry standard.

From 1948 to 1970, the company experienced unprecedented growth due to post-war prosperity and the rise in popularity of American folk music. In 1955, a new, larger plant was built in Nazareth to help meet increasing demand,

but by the early 1960s Martin guitars were back-ordered as much as 3 years.

In 1990, the company formalized its long-standing ecological policy which embraced the responsible use of natural materials and promoted the use of sustainable yield, alternative wood varieties.

Adopting such a progressive policy nearly 20 years ago has helped broaden the use of sustainable materials within the guitar industry over the last two decades and illustrates Martin's admirable dedication to responsible production. Martin's amazing longevity in a constantly changing industry is a true testament to the strength of the company's management and its commitment to crafting guitars of the highest quality.

Mr. Speaker, the Martin Guitar Company has been a source of tremendous pride in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania for generations. Today, I rise to congratulate the Martin family and their many employees on 175 years of achievement. I wish them many, many more years of incredible success. We are extraordinarily proud of them.

IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, those who support our occupation of Iraq often justify it by saying that there will be a terrible humanitarian crisis if our troops leave. They must have missed the memo about the humanitarian crisis that already exists in Iraq. And they must be blind to the humanitarian crisis that goes on every day right here in America because of the occupation.

Last week, the Rand Corporation issued a shocking report which measured the crisis at home. The report found that 300,000 troops who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder or major depression; that's about 20 percent of all the troops who have been deployed. The numbers are truly staggering, but when you add all the family members who are affected, you realize that we will never be able to calculate the full human toll of the Iraq invasion.

Mr. Speaker, the study was the first complete analysis of PTSD and depression problems. It should have been conducted by our government, our government, which, by the way, has the greatest responsibility for the care of our veterans, but it wasn't. It was conducted by the Rand Corporation, a private, nonprofit organization. The codirector of the report said one of the reasons that RAND did the study was because the Pentagon didn't, and they wanted to have the numbers. It is outrageous that our own Department of Defense didn't know how many of our veterans were suffering from PTSD and from major depression. How did our

government expect to address this health crises if it didn't know the full extent of it?

This is another example, Mr. Speaker, of the administration failing our troops. But it's hardly the only example. Over 125,000 veterans of the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan are on disability for hearing loss and other hearing problems. One of the chief reasons is the Pentagon's failure to fully anticipate the problem of road-side bombs. The blasts from these bombs cause violent changes in air pressure that can rupture the eardrum and break bones inside the ear.

And most tragically, we are learning that the government may be trying to cover up the problem of suicide among veterans. In a trial that opened yesterday, two organizations are suing the Department of Veterans Affairs for failing to provide adequate care to prevent suicides among veterans. An e-mail written by the head of the Mental Health Services for the VA was shown at that very trial. The e-mail referred to approximately 1,000 veterans under the VA's care who attempt suicide every month. And the memo said, "Shhhh! Is this something we should carefully address ourselves in some order of press release before someone stumbles on it?" This is incredible. The Veterans Administration is trying to figure out whether to hide the truth from the American people about the extent of the suicide problem among our veterans. What a disgrace.

Mr. Speaker, we have a solemn duty to care for our veterans, to honor them for their sacrifice, and the best way to honor those who have been injured is to make certain that more aren't injured. That means we must responsibly redeploy our troops out of Iraq. And it means we must get on with the task of helping the people of Iraq to rebuild their lives and their country, and healing the wounds of our veterans right here at home. The administration will not do it. It is up to Congress to do it.

We owe it to our veterans, to the American people, to the Iraqi people. And Mr. Speaker, we owe it to ourselves.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE DRUG CONVICTION QUESTION AND FEDERAL STUDENT FINANCIAL AID

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Ms. CLARKE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CLARKE. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, both the Washington Post and the New York Times reported that under

the Bush administration the military has increasingly granted so-called "conduct waivers" to allow more people with criminal records, including drug convictions, to serve in the Armed Forces. As a matter of fact, conduct waivers granted for felonies and other crimes constitute the majority of all waivers, about 60 percent for the Army, and 75 percent for the Marine Corps.

It is important to note that the vast majority of such convictions stem from juvenile offenses, but at the same time, a provision of the Higher Education Act, which Congress is currently in the process of reauthorizing, bars young people with drug convictions from receiving Federal financial aid to go to college. I find it absolutely alarming that the Bush administration seems to think that youth who are prone to youthful indiscretions and get into trouble with drug use are, on the one hand, not worthy of Federal support to obtain a college education, but on the other hand, are perfectly fit to go and to fight the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Because of what many have termed the "Drug War Draft," countless students with minor drug convictions are turned away from the university financial aid office only to be funneled across the street to the military recruiting office. While there is absolutely nothing wrong with giving young people with past drug convictions an opportunity to redeem themselves in service to our country by joining the armed services, it is a moral outrage that current law blocks redemption through educational opportunities to these same individuals.

When asked about the conduct waivers, the Army's Operations Chief Lieutenant General James Thurman stated, "You've got to give people an opportunity to serve." Well, I thoroughly agree with the general, people should be able to contribute to this society in whatever way they best can, whether by enlisting in the military or by enrolling in school and obtaining the skills needed to become productive members of our workforce, our communities, and by extension, our Nation.

SUNSET MEMORIAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I stand once again before this House with yet another Sunset Memorial.

It is April 23, 2008, in the land of the free and the home of the brave, and before the sun set today in America, almost 4,000 more defenseless unborn children were killed by abortion on demand. That's just today, Mr. Speaker. That's more than the number of innocent lives lost on September 11 in this country, only it happens every day.

It has now been exactly 12,875 days since the tragedy called Roe v. Wade was first handed down. Since then, the very foundation of this Nation has been stained by the blood