

leased and easily developable acres of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, only to have their profits plunge while trying to reduce gas prices?

Last week, Democrats in Congress supported legislation to increase domestic oil production by requiring oil companies to drill on leases they control or lose those leases to companies that would drill.

The Republicans once again voted no. Republicans won't require oil companies to drill, but they have no problem handing them more leases to hoard while gas pump prices and oil company profits soar.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. TAUSCHER). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

APPROVING RENEWAL OF IMPORT RESTRICTIONS CONTAINED IN THE BURMESE FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY ACT OF 2003

Mr. LEVIN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 93) approving the renewal of import restrictions contained in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the joint resolution.

The text of the joint resolution is as follows:

H.J. RES. 93

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. RENEWAL OF IMPORT RESTRICTIONS UNDER THE BURMESE FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY ACT OF 2003.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Congress approves the renewal of the import restrictions contained in section 3(a)(1) of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003.

(b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—This joint resolution shall be deemed to be a “renewal resolution” for purposes of section 9 of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003.

SEC. 2. CERTAIN COBRA FEES.

Section 13031(j)(3)(B)(i) of the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (19 U.S.C. 58c(j)(3)(B)(i)) is amended by striking “September 30, 2017” and inserting “October 7, 2017”.

SEC. 3. TIME FOR PAYMENT OF CORPORATE ESTI- MATED TAXES.

The percentage under subparagraph (C) of section 401(l) of the Tax Increase Prevention and Reconciliation Act of 2005 in effect on the date of the enactment of this Act is increased by 0.25 percentage points.

SEC. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This joint resolution and the amendments made by this joint resolution shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this joint resolution or July 26, 2008, whichever occurs first.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEVIN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The bill before us will renew the import ban on products of Burma. While there can be concerns about the universal effectiveness of unilateral sanctions, Burma clearly presents a unique situation. There is overwhelming evidence that Burma continues to blatantly disregard human rights and suppress democracy, and it is therefore important to continue the import ban for another year.

Under the military regime that rules Burma today, Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest, which the military regime extended yet again in May. She has been detained for 12 of the last 18 years without being charged or tried. The government is also detaining almost 2,000 other civic activists indefinitely and without charge. The detention of Aung San Suu Kyi and these other activists would be reason enough to renew the sanctions. Unfortunately, there are many more examples of human rights abuses in Burma.

Government security forces killed and injured hundreds of demonstrators during their suppression of pro-democracy protests in September. These forces have also committed other extrajudicial killings, as well as disappearances, rape, and torture in the past year.

Regime-supported organizations and militias have harassed, abused and detained human rights and pro-democracy activists. The government regularly tramples on the Burmese people's privacy and their freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, religion and movement.

Violence and discrimination against women and ethnic minorities; recruitment of child soldiers; and trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, persist. Workers' rights remain restricted and forced labor, including that of children, continues to be a problem.

The military regime's handling of tropical cyclone Nargis this past spring also underscores the poor human rights situation in Burma. The regime did little to warn citizens about the calamitous cyclone. Almost 150,000 people are dead or missing. Nor did the regime provide adequate assistance to hundreds of thousands who survived the cyclone.

While dozens of nations, including our Nation, responded immediately to the cyclone and attempted to provide humanitarian assistance, the government initially denied them permission to enter the country. It continues to severely limit their ability to provide assistance.

As a result, the Burmese people unnecessarily suffer. In light of Burma's continuing dismal record and the lack of any concrete steps to provide basic human rights to its citizens or to implement basic democratic reforms, I urge my colleagues to extend the ban on the import of Burmese products for another year.

I also hope the European Union, ASEAN and other nations around the world will continue to work with the U.S. to increase pressure on the Burmese regime. This week's ASEAN meetings in Singapore offer the opportunity to do so.

I would also like to submit the following letters for the RECORD:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,

Washington, DC, July 9, 2008.

Hon. HOWARD BERMAN,

Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I am writing regarding H. J. Res. 93, which renews the import restrictions contained in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 (P. L. No. 108-61). This legislation was introduced on June 5, 2008.

As you know, the Committee on Ways & Means has jurisdiction over import matters, such as the import ban imposed by the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act. Accordingly, certain provisions of H. J. Res. 93 fall under the Committee's jurisdiction.

The import ban imposed by this Act must be renewed annually by Congress to remain in effect. Last year, the Committee allowed the renewal legislation to proceed to the floor without a Committee markup. To again expedite this legislation for floor consideration, the Committee will forgo action on this bill and will not oppose its consideration on the suspension calendar. This is done with the understanding that it does not in any way prejudice the Committee or its jurisdictional prerogatives on this, or similar legislation, in the future.

I would appreciate your response to this letter, confirming our understanding with respect to H.J. Res. 93, and would ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included in the Congressional Record.

Sincerely,

CHARLES B. RANGEL,

Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,

Washington, DC, July 9, 2008.

Hon. CHARLES B. RANGEL,

Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your letter regarding H. J. Res. 93, approving the renewal of import restrictions contained in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003.

I appreciate your willingness to waive consideration of this legislation in the interest of expediting its consideration. I recognize that the bill contains provisions that fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means. I agree that the inaction of

your Committee with respect to the bill does not in any way prejudice the Committee on Ways and Means or its jurisdictional prerogatives on this or similar legislation in the future.

I concur that our exchange of letters be included in the Congressional Record.

Cordially,

HOWARD L. BERMAN,
Chairman.

Madam Speaker, I now reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HERGER. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.J. Res. 93, to extend import sanctions against Burma for another year. Conditions are getting worse, not better, in Burma.

This past year has been particularly repugnant on all fronts. The U.N. General Assembly expressed grave concern with the ongoing systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Burma.

In response to peaceful civic protests in August and September of 2007, the regime killed 30 people, according to U.N. estimates. Other sources reported hundreds of deaths. Harassment, beatings and other violent attacks on demonstrators were routine.

The U.N. Human Rights Council strongly deplored these mindless acts, and the U.N. Security Council, which includes China, unanimously condemned them as well. The ASEAN countries, Burma's neighbors, proclaimed their revulsion.

As for promoting democracy, there too Burma went in the wrong direction, ignoring the requests of the U.N. special adviser to release opposition political prisoners. The regime imposed on its people a smoke-and-mirrors democratic process, criminalizing criticism of its sham constitution and forcing an unfair referendum on communities devastated by the cyclone. This is not the scorecard of a country for which we should lift sanctions.

I must say, however, that I seriously question the usefulness of unilateral action. Our Burma import sanctions have been in place for 5 years. During that time, the repressive ruling regime has shown no progress toward democracy and respect for human rights.

That said, in light of the events of the past year, I believe that we have no choice but to continue these sanctions, not only to remind Burma's leaders that their actions are inexcusable, but also to communicate to the impoverished Burmese people that we have not abandoned their cause.

While I am an admitted skeptic when it comes to import sanctions, the Burma sanctions are structured to epitomize their effectiveness. They require the administration to report annually on whether conditions in Burma are improving, and whether U.S. national security, economic and foreign policy interests are being served.

The President may waive the sanctions in the national interest. Finally, they are not self-executing. The sanctions will sunset next July unless Congress votes to extend them. Most importantly, our sanctions, which this

Chamber voted last week to strengthen even further, are driving other countries to take a tougher stance.

This past year, Canada imposed new export, import and investment restrictions on Burma. Australia instituted new financial measures, and the EU sharpened its import sanctions, targeting Burma's profitable extractive industries.

We still need to see much more from China, the ASEAN nations and India. For us to force change in Burma, the action must be multilateral, and continued efforts to build international pressure are critical to my future support for these import sanctions. In the meantime, Madam Speaker, I support this resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam Speaker, it is now my privilege to yield as much time as he shall consume to the lead sponsor of this resolution, the distinguished colleague from New York, a member of our committee.

Mr. CROWLEY. I thank my friend from Michigan for yielding me this time. I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for expressing their support for what I believe is a very valuable piece of legislation.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the renewal of the sanctions on the Burmese junta. I am proud to follow in the footsteps of the previous author of this important legislation, the late Tom Lantos. It was Tom's drive and energy that ensured that this legislation was passed in the past Congresses, and I am now pleased that I am able to pick up the mantle and to be the lead sponsor of this legislation as it moves forward.

Like Mr. Lantos, I believe that the United States has a moral obligation to stand up for those citizens of the world who cannot stand up for themselves. For many years now, the Burmese military junta has committed endless atrocities toward rival factions and ethnic groups inside their borders. Over 1 million of the Burmese people have been forced to relocate from their homes. More than 2,700 villages have been annihilated while junta leaders deny much-needed humanitarian aid to reach refugees as a result of Cyclone Nargis. Millions have been subjugated into forced labor, what the International Labor Organization calls, and I quote, a modern form of slavery.

The junta is one of the few remaining repressive regimes still in power in the 21st century. The entire world witnessed the repression that existed only last fall in Burma when the military junta smashed a burgeoning democracy movement. Once again, it was demonstrated when the military junta denied humanitarian assistance to its own people during Cyclone Nargis.

President Bush and the First Lady continue to bring attention to the people of Burma's struggle for freedom and democracy, and I congratulate and commend both of them for that.

□ 1045

Most recently, the President signed the Congressional Gold Medal of Freedom for Aung San Suu Kyi, which again further demonstrates the commitment of the President and of Congress in terms of bringing notoriety to her cause. But we need to pressure our allies, specifically the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, known as ASEAN, as well as, I believe, China and India, to do more to clamp down on the junta's finances and international travel.

If we ignore this terrible situation, it will only continue to worsen. The time to act against these Burmese atrocities is upon us. Times such as now are when a strong voice is needed to push the world in the right direction. As a collective group, we can come together to save lives and to save a culture from being swallowed by inhumanity.

I want to again thank my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, who may have some skeptical thoughts about the imposition of sanctions, but I think you've already alluded to other countries and what they're doing now as a result of what we did, maybe unilaterally. But we are making a difference by not ignoring the plight of the people of Burma, who are being held, in many respects, in bondage by their own government.

And so I applaud you for recognizing the effects that these sanctions have had and will continue to have and will grow. We're looking for more partners in this effort. And I believe by passing this legislation today, it demonstrates our further commitment towards the people of Burma, who have very few people in the world looking out for them but the United States. So I congratulate you all for supporting this legislation and I urge all my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. SHAYS. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.J. Res. 93, which would reauthorize the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act.

The devastation caused by Cyclone Nargis in May has been heart wrenching to watch. Despite the significant progress that has been made over the last three months with the support of the international community and numerous non-governmental organizations, the junta has frustrated our efforts to do more to help the people of Burma. We must continue to assist the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable communities.

As a member of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, I am particularly concerned about human rights in Burma. The violence against thousands of protesters led by Buddhist monks last September, which was triggered by the unannounced decision of the Burmese military junta to remove fuel subsidies, should be of great concern to everyone.

We must call on the Burmese junta to end its human rights abuses against members of Burma's ethnic minorities immediately, and until then, we should continue to impose tough economic and diplomatic sanctions against Burma.

I urge the support of H.J. Res. 93.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, today I rise in support of H. J. Res. 93, a resolution approving the renewal of import restrictions contained in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act (P.L. 108-61). I am proud to have once again introduced this legislation; this year with the gentleman from New York, Mr. CROWLEY.

In 2003 Congress passed the Burmese Freedom & Democracy Act, legislation that I co-authored with my friend, the late Tom Lantos. President Bush signed this bill into law and we have reauthorized these import restrictions every year since. The legislation bans imports from Burma and the issuance of visas to those officials affiliated with the State Peace and Development Council, SPDC, the military junta that rules Burma and brutally represses its people. This law also bans U.S. financial transactions that involve individuals or entities connected with the SPDC.

These sanctions are critically important to keeping the pressure on the Burmese junta. The government continues to have one of the worst human rights records in the world and routinely violates the rights of Burmese citizens, including the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detention, torture, as well as slave and child labor. The Burmese regime has destroyed more than 3,000 ethnic villages, displaced approximately 2,000,000 Burmese people, more than 500,000 of which are internally displaced, and arrested approximately 1,300 individuals for expressing critical opinions of the government. And it continues to hold Aung San Suu Kyi, the head of the National League for Democracy and the democratically elected leader of Burma, under house arrest.

And just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, it does. In August 2007, after the SPDC cancelled fuel subsidies resulting in skyrocketing fuel prices, student leaders, democracy leaders, and Buddhist monks marched peacefully through the streets to demand human rights, freedom, and democracy. But the military responded by attacking these protestors. Hundreds of innocent people were killed, arrested, imprisoned, or tortured as part of this violent crackdown.

Then in May 2008 came Cyclone Nargis. Hundreds of thousands of Burmese citizens lost their lives because the government did not inform them a storm was approaching and, even worse, delayed and prevented humanitarian aid from reaching its people.

We must continue to stand with the Burmese people and expose the despicable and reprehensible actions of the SPDC. Sanctions are critical to putting pressure on the junta. Just last week the House passed the Burmese Democracy Promotion Act (H.R. 3890) which would ban the importation of Burmese gems into the United States and freeze the assets of Burmese political and military leaders. But we need to urge others to do the same. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN, the European Union, EU, and the United Nations Security Council, UNSC, must all impose multilateral sanctions against Burma's military regime including a complete arms embargo.

I urge adoption of the resolution.

Mr. HERGER. Madam Speaker, I urge an "aye" vote on this and yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time with the hope that we will pass this. And I think

Mr. CROWLEY noted the efforts of our late colleague and close friend, Tom Lantos. He paved the way on this, and I think we need to follow in that path.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution, H.J. Res. 93, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AMENDING THE INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1986 TO RESTORE THE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND BALANCE

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6532) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to restore the Highway Trust Fund balance.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6532

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

SECTION 1. RESTORATION OF HIGHWAY TRUST FUND BALANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (f) of section 9503 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (relating to determination of trust fund balances after September 30, 1998) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (1) and (2) as subparagraphs (A) and (B), respectively, and by moving such subparagraphs 2 ems to the right,

(2) by striking "For purposes" and inserting the following:

"(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes",

(3) by moving the flush sentence at the end of paragraph (1), as so amended, 2 ems to the right, and

(4) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(2) RESTORATION OF FUND BALANCE.—Out of money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, there is hereby appropriated to the Highway Trust Fund \$8,017,000,000."

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The last sentence of section 9503(f)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended by subsection (a), is amended by striking "subsection" and inserting "paragraph".

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on September 30, 2008.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCRERY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, may I ask unanimous consent to give Members 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on the bill, H.R. 6532.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, first let me thank my colleagues, Chairmen RANGEL, OBERSTAR and DEFAZIO, for acting on this important issue.

Madam Speaker, our roads need repair. Our State and local governments are struggling to make ends meet. Our drivers suffer when highway projects are delayed.

This bill is a temporary fix for the estimated \$4 billion shortfall in the highway trust fund.

This bill should fully fund the highway trust fund through 2009, but we still need a long-term bipartisan solution. I want to be clear, no money, but no money is spent under this bill. That process is left up to the appropriators. This legislation simply amends the Internal Revenue Code provision only.

Madam Speaker, transportation is the number one issue for many citizens in my district. Commuters sit in traffic for about 60 hours every year. Early this year, Forbes magazine declared the Atlanta metro area as the worst city for commuters in the country; the worst, Madam Speaker. If we fail to act today, our citizens, our States and our economy will suffer. We must act, and we must act today. We must act now.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote in support of H.R. 6532.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCRERY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself so much time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 6532.

I would say to my good friend, the chairman of the Transportation Committee, that I agree with him that the current financing structure for our transportation needs is inadequate. The bill before us today, though, I think just puts off the day that we will finally come to grips with the inadequacy of that financing structure and deal with it. And we should be dealing with the fundamental problem here and not just putting a patch, a temporary band-aid on it, such as this \$8 billion transfer will do.

So while I'm in agreement with the underlying, I suppose, motive for this bill, I think it is ill-advised because of the precedent that it sets. And it puts off to another day—which is easy for us to do—grappling with the real serious problem of fundamental inadequate funding of our transportation system through the trust fund.

So with that, Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota, chairman of the Transportation Committee, Mr. OBERSTAR.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I thank the distinguished gentleman from the Committee on Ways and Means, whom we all admire and revere for his civil rights leadership. And we're delighted that he is bringing this legislation to the floor.

I certainly appreciate the fiscal concern expressed by the distinguished