

The act has helped to guarantee the public's "right to know" for generations of Americans. Today, thanks to the reforms contained in the OPEN Government Act, which was signed into law on December 31, Americans who seek information under FOIA will experience a process that is much more transparent and less burdened by delays than it has been in the past. This is very good news. But there is still much more to be done to ensure that FOIA remains an effective tool for keeping our democracy open and free.

A key component of the OPEN Government Act is the creation of an Office of Government Information Services, OGIS, within the National Archives and Records Administration. The office would mediate FOIA disputes, review agency compliance with FOIA, and house a newly created FOIA ombudsman. Establishing a fully funded OGIS is essential to reversing the troubling trend of the last 7 years towards lax FOIA compliance and excessive Government secrecy.

I am pleased that the Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies—a panel on which I serve—last week rejected the President's budget proposal to move the functions of OGIS to the Department of Justice. I will continue to work very hard to ensure that OGIS is fully funded within the National Archives—as Congress intended—so that this important office has the necessary resources to fully comply with the OPEN Government Act.

There is also more work to be done to further strengthen FOIA. Earlier this year, I was pleased to join with Senator JOHN CORNYN in introducing the OPEN FOIA Act, S. 2746, a bill that requires Congress to clearly and explicitly state its intention to create a statutory exemption to FOIA when it provides for such an exemption in new legislation. While there is a very real need to keep certain Government information secret to ensure the public good and safety, excessive Government secrecy is a constant temptation and the enemy of a vibrant democracy.

The OPEN FOIA Act provides a safeguard against the growing trend towards FOIA exemptions, and would make all FOIA exemptions clear and unambiguous, and vigorously debated, before they are enacted into law. The Senate Judiciary Committee will consider this bill at its business meeting this week, and I urge all members to support this legislation to further restore the public's trust in their Government.

As we reflect upon the celebration of another FOIA anniversary, we in Congress must also reaffirm our commitment to open and transparent government. As I have said many times, open government is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. It is an American value and a virtue that all Americans hold dear. It is in this bipartisan spirit that I join Americans from

across the political spectrum in celebrating the 42nd anniversary of the birth of FOIA and all that this law has come to symbolize about our vibrant democracy.

HONORING THE RESCUERS OF KEITH KENNEDY

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the dedication of all those involved in the safe and miraculous return of Keith Kennedy, an autistic man from Shoreview, MN, who spent this past week alone, without food or shelter, lost in the woods of northwestern Wisconsin.

His safe return has been called a miracle, but this miracle would not have been possible without the commitment of the hundreds of volunteers, law enforcement officers, firefighters and medics who selflessly gave their time and continued to search for Keith, even when all hope seemed lost.

Special recognition must go to Gary Ruiz and Jim Cotroneo, two St. Paul firefighters who found Keith against all odds. Their efforts, and the efforts of their colleagues who joined them in this search, ensured a joyful ending to what could so easily have been another tragedy.

I cannot fail to mention Keith's parents, Bruce and Linda Kennedy, whose spirit of hope was by all accounts an inspiration to those who participated in bringing Keith home safely. Their bravery and the bravery of their son are an inspiration to us all.

I believe this story shows once again the willingness of Minnesotans, and of our friends in Wisconsin, to go beyond what is asked of them to come together as a community and support those in need. My hope is that the actions of all those who gave of themselves so that Keith could return home, will inspire others to do the same.

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, earlier this week, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, numbering over 1,000, are heartbreaking and touching. To respect their efforts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through energy_prices@rapo.senate.gov to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. This is not an issue that will be easily resolved, but it is one that deserves immediate and serious attention, and Idahoans deserve to be heard. Their stories not only detail their struggles to meet everyday expenses, but also have suggestions and recommendations as to what Congress can do now to tackle this problem and find solutions that last beyond today. I ask unanimous consent to have today's letters printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SENATOR CRAPO. Thank you for the opportunity to tell my story. I am nearly 70 years old and for 40 to 50 years have dreamed of a vacation in Jasper National Park in Canada. This year was to be the year to go. I had a new vehicle, a competent driver to share the driving, and I had the money. Well, I had the money until the price of gas began to rise so sharply. I had to cancel this dream trip. I may never get to Jasper.

My sister and I made weekly trips to Boise for religious purposes. Because of the cost of gas, we had to cut that back to twice a month.

I have a little patch of strawberries that produces more than I can use. I have shared with friends, family and neighbors nearby. There are many who I would love to share with (and they would love to have them), but they live too far to make it worth the trip with the high cost of gas.

My sister and I are on a limited budget (Social Security), and the cost of gas has caused the prices of food and other things we have to buy to skyrocket. We live at least 20 miles from town, one way. It costs over three times for gas to go to town than it used to. There are no buses in our area.

My personal opinion is that the environmentalists should either donate their money to pay for foreign fuel or let us produce that which we have in our own country. I think they are being very selfish, and I wish a bunch of those characters had to live on less than \$1,000 per month.

Sincerely,

DELORES, *Melba*.

With the gas prices the way they are, my family has to stay home instead of camping, fishing and other family activities we have done in the past. The grocery stores have had to raise the prices because of the price of fuel. My wife travels 55 miles a day for work in a car that is on its last leg. I cannot replace it because of the money that we are spending in fuel. I never worried about "filling my tank" before, but now I cannot fill my tank because of the price of fuel. I feel like my government wants the fuel to keep going up and up. Everybody says that the oil companies are making a fortune, but they make 4 cents a gallon and taxes are 50 cents a gallon. So who is making the money, the oil companies or the government? Please help us by lowering the fuel prices even if we have to rely on the oil in the United States and not buy from the Middle East.

JASON, *Pocatello*.

DEAR SENATOR, I am concerned about your ignorance on why prices not only at the pump but on anything we buy are up. The Federal Reserve is most responsible for this inflation. It is taught in economics 101. The Federal Reserve has inflated our dollar 50 percent in the last 7 years, according to their statistics. That means 7 years ago, if you had \$100,000 in the bank, it would only buy half as much today "say \$50,000". This means if you made \$10.00 an hour seven years ago and your wages stayed the same, you only have the buying power of \$5.00/hour.

The Federal Reserve inflates our money supply. They will not give the M3 numbers out because there's a conscious effort not to let the public know what they are doing. You must kick the can, do your research on how inflation really works before you even talk about making changes. If you are to fix the problem, go to the Congress and ask them to fire the Federal Reserve.

Sure, energy prices are up, and these big companies are making big profits. The big oil companies are only in the right place at the right time. The Federal Reserve was voted in wrongly Dec 24, 1913. This was when no one could vote against the creation of the

Federal Reserve. The Federal Reserve is responsible for the Great Depression. They are responsible now for our inflation. Please takes steps and ask Congress to remove this private agency and go to gold standard.

KEVIN, Rathdrum.

Fortunately, I can live, work, and shop within a 2-mile radius of home. However, we're reluctant to pull our RV down the road, which causes a loss of business for those tourist areas we would have visited.

I believe the best way to reduce gas prices is to increase production—drill off the coasts (like China and Cuba are doing now), and in Alaska; extract oil from coal and shale; and exploit other known resources. A massive effort to build nuclear plants would also be wise. It is time to tell the environmentalists where to "get off". The planet is not getting warmer, and certainly not at the hands of man.

SCOTT.

SENATOR CRAPO, Thank you for your time and ears. I am married with three children at home (two girls, ages 15 and 16; and one boy, 10 years old). Ten years ago, my wife and I were receiving government assistance; now we are both college graduates and working in professional positions, yet we still feel the pain at the pump. I can only imagine how hard it is affecting those who are still on government assistance, or those less fortunate without a higher education. I have personally bought relatives gas in the last month, not because they asked but because I knew they needed it.

Our family has felt the crunch with rising fuel prices. Fuel costs have taken away money from other pertinent bills in our household, especially our energy/power bill. Our family has scaled back traveling and fun family activities such as going to Mariners baseball games. After all, baseball is as American as apple pie. I know these aren't priorities in most households, but activities like these are ones which my family enjoys our time together. When you are raising teenagers you really appreciate these times because teens are hard to convince that family time is truly important. My wife and I bought two small import vehicles (4-cylinders) because we saw this fuel crisis coming. Maybe there could be incentives for using energy-efficient vehicles, not specifically imports but fuel-efficient vehicles. We have a large SUV, but we only drive it when we travel or have to transport the entire family.

Please help contain the ever-rising fuel crisis. Families are affected in more ways than we can imagine, especially the poor.

Sincerely,

RICHARD, Lenore.

You asked for my story here it is.

As a retired person and gas prices so high, I do not go anywhere. What bothers me more is the profit taking by oil companies, record profit earning 300 percent and over. Now is the time to own stock in oil. Is this not just greed, ripping off of the American public? We have back-up supplies; we have other sources of energy. We have a government that is not doing its job of protecting the people from being taken advantage of. Why are our government officials allowing this to happen? OPEC does control a lot but are they not be Holden to us for some of our products? Can we not hold them over the barrel—for some of the product we send them? OK, a head of lettuce \$4.00 each? What is happening with this country? All I am seeing is greed.

We have oil in Alaska; we have oil in Texas. Drill more here; supply ourselves. Why are we shipping oil out? Why not keep

our oil here so that OPEC can't hold us up at the bank?

Sincerely,

CLAUDIA, Nampa.

DEAR SENATOR CRAPO, I am very pleased for the opportunity to say something that will be heard. I bought a nice little 3-bedroom house in Caldwell, thinking the drive would be long, but something I could handle because I have a car that gets decent gas mileage. Well, with the high gas prices, I have left my home in Caldwell and moved to Boise to be able to keep my job and have something left to live on. Of course with the housing market, it is not selling. I know a lot of people like me who are sharing homes with others due to the increase in gas, electricity, and food prices. Right now living in Boise, it is still costing me 150.00 a month for gas, and I live about 15 minutes from work. Living in Caldwell it was three times the amount. That is one whole paycheck for me. I learned to eat noodles and potatoes instead of other things that would be better for me to eat. Can you imagine the people who are living on that who do not have a good job? I go to work, home and church. Now you may think that is not much of a life. I used to go for drives and visit friends, but that is not possible at this time due to the high cost of everything. We in this country know how to cut back and buckle down to do what needs to be done to help, but our government has let things get way out of hand. We as the voting public are supposed to have a say in things and too many have sat back and said nothing. Something must be done. We have far too long been dependent on others for our fuel, when we have the resources right here in this great country. I do not mean to sound negative, but there is nothing left for us to give. It is time those who have been elected begin giving back to those who support them!

I pray someone is listening.

JEANNIE, Boise.

The amount of fuel that I use is as minimal as I can get. I do not do anything except drive back and forth to work and to the grocery store on weekends. I do very little, if any, extra driving. I would love to go camping or up in our wonderful mountains to go fishing, but I cannot afford the gas that it would take to do this. I have been trying to find a way to purchase a different automobile that would get better mileage, but if you do not have extra money, it is real hard to try to save. I use one tank of gas a month to do what I do, and, at today's price, that costs me \$120.00; soon it will be \$150.00; then who knows. I understand price increases, but this is ridiculous. We need to have relief now. I do not understand how one group of people can put all of our own oil in such problems by not allowing us to drill for our own gas and oil. This problem stems from green people who have no idea how anyone else lives. We do not now nor will we ever have mass transit that will remove our cars from the highway.

I feel that we need to drill and produce our own oil and gas as much as we can; then we can tell all of these countries that do not like us goodbye, and we can keep our money here to help people in the U.S. that need help.

Thank you very much for the space to vent. I am not sure it will come of anything, but we can hope.

God bless the USA.

RICK.

With fuel prices increasing so rapidly, we aren't travelling as much or planning a vacation. We are making cutbacks in many areas. However, I was recently visiting my parents

in Idaho Falls. They are retired and on a limited income, so I have worried a bit about their finances with the rising fuel prices that not only affect transportation but everything. We stopped at a grocery store known to have the lowest prices consistently. As I approached the check out I saw a family and the mom's voice was starting to rise in intensity and volume. She was under a lot of stress. Her children were near and her husband was, too. She was adding up the cost of the meager amount of groceries in their cart and starting to put back basic items. The children and husband looked at her. She said, "I only have a half tank of gas left. I only have a half tank of gas left," she repeated. "I just filled it up and I only have $\frac{1}{2}$ tank left." She turned to her husband and asked him if he had driven her car yesterday. He replied, "No." Tears came to my eyes as I realized what this young, small, responsible family was going through. Tension was mounting, money was very tight, without fuel, how would they get to work? With fuel costing at least double what it recently was, how would they have enough to stretch? I hadn't realized that people were already having to make choices between fuel and food. Many, many Idahoans are independent and hard-working. They do not look for government hand-outs. They are resourceful. They grow gardens, glean fields nearby, cook from scratch and stretch their dollars in many ways. They make things work. But there comes a point when dollars do not stretch farther, salaries aren't increasing as rapidly as expenses, second jobs are scarcer to find. I live in Boise, a city with more transportation options. We are biking more; my husband has the privilege of biking to work. This family did not! Rural areas have few transportation options besides personal vehicles, and the distance to almost anywhere is great.

I believe as we use and develop our own resources in our great country that people will rise to the occasion and find solutions before we run out of fuel. When we encourage personal initiative and do not take a dependency attitude we, the people, can accomplish amazing things.

KARLA, Boise.

We must start drilling for domestic oil, start making nuclear power plants and oil refineries. I will not support anyone who does not and will be willing to help support those leaders who do.

JOHN.

My story is not special, but I think it is too common. I am a 55-year-old woman. I am my sole support. I live in Emmett, but there are no jobs there. I work in Boise, a 30-mile drive one way. I do not make a lot of money and, with the mortgage industry the way it is, I cannot afford to move. Homes are not selling in Emmett. I wonder how much higher things are going to go. Soon it will be a choice of food or gas. Which would you choose?

I am disgusted with our government. They do nothing, and I know they do not have to suffer the way we do. I feel our government has forgotten they work for us, not that we are supporting them.

CANDACE, Emmett.

DEAR SENATOR CRAPO, I am lucky enough to live within three miles of where I work, so transporting myself has not impacted me as much as most in my community. Where I am hit hard, though, is the cost of the organic and healthy food I buy. Since spending a lot of time trying to get myself healthy and researching about pesticides and about environmental toxins, I had to make the decision to vote with my dollars. I have spent a

much higher percentage on the important organics such as tomatoes, berries, greens, and some other staples that are most chemical-laden in the conventional counterpart. And I am happy to do so to help a growing sector of sustainable farmers. I always felt that, in the long run, this would come back to benefit all as our country turned to more sustainable and nutritious agriculture.

After studying some of the recent documentaries about our food supply, and the big corporate welfare, and how the farm bill works, I realized that, for some reason, our system prefers us eating the 2,000 mile irradiated, grown for shelf life, nutrient void produce. Organic and sustainable farming hasn't really been given the chance in the past, but I do have hope that because of rising fuel costs that maybe our officials will wake up and support locally grown and sold agriculture (at the expense of big agri and big oil). It will be cheaper with less transportation costs, but to get off the ground we need some government intervention that gives incentives for farmers to take the risk. We subsidize all the corn out there to make us obese with its crack of sweeteners and processed puffed foods and to feed more farm animals than we really have business eating, (\$79 hamburgers??); why do we not give nutrition a fair shake. Why do we not try to learn some of Europe's successes and shape a healthy community-based food system? So what I can do is look at my plate as half full on this issue; that is how high fuel costs can benefit me most.

Thank you,

RYAN.

The high energy prices are affecting our family negatively. Higher grocery prices. Gas prices were 1.46 when Bush took office. Unfortunately, Senator Crapo's vote to support the war in Iraq is one reason that gas prices are so high.

BRIAN.

I live in Jerome, Idaho, a rural community. We live between Twin Falls and Jerome, my wife works in Twin Falls and I work in Jerome. Since our area is rural and there is not any form of mass transit like in larger cities the high gas prices are killing us. My wife works for Twin Falls school district and they got a 2 percent raise this year and I got a 3 percent raise. The gas prices have taken all of our raises plus much more. We do not take any long drives other than to work. Life has changed in a big way and not to the positive side. The following is an email I received and I did check it out on the internet. Why are we not tapping into this oil field?

1. Ever heard of the Bakken Formation? Google it. I did, and again, blew my mind. The U.S. Geological Service issued a report in April ('08) that only scientists and oilmen/women knew was coming, but man was it big. It was a revised report (hadn't been updated since '95) on how much oil was in this area of the western 2/3 of North Dakota; western South Dakota; and extreme eastern Montana . . . check this out:

"The Bakken is the largest domestic oil discovery since Alaska's Prudhoe Bay, and has the potential to eliminate all American dependence on foreign oil. The Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates it at 503 billion barrels. Even if just 10% of the oil is recoverable . . . at \$107 a barrel, we're looking at a resource base worth more than \$5.3 trillion.

"When I first briefed legislators on this, you could practically see their jaws hit the floor. They had no idea," says Terry Johnson, the Montana Legislature's financial analyst.

"This sizable find is now the highest-producing onshore oil field found in the past 56

years,' reports The Pittsburgh Post Gazette. It is a formation known as the Williston Basin, but is more commonly referred to as the 'Bakken.' And it stretches from Northern Montana, through North Dakota and into Canada. For years, U.S. oil exploration has been considered a dead end. Even the 'Big Oil' companies gave up searching for major oil wells decades ago. However, a recent technological breakthrough has opened up the Bakken's massive reserves . . . and we now have access of up to 500 billion barrels. And because this is light, sweet oil, those billions of barrels will cost Americans just \$16 per barrel!

"That is enough crude to fully fuel the American economy for 41 years straight."

2. [And if that didn't throw you on the floor, then this next one should—because it is from two years ago, people!]

"U.S. Oil Discovery—Largest Reserve in the World! Stansberry Report Online—4/20/2006 Hidden 1,000 feet beneath the surface of the Rocky Mountains lies the largest untapped oil reserve in the world is more than 2 trillion barrels. On August 8, 2005 President Bush mandated its extraction.

"They reported this stunning news: We have more oil inside our borders, than all the other proven reserves on earth. Here are the official estimates: 8 times as much oil as Saudi Arabia; 18 times as much oil as Iraq; 21 times as much oil as Kuwait; 22 times as much oil as Iran; 500 times as much oil as Yemen—and it is all right here in the Western United States."

[How can this be!? How can we not be extracting this!? Because we've not demanded legislation to come out of Washington allowing its extraction; that is why!]

"James Bartis, lead researcher with the study says we've got more oil in this very compact area than the entire Middle East—more than 2 trillion barrels. Untapped. That is more than all the proven oil reserves of crude oil in the world today, reports The Denver Post.

"Do not think 'Big Oil' will drop its price—even with this find? Think again! It is all about the competitive marketplace, and if they can extract it (here) for less, they can afford to sell it for less—and if they do not, others will. It will come down—it has to." [Got your attention/ire up yet? Hope so! Now, while you're thinking about it . . . and hopefully P.O'd, do this:

PAT.

SENATOR CRAPO, New drilling of oil reserves will not even reduce the price of gas. All drilling more wells will do is put more money into the hands of the big oil companies. Nuclear costs far too much when accounting for the storage of the waste it generates. It is time for a new approach!

We need incentives for mass transit and electric vehicles. Idaho, in particular has an abundance of renewable energy potential, just waiting to be exploited. Solar and wind development needs to be a priority. It is time to fill our gas tanks from the sun!

Why not take this opportunity to address carbon dioxide generation from vehicles and gas prices at the same time?

My family has been affected by high energy prices just like everyone else, but the solution is not poking our heads in the sand.

Sincerely,

CHRIS, Boise.

1. Get all your fellow Senators to emphasize conservation and to practice what they preach. The 'historic' comment by Vice President Dick Cheney that conservation is a 'personal virtue' came across as an inference that conservation is a wimpy attitude and real cowboys do not do that.

2. Show me that the federal bureaucracy really can reduce the waste of our energy

and natural resources. Start with your office and your staff. Hypocrisy is so yesterday!

3. Quit the whining that we must drill in the ANWR. The so-called Naval Reserves established in the 1920s are now being "developed" for oil and gas exploitation; an area the size of the State of Indiana.

4. Show us that oil and gas drilling can be done properly. The massive operations in Wyoming are creating a gawd-awful mess.

5. Encourage our nation's truck carriers to pay their drivers by the hour and not by the mile. Then, the drivers will have a decent incentive to drive at the speed limit and conserve fuel.

6. Then, if you dare, encourage the USPS to eliminate Saturday deliveries, and keep those 200,000 residential-delivery jitneys off the road. (Besides, all they do is save up the junk mail for Saturday delivery. When is the last time you received anything important via US mail on a Saturday?)

Thanks for listening,

D.

SENATOR CRAPO, Rather than solicit stories for the purpose of political grandstanding, how about you take a moment to understand the real reason why energy prices are where they are.

High energy (and food) costs can be laid squarely at the feet of the U.S. Congress and President, including you. This is because of what has been done to the U.S. dollar during the Bush/Republican years. Deficit spending and a disastrous war in Iraq have frittered away a budget surplus and progress toward reducing our national debt. Rather than act as the party of fiscal responsibility, the Republican Party has frittered our national financial health away.

Over the last few years, it was plainly obvious what was being done to the dollar from a spendthrift Congress and markets acted accordingly. And, if you believe that your currency is going to become worthless, the only way to preserve your net worth is to own tangible things, particularly commodities. This is what has spurred this massive commodity boom—lack of faith in the dollar. I have been invested in a basket of commodities for over four years now, one of the best investments I have ever made. My decision was based heavily on the irresponsible Congress.

If you have any doubts about this relationship, look no further than those bad unemployment numbers from June 6th. Intuitively, you'd think that lots of unemployed people would cause oil prices to drop on weaker demand. Yet oil had its biggest one day rise in history, starting the minute those unemployment numbers came out. Why? Because bad unemployment numbers puts pressure on the Federal Reserve to hold rates steady or lower them at a time when the Fed wants to raise them before inflation gets any further out of control. This is bad for the dollar; the dollar dropped as well that day.

Let me give you a quick example of the effect the weak dollar has had on gas prices. Let's say the dollar magically went back to par with the Euro, where it used to be not so very long ago. Gasoline would be around \$2.70 per gallon! A strong dollar would also pop this balloon of commodity speculation we are seeing and drive down prices even further.

So if you truly want to fix high gasoline prices, it is time to face up to the giant elephant in the room that is the irresponsible fiscal policy of the U.S. Congress and stop this huffing and puffing about drilling on the continental shelf and ANWR. Even a hint of real fiscal responsibility would go a long way toward strengthening the dollar. We cannot drill our way out of this problem, as much as

the oil companies would like to have you believe that. Because of the very same weak dollar, U.S. oil reserves are extremely profitable at this time, so it is no surprise they are pushing hard for expanded drilling. I can't imagine a better scenario for them—an outraged public and production costs that keep dropping as the dollar weakens.

Of course we need to conserve and develop alternative forms of energy, but to ignore the role of the dollar in all this will just mean we continue down this road to disaster we've been on the last few years.

This might not be the story of suffering you're looking for (actually just the opposite in my case). But I think it might be more constructive than an inbox full of moaning and groaning about how much it costs to commute to work from Nampa.

Regards,

STAN, Boise.

HMONG DETAINEES IN LAOS

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I would like to submit for the RECORD a statement given by Mrs. Sheng Xiong, a spokeswoman for her husband Hakit Yang and other families of Hmong-American citizens from St. Paul, MN, that are being detained by the the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, LPDR, regime. This statement was given by Mrs. Xiong at a congressional forum on Laos on January 31, 2008, organized by the Center for Public Policy Analysis.

I ask unanimous consent that the Statement to which I referred be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

STATEMENT BY MRS. SHENG XIONG

I want to thank Congressman Dana Rohrabacher, Congressman Frank Wolf, Congressman Patrick Kennedy, Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin and other Members of the U.S. House of Representatives for co-hosting today's U.S. Congressional Forum on Laos in cooperation with Mr. Philip Smith, Executive Director of the Center for Public Policy Analysis, Dr. Jane Hamilton-Merritt, Lao Hmong scholar; Vaughn Vang of the Lao Human Rights Council of Wisconsin and Minnesota; Khamphet Moukdarath of the United League for Democracy in Laos and T. Kumar, Advocacy Director of Amnesty International. I appreciate their leadership on the current human rights crisis in Laos, especially facing the Hmong people, and the serious situation regarding the arrest and imprisonment in Laos of my husband, Hakit Yang, and his two Hmong-American colleagues from St. Paul, Minnesota last year.

The U.S. Government granted Normalized Trade Relations (NTR) to Laos in 2005. Today, it encourages citizens to consider foreign investments in the communist state despite the country's atrocious human rights records and the unjustified arrest, jailing and continued detention of three Hmong-American citizens from St. Paul, Minnesota including my husband Mr. Hakit Yang.

On July 10, 2007, Hakit Yang, Congshineng Yang and Trillion Yuhaison departed the United States for Laos to pursue business investment opportunities. The men were staying at the #5 Guest House in Phousavan, Laos when they were arrested by secret police forces. They were detained in Phonthong Prison and later transferred to an unknown destination. Several unofficial reports suggest they are being detained in the North of Laos near the Vietnam border.

The last phone call and communication was received from Yuhaison on August 26, 2007 at approximately 9:00 am (CST). Yuhaison called Hakit's older brother Xai Yang, and stated that he was calling from a security guard's cell phone and confirmed that all three men had been arrested without warrant. Yuhaison sounded very worried and wanted Xai to contact the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane right away.

A U.S. Embassy staff confirmed with local Lao authorities that three U.S. Citizens were arrested, however, the authorities refused to release any names. According to the U.S. Embassy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could not confirm the situation over the phone, but it appeared they knew about the cases.

The U.S. Embassy contacted the Lao government who denied having any record of the men entering their country and any U.S. Citizens being detained or arrested. Later, the Lao government changed their previous denials and admitted that the men did indeed enter Laos, but allegedly claimed that they had allegedly departed Laos via the Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge on August 29, 2007. Despite repeated requests from the U.S. Embassy no departure cards have ever been produced as evidence for their departure. Other documents produced are clearly bogus and fabricated allegedly claiming to support the Lao government's false claims that my husband and the other two departed from Laos to Thailand, which is not factual.

It has been many months since the arrest and disappearance of Hakit Yang, Congshineng Yang and Trillion Yuhaison. To this day, our family has not received any concrete answers from the U.S. Embassy in Laos nor the State Department. I have been in contact with the other men's families and they also have not received any answers.

The U.S. Government and U.S. Embassy have a responsibility to inform U.S. Citizens that there are no real protections in place to safeguard their civil and legal rights. The U.S. Government has failed to properly hold the Laos Government accountable for the disappearance of these U.S. investors.

Hakit, Congshineng, and Trillion represent the first of many U.S. investors and tourists to travel to Laos under the new Normalised Trade Relations agreement but their disappearance clearly proves that no U.S. Citizen is safe in Laos and no U.S. citizen should invest in the current Lao regime until proper protections can be put in place, to safeguard the civil, legal and human rights of all U.S. Citizens traveling to Laos.

I respectfully ask that the U.S. Government and U.S. Embassy in Laos continue to investigate the arrest and disappearance of Hakit, Congshineng, and Trillion and to press the Lao government for humanitarian access to the three U.S. citizens and their unconditional and immediate release.

The Lao government continues to jail my husband and the two other Americans from St. Paul that he was traveling with in clear violation and contempt of international law. Lao and Hmong Americans should not invest in the current regime in Laos, the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic. NTR Trade Status to Laos should be revoked by the U.S. Congress; and, U.S. foreign aid and assistance to the Lao regime should also be cut by the U.S. Congress and U.S. Government completely, including all de-mining funding, until at least such time as my husband Hakit Yang, Congshineng and Trillion, as Hmong-American citizens, are released from prison in Laos and brought home safely to America and their homes and families in St. Paul, Minnesota.

We will not forget and not give up fighting until we have truthful answers and the Lao regime releases Hakit Yang, Congshineng

and Trillion. We appeal to the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Government and international community for assistance in pressing the Lao regime to release our family members and restore human rights and freedom to them so that we can be reunited and these American citizens can return home once again from this terrible darkness.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

IN RECOGNITION OF JEANNA HENRY

• Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, today I recognize the outstanding contributions of Jeanna Henry, whose dedication to the Environmental Protection Agency earned her the Glen Witmer Award. Jeanna, noted for her dedication, resourcefulness, and sheer joy in her work, is an excellent example of the quality employees who serve us at the EPA.

The Glen Witmer Award is presented each year to the employee whose service is distinguished by concern for our environment, enthusiasm for environmental programs, a logical approach to problem solving, attention to detail, resourcefulness and initiative, and an ability to interact with people in a manner that fosters cooperation, understanding, and resolution of environmental problems. It is the highest award that may be presented to an employee by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Jeanna grew up in Delmar, MD—the town too big for one State—and graduated from Salisbury State University in 1996 with a degree in environmental health and minors in biology and chemistry. Following through on a goal she set her freshman year of college, Jeanna went on to work as an environmental scientist at the EPA upon winning a National Network for Environmental Management Studies Fellowship. Currently an enforcement officer at EPA's Waste and Chemical Management Division in Wilmington, DE, she has managed a multitude of hazardous waste and underground storage tank enforcement cases, all with motivation, professionalism, and extraordinary attention to detail.

Beyond her achievements in her field, Jeanna is most noted for her work ethic, exceptional communication skills, and for the passion that she brings to all of her undertakings. New employees often gravitate towards her because despite her heavy workload, she is never too busy to take time out to help others. She has become a mentor for new employees, a role model for her peers, and an absolute joy to her supervisors.

Jeanna is not only an outstanding employee, but a remarkable person, as well. Her lifelong passion for the environment has enabled her to help shape and enrich the lives of many in her field and the lives of those lucky