

the conditions on the ground for most Sahrawis remained poor.

Western Sahara was ruled by Spain for nearly a century until Spanish troops withdrew in 1976, following a bloody guerrilla conflict with the pro-independence Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (Polisario Front). Mauritania and Morocco both ignored Sahrawi aspirations and claimed the resource-rich region for themselves, agreeing to a partition in which Morocco received the northern two-thirds. However, the Polisario Front proclaimed an independent Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and continued its guerrilla campaign. Mauritania renounced its claim to the region in 1979, and Morocco filled the vacuum by annexing the entire territory.

Moroccan and Polisario forces engaged in a low-intensity armed conflict until the United Nations brokered a ceasefire in 1991. The agreement called for residents of Western Sahara to vote in a referendum on independence the following year, to be supervised by the newly established UN Mission for a Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). However, the vote never took place, with the two sides failing to agree on voter eligibility.

Morocco tried to bolster its annexation by offering financial incentives for Moroccans to move to Western Sahara and for Sahrawis to move to Morocco. Morocco also used more coercive measures to assert its control, engaging in forced resettlements of Sahrawis and long-term detention and “disappearances” of pro-independence activists.

In 2004, the Polisario Front accepted the UN Security Council’s Baker II plan (named after former UN special envoy and U.S. secretary of state James Baker), which called for up to five years of autonomy followed by a referendum on the territory’s status. However, Morocco rejected the plan, as it could lead to independence, and in 2007 offered its own autonomy plan.

Because the Polisario Front remained committed to an eventual referendum on independence, the two sides failed to make meaningful progress in several rounds of talks that started in 2007 and continued through 2009. Also in 2009, some UN Security Council members expressed concern about the human rights situation and proposed that the council consider expanding MINURSO’s mandate.

POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

As the occupying force in Western Sahara, Morocco controls local elections and works to ensure that independence-minded leaders are excluded from both the local political process and the Moroccan Parliament.

Western Sahara is not listed separately on Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, but corruption is believed to be at least as much of a problem as it is in Morocco.

According to the Moroccan constitution, the press is free, but this is not the case in practice. There is little in the way of independent Sahrawi media. Moroccan authorities are sensitive to any reporting that is not in line with the state’s official position on Western Sahara, and they continue to expel or detain Sahrawi, Moroccan, and foreign reporters who write critically on the issue. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that in October 2009, plainclothes police told two Morocco-based Spanish journalists to leave the El-Aaiun home of Sidi Mohamed Dadach, who heads the Committee to Support Self-Determination in Western Sahara (CODAPSO). Online media and independent satellite broadcasts are largely unavailable to the impoverished population.

Nearly all Sahrawis are Sunni Muslims, as are most Moroccans, and Moroccan authori-

ties generally do not interfere with their freedom of worship. There are no major universities or institutions of higher learning in Western Sahara.

Sahrawis are not permitted to form independent political or nongovernmental organizations, and their freedom of assembly is severely restricted. As in previous years, activists supporting independence and their suspected foreign sympathizers were subject to harassment in 2009. HRW, which has documented several violations, reported that Moroccan authorities referred seven Sahrawi activists to a military court in October after charging them with harming state security; there were no verdicts at year’s end. Moroccan officials appear to be particularly wary of Sahrawis who travel abroad to highlight the plight of their people and argue for independence. According to HRW, police in October 2009 began breaking up visits by foreign reporters and human rights activists to the homes of Sahrawi activists, rather than simply monitoring them; the police said the visits required clearance from Moroccan authorities.

Among Sahrawi activists themselves, HRW documented the case of Naama Asfari of the Paris-based Committee for the Respect of Freedoms and Human Rights In Western Sahara (CORELSO), who has been detained and harassed on numerous occasions over the years. In August 2009, he was sentenced to four months in jail after an argument with a police officer over the Sahrawi flag that Asfari had on his keychain. Asfari’s cousin, who was with him during the encounter, was also sentenced to jail time. In another high-profile case, activist Aminatou Haidar, head of the Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders (CODESA), returned in November to Western Sahara from the United States, where she had received a human rights award. She indicated on her reentry paperwork that she lived in Western Sahara, and when she refused to change the document to indicate Morocco, she was detained and eventually deported without a passport to Spain’s Canary Islands. Haidar was able to return home in December 2009 after a month-long hunger strike and considerable diplomatic pressure, but the authorities continued to monitor her and restrict her movements.

Sahrawis are technically subject to Moroccan labor laws, but there is little organized labor activity in the resource-rich but poverty-stricken territory.

International human rights groups have criticized Morocco’s record in Western Sahara for decades. A highly critical September 2006 report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights—intended to be distributed only to Algeria, Morocco, and the Polisario Front—was leaked to the press that October. The human rights situation in the territory tends to worsen during periods of increased demonstrations against Moroccan rule. The Polisario Front has also been accused of disregarding human rights.

Morocco and the Polisario Front both restrict free movement in potential conflict areas. Morocco has been accused of using force and financial incentives to alter the composition of Western Sahara’s population.

Sahrawi women face much of the same cultural and legal discrimination as Moroccan women. Conditions are generally worse for women living in rural areas, where poverty and illiteracy rates are higher.

5TH ANNIVERSARY OF HURRICANE KATRINA

HON. ANH “JOSEPH” CAO OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 30, 2010

Mr. CAO. Madam Speaker, August 29th of this year will mark five years since the day Hurricane Katrina made landfall along the Gulf Coast. Tragically, 1,822 lives were lost in the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, and Alabama.

As a result of what was one of the greatest disasters this nation has ever seen, more than 1.2 million people were under some type of evacuation order, 3 million were left without electricity for weeks, and hundreds of thousands were left jobless.

Yesterday, with the support of the members from the Louisiana delegation, I introduced a resolution observing the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina’s landfall.

This resolution honors and remembers the lives lost on that fateful day. It also salutes the dedication of those who responded in our darkest hour and those who have stood by our sides during our recovering and rebuilding. We simply could not have done it without the thousands who answered the call and recognized our need. Our rebuilding continues and we take each new challenge one day at a time. We are strong, and we will recover.

On behalf of my constituents in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes and all those across Louisiana and the Gulf Coast, I thank the American people for their generosity and support.

HONORING THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 19TH AMENDMENT

HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 30, 2010

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, next month the United States celebrates the 90th anniversary of women’s suffrage. On August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment gave women in the United States the right to vote, and for 90 years, women have been actively participating in the democratic process.

The battle for women’s suffrage was not an easy one. It took the courage and steadfast leadership of trailblazers like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and all the women who gathered at Seneca Falls so many decades ago and began advocating for the right to express their views and let their voices be heard at the ballot box.

As we celebrate this important anniversary, I urge women across our great nation to continue taking an active role in the democratic process and politics, and to exercise their right to vote, as they have for so many years.

In March, the House celebrated Women’s History Month and remembered the accomplishments of women in our nation and around the world. August 26th allows us yet another opportunity to celebrate the history of American women and their accomplishments. Today women everywhere are breaking barriers and reaching new heights not only in the political arena, but also the business world,

the fields of medicine and journalism, and in advocacy and human rights. Their contributions shape our society and make a difference every day.

It is unfortunate that in some areas of the world, women continue to struggle for equality and for their right to vote. It is my hope that the lives and work of American women can serve as inspiration to those who continue their struggle for basic rights around the world.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you join me in celebrating the 90th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, and thanking women across the United States for their activism and commitment to keeping the democratic process alive.

HONORING CHERYL O'BRIEN, RECIPIENT OF THE TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS' 2009 REALTOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 30, 2010

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Cheryl O'Brien, the recipient of the Tacoma-Pierce County Association of Realtors' 2009 Realtor of the Year Award.

For 55 years, the Realtor of the Year Award has been the highest honor given to members of the Tacoma-Pierce County Association of Realtors, given in recognition of exceptional performance in the service of the local, state, and national associations of realtors. In earning this award, Ms. O'Brien demonstrated excellent professionalism as well as a commitment to the Realtors' Code of Ethics.

Having worked in real estate for over 20 years, Cheryl O'Brien's success and credibility in the industry were made possible by her honesty, professionalism, and commitment to quality service. In addition to the Tacoma-Pierce County Association of Realtors naming her 2009 Realtor of the Year, Ms. O'Brien has also received the President's Emerald & Silver Awards and the Honor Society Award for Outstanding Service. In providing superior customer service, Ms. O'Brien is guided by important ethical standards and a strong commitment to providing her best to her clients and to the Tacoma-Pierce County region.

The 9th District of Washington is proud to count Ms. O'Brien as a member of our community.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate Cheryl O'Brien on her remarkable achievement.

COURAGE COMES SFC RICHARD G. McDUGGLE 901ST MINIMAL CARE DETACHMENT COMBAT MEDIC OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

HON. MARK S. CRITZ

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 30, 2010

Mr. CRITZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a real American Hero, SFC Richard McDougle from Connellsville Pennsylvania, of the 901st Minimal Care Detachment Combat Medic of the United States Army. Richard has served in the Army for over 16 years, he is a

Medic, a Angel On The Battlefield. Over in Iraq he contracted renal cell cancer, and even though it is in 4th stage, he fights on! With the aid of his wonderful wife Donna, a former Medic herself, he continues his battle each day. Who knows, what child may come from someone he has saved fields of honor. . . . who might one day save the world! His quiet courage and unrelenting faith is an inspiration to us all, and especially to his brothers in arms over at Walter Reed Medical Hospital. We can all learn something from Richard, as he never surrenders! Our prayers are with him and his family. I ask that this poem penned in honor of him and his family, by Albert Caswell, be placed in the RECORD.

COURAGE COMES

Amen!

Courage Comes. . . .

Comes in all shapes and sizes. . . .

All in our fine men and women in uniform, who death defies this. . . .

Who go off to war, as no one denies this. . . . who all in the midst of hell, upon each other so relies this. . . .

All for Brothers In Arms, for them will die this. . . . For there are all kinds of courage, so why this?

How does such Strength In Honor, one find this? From deep inside of ones heart, arises!

From Angels on The Battlefield, are so high this!

Arises, such splendid splendor. . . .

To such hearts of faith so rendered!

As Mac, you are such splendor. . . .

For you went so bravely off to war. . . .

All for your Country Tis of Thee, bore. . . .

And now that you've come home. . . .

As a new battle, a new fight you must own. . . .

All part of the cost of war. . . .

As now Richard, your courageous fight must begin. . . .

Step by Step, Day by Day. . . . as your brave heart will not give in. . . .

Will not give way. . . . as for such fine heroes we all now so pray. . . .

All in your quiet courage, your heart so cries out let this war begin!

For a heart of faith and courage, can against all odds so victory so win!

With head held high, as Mac you so wiped all of those tears from your brilliant eyes. . . .

With the kind of courage, that up in Heaven so makes even The Angels sing and cry!

Fight on America's Heroic Son, as we watch in great awe. . . . all to what heights your heart can run. . . .

As you us touch with your splendid grace, as your heart of courage brings us to tears and smiles upon our face!

For Heaven so holds a place, for such ones!

When, Courage Comes!

Amen!

MS. KAZIAH HANCOCK AND PROJECT COMPASSION

HON. JASON CHAFFETZ

OF UTAH

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 30, 2010

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to thank and to honor Ms. Kaziah Flancock, a true American patriot serving her country in a very unique and special way.

America's heroes come from all walks of life. Many of them, perhaps most, remain unsung heroes as they go quietly about, offering

their service out of love for their country and countrymen with little or no fanfare or recognition.

One such hero is Ms. Hancock. From the bedroom studio of her little goat ranch at the base of Utah's mountains she expresses, through her love of painting, her love and respect for the men and women who have given their lives while serving in uniform. She refers to this effort as Project Compassion.

"It is our view that every fallen hero deserves to be honored and remembered and we will make every effort to that end," Ms. Hancock says on Project Compassion's Web site, heropaintings.com. She and her volunteer team of artists have sent over 1,750 painted portraits of fallen service members to grieving parents and families who live in nearly every state. They're currently seeking to complete at least 3,000 more.

Ms. Hancock asks no price for this touching gift, and won't accept payments offered. She considers her time, time which might have been spent on other paintings she could sell for thousands of dollars, a small sacrifice compared to the sacrifice made by these service members and their families. For those who have already paid the ultimate price, she feels it is the least she can offer. "There is nothing that I'll ever paint, that will be more appreciated than that," she says.

The American Legion Auxiliary, the largest patriotic women's service organization in the world with over 900,000 members, noted in awarding Project Compassion its 2007 Public Service Award: "Project Compassion struck a chord with us: healing through art."

Ms. Kaziah Hancock has struck a chord with me as well. I am honored to have her as a constituent in Utah's Third District, and grateful to join with her in expressing our love and support for the men and women serving in the United States Armed Forces.

HONORING FLORIDA SOUTHERN COLLEGE

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 30, 2010

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor Florida Southern College for celebrating its 125th anniversary. Florida Southern is rapidly rising among the Nation's best private colleges under the leadership of its 17th president, Dr. Anne Kerr.

The Lakeland College enrolls 1832 full-time residential undergraduate students from 44 states and 31 countries. To further its focus on engaged learning, it guarantees every student an internship and study abroad experience. The college also has distinguished graduate programs in business, nursing, and education. Ninety-four percent of students report landing a job in their respective field or furthering their studies at another institution within 3 months of graduation.

The Princeton Review has given Florida Southern its "Best Southeastern College" and "Best Value College" awards in addition to including it on its "Best 366 Colleges" list.

Rounding out its pedigree, the Florida Southern Moccasins have brought home 26 NCAA Division II championships, including 11 in men's golf, 4 in women's golf, and 9 in