

HONORING COAL MINERS FROM UPPER BIG BRANCH MINE IN WEST VIRGINIA

SPEECH OF

HON. AL GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 14, 2010

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today, I extend my condolences to the community of Raleigh County, West Virginia, as it mourns the loss of 29 miners in the collapse of the Upper Big Branch Mine-South, the worst U.S. mining disaster in decades. I also would like to express my heartfelt condolences to the families of victims who perished in the collapse.

The profession of coal mining is important not only to our nation's past, but also to its future, as we search for alternatives to our dependence on foreign oil. These professions power our economies and shape our culture.

I commend the tireless efforts of Raleigh County's first responders, as well as the volunteer efforts of those trained in mine rescue, and for the long hours they devoted to save the lives of the trapped miners.

The role of Congress in securing the health and safety of coal miners is essential and important. I take my role in the process of ensuring that violations of safety codes are properly dealt with and recorded, so communities like Raleigh County, West Virginia can avoid tragedy.

I would like to thank Rep. RAHALL for introducing this piece of legislation, and express our Nation's sympathy and support for the fallen miners, their families and their community.

TAXES

HON. BOB GOODLATTE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 15, 2010

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, today, tax day, is the most stressful day of the year for taxpayers. April 15th is a day filled with aggravation and frustration as hard working Americans are confronted with piles of forms, confusing instructions, and the prospect of turning their hard-earned money over to the government. In 1935, the 1040 tax form contained two pages of instructions, today it is 155 pages, forcing Americans to devote a tremendous amount of resources to try to comply with this monstrosity. In fact, Americans will devote an estimated 7.7 billion hours complying with the tax code, and will spend an estimated \$29.33 billion on tax software, preparers, and other expenses related to filing their taxes.

Over the past year, we have seen citizens from around the nation express their frustration about this nefarious tax code. Taxpayers have pleaded with Congress to be better stewards of their money and reform our broken tax code. The tax code Americans are forced to comply with discourages savings and investment, and is impossibly complex. It has become all too clear that the current code is broken beyond repair and cannot be fixed so we must start over.

I understand the frustrations of taxpayers and I have introduced H.R. 982, the Tax Code

Termination Act, which will force Congress to finally address fundamental tax reform. This legislation, with 115 bipartisan cosponsors, will abolish the tax code by December 2012, and call on Congress to approve a new federal tax system by July of the same year.

While almost every Member of Congress would recognize that our tax code is no longer working in a fair manner for Americans, nothing has been done to create a more equitable tax code. Congress won't act on fundamental tax reform unless it is forced to do so. My bill will force Congress to finally debate and address fundamental tax reform.

Once this bill becomes law, today's oppressive tax code would survive for only three more years, at which time it would expire and be replaced with a new tax code that will be determined by Congress, the President, and the American people. This legislation will allow us, as a nation, to collectively decide what the new tax system should look like. Having a date-certain to end the current tax code will force the issue to the top of the national agenda.

Although many questions remain about the best way to reform our tax system, I am certain that if Congress is forced to address the issue we can create a tax code that is simpler, fairer, and better for our economy than the one we are forced to comply with today.

Whichever tax system is adopted, the key ingredients should be: a low rate for all Americans; tax relief for working people; protection of the rights of taxpayers and reduction in tax collection abuses; promotion of savings and investment; and encouragement of economic growth and job creation.

Taxes may be unavoidable but they don't have to be unfair and overcomplicated. I urge my colleagues to join me as a cosponsor of H.R. 982, the Tax Code Termination Act and end the broken tax system that exists today.

NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK, KING COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

HON. DAVID G. REICHERT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 15, 2010

Mr. REICHERT. Madam Speaker, this week we'll be recognizing National Library Week all across our great country. In an age of tough economic forecasts, and families scrambling to make ends meet while still engaging in their communities, libraries around the United States have seen more people walk through their doors, visit their websites and communicate with their employees than perhaps ever before. Indeed, the library systems of America are operating at unprecedented levels. Rather than shrinking in their responsibility, many systems are proactively courting members of their communities and expanding the resources they have available to help push this country forward. I am very fortunate to represent the 8th Congressional District of Washington, and to observe and follow the work being done by my childhood library system, the King County Library System.

The King County Library System, led by Director Bill Ptacek, is the third-busiest library system in the United States. It is a remarkable distinction. In his introduction to their year-in-review for 2009, Director Ptacek wrote: "KCLS

developed an innovative approach in response to the economic crisis to guide patrons to reliable information when they needed it most." Citizens in our region looked to their library system for help and the King County Library System responded: In 2009, nearly 10 million people walked through the doors of their local library and more than 21 million items were circulated. The library catalog of the King County Library System had nearly 89 million visits and the system's website—kingcountylibrarysystem.org—received nearly 27 million hits. In other words, I can think of very few public organizations busier than the King County Library System and the System has responded, stepping up to meet the challenge in a big way.

Director Ptacek and his staff have expanded collections and streamlined service using technology and terrific, innovative organizational structure and management. The King County Library System has increased its technological output and reached out proactively to underserved communities in King County with great success. The system has ensconced itself in the communities it serves and has become a huge asset for families, community groups and local governments. The King County Library System has researched and developed programs specifically targeting young children in their formative years to get excited about literacy and research; they've done the same specifically targeting children who speak English as a second language. Overall, the King County Library System is providing the people of King County with a large public organization that is best described with one word: innovative.

Director Ptacek, his managers, and the employees of the KCLS deserve our utmost respect and admiration. The system answers the call of communities each and every day, without fail. A large public organization with such an innovative spirit and flexible structure always deserves accolades and encouragement. I am proud to honor the KCLS during National Library Week, during a difficult period and for serving our communities in such efficient, creative, and meaningful ways.

BI-PARTISAN MAJORITY IN THE U.S. HOUSE CALLS FOR PROTECTION OF CAMP ASHRAF RESIDENTS

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 15, 2010

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, on March 17, 2010, Congressman BOB FILNER (D-CA), Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and Congresswoman ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN (R-FL), Ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, were joined by 10 of their colleagues, including three from the House Foreign Affairs Committee, in a briefing to announce the support by a bi-partisan House majority for the humanitarian rights and protection of residents of Camp Ashraf in Iraq.

In his remarks, Filner announced that following last July's deadly assault by the Iraqi security forces against unarmed residents of Camp Ashraf, home to 3,400 members of Iran's main opposition, the People's Mojahedin

Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK), he introduced a resolution (H. Res. 704) which “explores the ongoing violence by Iraqi security forces against the residents of Camp Ashraf; calls upon the Iraqi Government to live up to its commitment to the United States to ensure the continued well-being of those living in Camp Ashraf; and calls upon the President to take all necessary and appropriate steps to support the commitments of the United States” to ensure protection of Camp Ashraf residents.

The majority of the members of the House of Representatives who have co-sponsored the resolution include 11 Committee Chairs; 13 Committee Ranking Members; 54 Sub-Committee Chairs; 49 Sub-Committee Ranking Members; and 30 House Foreign Affairs Committee members.

ROS-LEHTINEN stressed that in light of repeated breach of guaranties provided by the Iraqi Government to the United States that residents of Camp Ashraf would be treated humanely, “the U.S. is obligated to take all necessary and appropriate steps to uphold our commitments.” The Florida lawmaker added that “we must send a clear message to the residents of Camp Ashraf that the U.S. Congress stands with them.”

Congressman EDOLPHUS TOWNS (D-NY), Chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, lauded the bi-partisan nature of support for Camp Ashraf and said “it’s so important that we continue to work together . . . to bring about the change that is so needed today.”

Congressman DANA ROHRBACHER (R-CA), Ranking Member of House International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight Subcommittee, remarked that “we must make sure that anyone who is fighting the mullah regime and would replace it with a democratic government is an ally of the people of the United States and we should not allow them to suffer negative consequences if we can prevent it. That is especially true of the people of Camp Ashraf.”

Congressman TED POE (R-TX), a member of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade said: “It is important that we constantly stay vigilant that we let the people in Camp Ashraf know that their silent voices are heard here in the United States . . . We are not going to stand idly by while those who wish to do harm to the residents of Camp Ashraf mend, weave their wicked ways and they will not be dispersed into parts and regions unknown to the rest of us.”

Congressman LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART (R-FL) described the Iranian regime as “regime of thugs,” and added “this is most impressive to have the majority of the U.S. Congress of one mind with regard to a critical issue and the travesty the brutality that was engaged against the innocent people in Ashraf. And so we will get this to the floor and we will pass it and we will stay on this issue.”

Congressman MARIO DIAZ-BALART (R-FL) described the attack on Ashraf as “a cold-blooded murder” and emphasized that the only way that they “could ever be totally safe is by having a free homeland.”

FILNER added that “the administration should encourage the United Nations to play a much more active role insofar as it concerns Camp Ashraf and strengthen the role of a U.N. monitoring team in Ashraf to one of pro-

tecting the residents to ensure that their rights and safety are respected and all the inhumane restrictions placed on them by the Iraqi government are lifted.”

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, also addressed the briefing via video from Paris. She emphasized that the House majority support for Ashraf indicates its recognition of the Iranian Resistance, especially Ashraf, as “a decisive factor in confronting this antihuman regime” in Tehran. Addressing the co-sponsors of the resolution, Mrs. Rajavi remarked that “While appreciating your efforts, I would like to ask you to continue your noble and humanitarian work in order to ensure that: The protection of the residents of Ashraf is guaranteed as long as the U.S. forces remain in Iraq; Mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq is expanded to guarantee the rights of Ashraf residents. The United Nations assumes the protection of Ashraf and a U.N. peacekeeping force is stationed at Ashraf; all restrictions and the blockade imposed by the Iraqi government against Ashraf in the past 14 months are lifted.”

Congresswoman JUDY CHU (D-CA) of the Judiciary Committee told the reception that “I was happy to support House Resolution 704. Certainly there needed to be protection for the people in Camp Ashraf. We should make sure that they continue to be safe. The United States and the Iraqi government should ensure that these residents have all security that they need. And so we must continue the pressure to make sure that happens so that the pro-democracy movement can continue to be safe and the Iranian people can be safe. So let us continue our relationship. I’m very, very happy to see that you are here on the Hill and that you’re presenting your issues to us.”

Congressman TRENT FRANKS (R-AZ), member of the Armed Services Committee, told the gathering that “We see some of the people of Camp Ashraf in Iraq that are being persecuted and threatened and even the Iranian government wants to see them repatriated to Iran and I think that represents a great danger to them and I want you to know that there are a lot of us that reject that completely. We want to see both the Government of Iraq and the Government of the United States stand up and make sure that we protect these people in Camp Ashraf.”

In his remarks, Congressman AL GREEN (D-TX) from the Homeland Security Committee told the reception that “Doctor King was right when he said decades ago—and his words ring true today—‘Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere’. Injustice in the streets of Iran is a threat to justice in the streets of every nation on the planet Earth and we must end injustice in the streets of Iran . . . We must support the human rights movement that is taking place in Iran.”

IN REMEMBRANCE OF MR.
BENJAMIN HOOKS

HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 15, 2010

Ms. RICHARDSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and remember Mr. Benjamin Hooks, who passed away this morning at the

age of 85. Benjamin Hooks was a champion of equality and justice who fought tirelessly for civil rights and, in doing so, made our country a better place for all Americans.

Benjamin Hooks was a critical figure in the fight for civil rights in the United States. In addition to fighting racial segregation through his successful careers a businessman, lawyer, judge, and minister, Mr. Hooks is most well known for his work with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP. Mr. Hooks was a pioneer of the NAACP-sponsored restaurant sit-ins and boycotts in the early years of the Civil Rights Movement.

In 1976, the NAACP elected Benjamin Hooks as the executive director of the organization. Mr. Hooks reenergized the NAACP, increased its enrollment dramatically, and enhanced the group’s effectiveness. At a time when the Civil Rights Movement was widely considered to have ended, Mr. Hooks recognized that much work was left to be done and recommitted the NAACP to tirelessly fighting for the rights of disadvantaged communities across the United States. Mr. Hooks guided the NAACP through decades of activism and oversaw the constant modernization and adaptation of the organization to respond to the new challenges of changing times.

Benjamin Hooks was a giant in the fight for civil rights in America over the last 60 years. Even as he and his family were targeted in bombings against civil rights leaders in the 1990s, his resolve and commitment to an equitable society never faltered. In characteristic modesty, Benjamin Hooks often referred to himself as “just a poor little old country preacher,” but the truth is that he was much more than that. He left an indelible mark on American society and helped improve the lives of countless Americans. Mr. Hooks was honored for his life of service with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which President George W. Bush presented to him in 2007.

I extend my deepest condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Benjamin Hooks as they grieve the loss of this truly special individual.

RECOGNIZING T.C. MARSH’S JUNIOR RESERVE OFFICERS TRAINING CORPS AND CORPORAL DAVID BATES

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 15, 2010

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize T.C. Marsh Middle School’s Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) and Corporal David Bates on their winning the National Middle School Drill Championship for the third time.

Corporal David Bates has led the JROTC program for the past eleven years. He has taught them the importance of personal responsibility, discipline, commitment, and hard work. Under his leadership, T.C. Marsh’s JROTC has taken the prestigious title of National Champion three times in the past four years.

After spending countless hours practicing their drills, the cadets were ready to compete and capture the national title once again. In