

met with varying levels of success, but HDP has been honored to work with reformers in both countries as they strive to throw off the shackles of their authoritarian past.

The world has watched over the past week as Russia's citizens have stood up and demanded greater political freedom and transparency, which is indeed a hopeful step. However, there is another country in Eastern Europe that has resisted all efforts to transform itself into a modern democracy and maintains itself as an authoritarian dictatorship. The country of Belarus remains Europe's only dictatorship. Under the unyielding grip of dictator Aleksandr Lukashenko, the people of Belarus are denied the basic freedoms of assembly, association, and expression. The press is heavily restricted and intimidated. The internet is censored. Independent nongovernmental organizations are not allowed to operate. There is little freedom of religion. And 100,000 Belarusians have been barred from leaving the country. For the people of Belarus, the oppression of the past did not dissolve with the Soviet Union, but remains a bitter reality.

While their neighbors in Central and Eastern Europe are able to freely elect their own leaders, Belarusians have witnessed one stage-managed election after another under the current regime. Lukashenko has held illegal referenda to change the constitution, eliminate term limits, and dissolve an elected parliament. In December 2010, the Government of Belarus conducted a presidential election that failed to meet basic standards of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and followed that election by detaining and beating more than 600 peaceful opposition protestors. Seven of nine opposition presidential candidates were jailed and what remains of the independent media was attacked. Rather than address the OSCE's criticisms, the OSCE was kicked out of the country by the government.

To highlight the continued abuses of the Lukashenko regime and once again demonstrate Congressional support for the aspirations of the Belarusian people, the House voted to renew the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, with a unanimous vote on July 6 of this year. This bill not only imposes additional sanctions on the leaders of the corrupt Belarusian regime, but allows the United States to work with groups who are promoting freedom and democracy, particularly media groups such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Voice of America, European Radio for Belarus, and Belsat.

The U.S. Congress will continue to stand with the Belarusian people as they fight for self determination and the rule of law. I look forward to the day that they are able to join their European neighbors on the right side of history with a lasting, peaceful and prosperous democracy.

MIDDLE CLASS TAX RELIEF AND JOB CREATION ACT OF 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. JACK KINGSTON

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the language included in this bill

that would remove current barriers for states to strengthen the unemployment program through optional drug testing. The purpose of the unemployment insurance program is to be a safety net, a bridge to reemployment. However, when beneficiaries choose to abuse illegal drugs they are no longer at their competitive best within the jobs market.

That is why I have proposed legislation, H.R. 3601 the "Ensuring Quality in the Unemployment Insurance Program (EQUIP) Act," that would require screenings for applicants of unemployment insurance. Applicants would be screened using a non-invasive questionnaire that has a 94 percent accuracy rate. If identified as likely to use drugs, an applicant for unemployment would be required to pass a drug test as a condition of benefits. This non-invasive practice has been upheld by state courts in New Jersey, Texas and Indiana. A federal court in West Virginia upheld that state's practice of screening applicants for Social Security Disability Insurance.

The screening would not increase federal spending. The estimated cost is \$12 per person. This would be more than offset by reducing the \$7.5 billion budget for the controversial Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB) and Consumers Operated and Oriented Plan (CO-OPs), which was established to ration health care expenditures.

At one of the several listening sessions I had with business owners earlier this year, I had an employer tell me of an overwhelming response for job openings. There was just one problem: half the people who applied could not even pass a drug test. Another told me about an employee they had to temporarily lay off when times were tight. A month later when he contacted his former employee to offer him a new position, he declined because unemployment was paying the bills. With our budget woes of more than \$15 trillion in debt, how can we justify using unemployment insurance to pay someone not to work when they have voluntarily taken themselves out of the hiring pool? That is what we are doing when someone on unemployment is using drugs.

Under the current system, workers can earn up to 26 weeks through employer contribution but are eligible for 99 weeks of benefits under current law. Your tax dollars make up the difference. Maximizing efficiency and effectiveness of programs like unemployment insurance has to be our society's goal.

Drug screening beneficiaries incentivizes individuals to not abuse drugs, which would otherwise render them unfit to be employed. Some have said this proposal asks too much of those who have lost their jobs, but asking someone who is unemployed to do his or her part by staying eligible to work is common sense, not draconian.

I look forward to working with the Committee on this proposal and a hearing in the spring.

URGING TURKEY TO SAFEGUARD ITS CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

SPEECH OF

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, the text of House Resolution 306 could lead to

false conclusions about Turkey. Make no mistake: Turkey has taken concrete steps to improve religious freedom through a series of meaningful initiatives. Moreover, Turkey is a secular, modernized NATO ally that provides indispensable military and diplomatic support to the United States and our allies. Its efforts with respect to religious inclusion are welcome and worthy of recognition.

In September, for example, Secretary Clinton praised Turkey's continued progress in enhancing religious freedom, stating:

We have also seen Turkey take serious steps to improve the climate for religious tolerance. The Turkish government issued a decree in August that invited non-Muslims to reclaim churches and synagogues that were confiscated 75 years ago. I applaud Prime Minister Erdogan's very important commitment to doing so.

Long before H. Res. 306 was introduced, the Turkish Government was enhancing religious freedom. For example:

In May 2010, the Prime Ministry issued a circular underlining that Turkey's non-Muslim citizens share with all other Turkish citizens the right to enjoy and maintain their own identities and cultures in parallel with the national identity and culture of Turkey.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul recently has been permitted to conduct masses at religiously significant venues that had been rendered museums due to disuse.

In November 2010, Turkish authorities returned a former orphanage to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate following a decision by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The attorney representing the Patriarchate declared, "This marks a first in Europe. Turkey became the first country to implement a decision of the ECHR by returning the property. This should be an example for other countries."

Since the original text of H. Res. 306 was introduced, Turkey amended its Law on Foundations to state that immovable properties, cemeteries, and fountains (of the non-Muslim community foundations registered in the name of Turkish public institutions) will be returned to the relevant non-Muslim community foundations, upon those non-Muslim foundations' request.

On a larger scale, Turkey has been an indispensable ally and friend of the United States since it joined NATO almost 60 years ago (in 1952). Given Turkey's strategic location and maintenance of the second largest military in NATO, this should come as no surprise. Currently, NATO is installing radar systems in Turkey and Romania as part of the regional anti-ballistic missile defense system. Moreover, when NATO passed Resolution 1973, which enforced a no-fly zone in Libya, Turkey helped lead a NATO-led coalition, after playing a major role in deliberations with the United States and other key allies. Turkey also had a key role in negotiating the release of four New York Times reporters who were captured during fighting in Libya.

With regard to U.S. operations in Afghanistan, Turkey:

Has made available its Konya Air Base and other airports for the deployment of aircraft and allies' cargo aircraft in support of ISAF operations.

Has deployed five Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLT) and has also conducted in-place training of 8,000 Afghan National Army (ANA) members and training in Turkey for an additional 1,000 Afghan troops.

Turkey established two civilian-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Wardak and Jawzjan, and opened a branch of the Turkish International Cooperation Agency in Kabul, from which it runs a number of humanitarian assistance and economic development projects.

Turkey stations over 1,700 U.S. military personnel under the U.S.-Turkey Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement. Incirlik Air Base, which houses about 1,500 U.S. military personnel, is a transit point for 68% of air logistical support for Iraq and Afghanistan. Each year, an average of 2,000 American C-17 aircraft and an average of 1,460 KC-135 refueling tankers fly through the Turkish air base. Turkey's support is not limited to access of its air bases; its Mersin port on the Mediterranean is part of the U.S.'s supply network to Afghanistan.

In a time when several Muslim majority countries are undergoing upheaval, Turkey provides an ideal model to its neighbors. It is a secular, modern, Muslim majority state that is a significant NATO ally. In its domestic affairs, Turkey is again a model for its neighbors. According to the State Department's 13th Annual Report on Religious Freedom,

During the reporting period, the [Turkish] government took steps to improve religious freedom. Notably the government permitted religious services to be held annually in historic Christian sites that had been turned into state museums after decades of disuse.

As a friend of Turkey, the United States ought to continue to recognize Turkey's initiatives on religious freedom and encourage Turkey to continue its progress. This is what allies do.

RECOGNIZING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TAMPA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM

HON. C.W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 20th Anniversary of the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, which has been a key factor in restoring and improving the ecological health of Tampa Bay. Designated by Congress as an 'estuary of national significance' under the National Estuary Program in 1990, the Tampa Bay Estuary program is one of only 28 programs in the United States and four in Florida.

Unique environments that are found where rivers meet the sea, estuaries are vital components to the world's ecosystem. Estuaries improve water quality by filtering pollutants, act as buffers to protect shorelines from erosion and flooding, serve as nursery grounds for the majority of commercial and recreational fish and shellfish consumed by Americans, and provide essential food and habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife.

Created by Congress in 1987, the National Estuary Program works to identify and restore nationally significant estuaries that are threatened by pollution. Through an amendment to an appropriations bill, we worked quickly to ensure that Tampa Bay was included as one of the first estuary programs, recognizing its importance to the ecosystem of Florida and

Pinellas County. Since then, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program has operated as a partnership of thousands of volunteers, elected officials, resource managers and commercial and recreational resource users who work together to restore and improve the ecological health of Tampa Bay.

The program has made significant progress in improving Tampa Bay during the last two decades. Important achievements over the years include the recovery of more than 6,000 acres of life-sustaining sea grasses, the restoration of more than 5,000 acres of coastal habitats, and improved water quality and clarity to levels not seen since the 1950s. The Tampa Bay National Estuary Program has done a tremendous job in cleaning, preserving and maintaining the health and vitality of Tampa Bay and today this estuary is not only a precious natural habitat for many species of fish, birds and flora, but also a beautiful playground for swimmers, boaters and general admirers.

Mr. Speaker, it has been an honor to have been a partner in this incredible successful partnership that has made an invaluable contribution to restoring this unique Florida ecosystem. The hard work and dedication of the staff and their community partners ensures that the Tampa Bay Estuary Program will continue to build upon their success in the future. Please join me in congratulating all those who have been a part of the Tampa Bay Estuary Program for a job well done over these past 20 years.

CONGRATULATING NATIONAL GUARD ON 375TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. CHARLES F. BASS

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

Mr. BASS of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my heartfelt congratulations to the National Guard in honor of its 375th anniversary and a particular thank you to the men and women that serve in the New Hampshire National Guard. The origins of the New Hampshire National Guard can be traced back to 1623 with a proud tradition of protecting the lives and property of Granite State residents. New Hampshire Guardsmen have always answered the call to serve our great state and nation and since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, more than 2,000 New Hampshire Guardsmen have served overseas as part of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and New Dawn. Collectively, the New Hampshire Guardsmen have received the highest honors our military bestows including the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medals, Combat Infantry and Combat Action Badges and Purple Hearts.

New Hampshire's citizen soldiers and airmen have served domestically as well by mobilizing under Operation Noble Eagle, aiding the victims of severe weather, and rescuing lost hikers in the White Mountains. I am proud to represent the brave men and women of New Hampshire's National Guard and look forward to honoring them for their service in the years to come.

IRAN, NORTH KOREA, AND SYRIA NONPROLIFERATION REFORM AND MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, North Korea has nuclear weapons. Iran is developing nuclear weapons. Al-Qaeda wants to acquire nuclear weapons. The threat we face is very, very real.

Sanctions are important to help prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, but they are not enough. America must lead by example.

The U.S. recently signed the New START treaty, requiring reductions to our nuclear arsenal. Yet, we still plan to spend hundreds of billions of dollars on new nuclear weapons and related programs over the next decade.

Why do we allow this wasteful spending to continue? Because some Republicans in this Chamber treat the nuclear weapons budget as a sacred cow, never to be questioned or scrutinized. This is ridiculous.

Wasteful nuclear weapons spending actually harms national security. It sends the message to Iran, North Korea, and Syria that while we don't want you to have these weapons, we are not willing to make cuts ourselves. This is the wrong message to send.

You cannot argue temperance from a barstool.

The central deal in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty was that the non-weapons states agreed to forgo the right to get the bomb. The weapons states in return, agreed to negotiate measures leading to disarmament.

That should be our goal, and we can take an important step in this direction by reducing unnecessary nuclear weapons spending.

IRAN THREAT REDUCTION ACT OF 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this statement is submitted as an extension of my remarks on the House floor, December 13, 2011, discussing H.R. 1905, the Iran Threat Reduction Act of 2011:

I thank my friend from California, the Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, for discussing Section 601(c) of the Iran Threat Reduction Act of 2011 with me.

Despite his helpful words, I still have strong reservations about language used in this legislation.

Specifically with the language in Section 601(c) of this bill, which states that:

"No person employed with the United States Government may contact in an official or unofficial capacity any person that is an agent, instrumentality, or official of, is affiliated with, or is serving as a representative of the Government of Iran; and presents a threat to the United States or is affiliated with terrorist organizations."