

bulldozes ahead closing valued postal facilities for very little, if any, economic savings. This sentiment has become so frequent that it prompted me to contact the Postmaster General last October to question whether the public comment process is truly accomplishing its purpose, which is to give the public an opportunity to convey its views to the Postal Service and to give the Postal Service the opportunity to adjust its actions accordingly.

Within a two-month period last fall, the USPS Appalachian District scheduled more than 40 public meetings in southern West Virginia, raising doubts that the Postal Service can appropriately manage the public feedback received from each meeting and prepare for continued mail delivery should a closure occur.

In one case, residents said that their post office was closed before rural delivery was fully established. In other instances, public meetings have been scheduled at inconvenient times, like Halloween night, limiting public participation.

In 2009, as part of a separate closure process, the Postal Service issued an emergency suspension of the Hacker Valley Post Office in Webster County, West Virginia. I said at the time that the action was unwarranted and I was later validated in my concerns by the Postal Regulatory Commission. In response, the Postal Service offered to solicit for a Contract Postal Unit, CPU, in Hacker Valley, which would be operated by a supplier under contract with the Postal Service to provide retail postal services. After soliciting bids in March 2011, postal officials abruptly ended the process, requiring me to contact the Postal Service to remedy the matter, which it did.

What happened in Hacker Valley underscores the need to keep a close eye on the Postal Service's proposed closures. I am convinced that legitimate safety and convenience concerns of residents and businesses are not being sufficiently addressed—that many post offices' fates are predetermined and that the public comment process, in too many instances, has become a perfunctory step in the closure process, instead of being used to truly assess legitimate safety and convenience issues, and to take steps to minimize the adverse impact on the community.

I also question the criteria used to select post offices for a closure study, noting the conflict with the Postal Service's statutory charter that requires the Postal Service to provide "a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services" to rural communities where post offices are not self-sustaining, explicitly prohibiting small post offices from being closed solely for operating at a deficit.

Despite this requirement, the Postal Service has utilized computer-driven criteria in identifying retail facilities for closure. Three of the four criteria are financially based and clearly target small facilities that are not heavy revenue producers. As such, it is not surprising that there is a concentration of closings in rural areas, where computer-driven criteria cannot fully reflect the importance of a post office.

Clearly, the Postal Service has a responsibility to ensure its long-term fiscal solvency, but that must not happen at the expense of its public service obligations in ensuring universal mail services.

The Postal Service is not FedEx or UPS, which can pick and choose between profitable

and unprofitable markets. Nowhere does the law waive the Postal Service's public service obligations if deficits run high. The Postal Service needs to look at other ways to become more profitable and competitive by improving and modernizing its services rather than cutting off rural customers.

Rural customers, more so than their urban counterparts, rely on the Postal Service for basic mail necessities—for sending bills and receiving checks, newspaper deliveries, and small businesses reaching customers—especially in areas where internet access is limited.

These closures will disrupt local economies and the lives of residents and businesses—from seniors who depend on the delivery of life-sustaining mail-order drugs, to the communities where the post office is the heart of the neighborhood—and there needs to be a better mechanism in place to ensure not only that public concerns are being addressed, but also that the public feels as though it is being heard. Some may want to view the Postal Service solely as a business, but it is still a public institution and it must remain responsive and accountable to the people.

The Congress must take action to reinforce the point, empowering an independent regulator to watch over the Postal Service to guard against overly optimistic savings projections and insufficient attention to community needs in the closure process.

I previously urged the Postmaster General to place a moratorium on postal closures until a practical and realistic plan for managing and responding to public concerns is provided to the American public. Subsequently, the Postal Service announced that it would delay any closings or consolidations until May 15, 2012. I recently wrote to the Postmaster General to ask that he extend the May 15 moratorium until the Congress has completed action on postal reform legislation.

In the coming weeks, the House is expected to consider such legislation. While I am opposed to the Committee reported bill in its current form, especially with regard to its eliminating six-day delivery and potentially expediting the closure process, I am hopeful that the House will consider and pass legislation that will help ensure that our small, rural postal facilities are not made to bear the brunt of the Postal Service's nationwide budgetary challenges. I urge the House leadership to act expeditiously.

SERGEI MAGNITSKY RULE OF LAW ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2012

HON. JAMES P. McGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 19, 2012

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I first learned of the case of Sergei Magnitsky two years ago at a hearing of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission. At that hearing, a witness described the brutal torture and vicious mistreatment by Russian authorities of Mr. Magnitsky, a courageous man of integrity who paid the ultimate price for speaking out publicly about massive corruption in Russia. Today, the Russian government has still held no one accountable for this outrageous crime.

The facts of the Magnitsky case are simply shocking. Mr. Magnitsky, a bright young tax

lawyer, uncovered evidence of a criminal conspiracy involving public officials who stole \$230 million from the Russian treasury. In August 2008, Mr. Magnitsky testified about this tax fraud scheme before Russian authorities and implicated high-level officials in the conspiracy.

This honesty and courage led Mr. Magnitsky to be arrested and, perversely, charged with the crimes he had helped to expose. He was kept in pretrial detention in inhuman conditions for almost a year, and was tortured by officials who pressured him to retract his damning testimony. He refused to do so, but his health badly broke down as a result of his abuse. As he developed serious medical problems, including pancreatitis and gallstones, Russian authorities refused to provide him with medical care. Eventually, he fell into critical condition, and when that happened, rather than treating him, prison guards chained him to a bed and beat him for one hour and eighteen minutes, resulting in his death.

The response of Russian authorities to these crimes has been as outrageous as the crimes themselves. After Mr. Magnitsky died, the Russian government said he had never complained about his health in prison, even though he had made more than 20 official requests for medical attention. Russian authorities have still not held anyone accountable for his arrest, abuse, and death. As if to spit on his grave, they even absurdly opened a new, groundless criminal case against him this year, marking the first posthumous prosecution in Russian history.

Since Russian authorities have not provided justice to Mr. Magnitsky and his family, the United States should do what it can to hold individuals accountable for these heinous crimes. The bill I am introducing today, the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012, would provide a measure of justice for this courageous man by imposing a visa ban and asset freeze on the people who participated in or covered up his detention, abuse, and death, as well as on those individuals who benefited financially from his mistreatment or participated in the criminal conspiracy that he uncovered.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is about much more than the Magnitsky case. In recognition of the many other severe human rights abuses that take place each year, the bill also imposes a visa ban and asset freeze on other individuals who have committed internationally recognized gross violations of human rights against people seeking to expose illegal activity by Russian officials or to exercise fundamental rights and freedoms.

In this way, the bill would hold accountable those individuals who have perpetrated grave abuses against other whistleblowers or government critics, such as Anna Politkovskaya, Natalia Estemirova, and others whose names are less well-known in the United States.

I am deeply grateful to the bipartisan group of members of Congress that supports this legislation and has helped to shape it. These members include Representatives FRANK WOLF, SANDER LEVIN, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, ALCEE HASTINGS, ED ROYCE, JIM McDERMOTT, DAN BURTON, GERRY CONNOLLY, CHRIS SMITH, EDOLPHUS TOWNS, PETER ROSKAM, MICHAEL MICHAUD, JOSEPH PITTS and CHARLES RANGEL.

I am also deeply grateful to my colleagues in the Senate for their leadership on this issue. Senator BEN CARDIN has introduced similar

legislation that has attracted over 30 bipartisan cosponsors, and he has spoken out eloquently about the legislation's vital importance.

I would also like to underscore that this effort is far from just a U.S. initiative. Similar legislation is being considered in nearly a dozen other legislatures around the world. My hope is that the United States Congress will be the first, but not the last, legislature to enact a Magnitsky human rights law.

Importantly, these legislative efforts have strong support from the Russian human rights community, including opposition leaders such as Garry Kasparov, Boris Nemtsov, and Alexei Navalny. As Mr. Navalny commented recently, "Such legislation is not anti-Russian. In fact I believe it is pro-Russian. It helps defend us from the criminals who kill our citizens, steal our money, and hide it abroad."

Enactment of the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act will provide the Administration with the tools it needs to hold accountable human rights violators and provide an important boost to human rights activists and defenders. It will also demonstrate that the protection of human rights is a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy. Our country has always been at its best when we stood firmly on the side of people seeking to exercise fundamental rights and against the actions of governments seeking to repress basic freedoms. This legislation is in keeping with that great tradition.

FACT SHEET ON SERGEI MAGNITSKY RULE OF LAW ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2012

THE STORY OF SERGEI MAGNITSKY

After exposing the largest tax fraud in Russian history, tax lawyer Sergei Magnitsky was wrongly arrested and tortured in a Russian prison. Six months later he became seriously ill and was denied medical attention despite 20 formal requests. On the night of November 16, 2009, he went into critical condition, but instead of being treated in a hospital he was put in an isolation cell, chained to a bed, and beaten by eight prison guards for one hour and eighteen minutes, resulting in his death. Sergei Magnitsky was 37 years old and left behind a wife and two children. Those responsible for this crime have yet to be punished, and the Magnitsky story is emblematic of corruption, human rights abuses, and impunity in Russia.

THE MAGNITSKY BILL

The Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012 would hold accountable Magnitsky's killers and other human rights violators by placing targeted sanctions on them. In particular, the draft bill imposes a visa ban and asset freeze on: 1) individuals responsible for participating in or covering up Magnitsky's detention, abuse, and death, and 2) individuals responsible for other gross violations of human rights against people seeking to expose illegal activity by Russian officials or to exercise fundamental rights and freedoms.

The bill requires the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury, to publish a list of the people who should be subject to sanctions under its provisions, and requires the Secretary of State to respond within 120 days to requests from the chairperson and ranking member of key congressional committees to add an individual to that list. The bill provides the executive branch with the authority to waive the sanctions on national security grounds, and requires the executive to submit an annual report to Congress on actions taken to implement it.

The bill includes findings on the mistreatment of Magnitsky and other individuals, and on the extent of corruption and impunity in Russia.

The bill updates H.R. 1575, a bipartisan bill introduced by Rep. MCGOVERN in 2011. The new bill improves on H.R. 1575 by placing sanctions on a broader range of human rights violators (rather than only on people involved in Magnitsky-related abuses), by requiring the executive to publish the list of sanctioned individuals, and by giving key members of Congress the ability to request that people be added to the list. A similar bill, introduced as S. 1039 by Sen. CARDIN, has attracted over 30 bipartisan cosponsors in the Senate.

PROJECT READY STEM ACT

HON. MARCIA L. FUDGE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 19, 2012

Ms. FUDGE. Mr Speaker, I rise today to address the need to increase the number of minorities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, or STEM-related fields. Throughout the nation, employment in professional scientific and technical services is projected to grow by 29% by 2020. Currently, African-Americans and Hispanics occupy only 6% of the STEM workforce.

This week, I introduced the Project Ready STEM Act of 2012. This legislation addresses critical disparities in student achievement in math and science at the middle and high school levels.

Without the opportunity to develop skills necessary to compete for STEM-related jobs, many students of color may be confined to a lifetime of lower wages. I urge my colleagues to support the Project Ready STEM Act.

IN CELEBRATION OF THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF MR. PRINCE T. JONES

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 19, 2012

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to extend my personal congratulations and Happy Birthday wishes to Mr. Prince T. Jones, a beloved citizen of Albany, Georgia, who turned 100 years of age on Sunday, April 15, 2012. On Saturday, April 14, 2012 he was honored by his family and friends at a celebration at Morning Side Assisted Living Facility in Albany, Georgia in recognition of his 100th birthday.

Prince T. Jones, the youngest of six children, was born on April 15, 1912, to Daniel Jones and Julia Fields Jones. He grew up in the tiny town of Barboursville, Virginia and attended public school in Orange County, Virginia.

Following his academic training in the Orange County public school system, Mr. Jones embarked on a tenured and successful career as a farmer and later as a butler. He worked for several years at the prestigious Farmington Country Club in Charlottesville, Virginia. At the conclusion of his stint at the Farmington Coun-

try Club, he went on to work at Winholm Farms for 25 years before he retired in 1981.

Always pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, in order to better improve the craft of Christian discipleship, he served for many years as a Sunday School Teacher; Chairman of the Trustee and Deacon Board; and Treasurer for the Ministers and Deacons Union at Blue Run Baptist Church in Somerset, Virginia. It is worth noting that Mr. Jones was a member of Blue Run Baptist Church for 88 years.

In 1933, he married the "woman of his dreams" Gertrude Mary Jones. They remained married for 66 years and they would go on to have three beautiful and loving children. Mr. Jones has achieved numerous successes in his life, but none of this would have been possible without the love and support of his late wife and his children's devoted mother. Together their legacy set sterling examples of family and parenting for their sons, Dr. T. Marshall Jones and the late Arthur Lee Jones; daughter Gladys Jones Saddler; their nine grandchildren; their nine great-grandchildren; and their great-great-grandson.

George Washington Carver once said, "How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong because someday in your life you will have been all of these." Mr. Jones has advanced so far in life because he never forgot these lessons and always kept God first.

The race of life isn't given to the swift or to the strong, but to those who endure until the end. Mr. Jones has run the race of life with grace and dignity and God has blessed him over his lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in paying tribute to Mr. Prince T. Jones. On a personal note, I would like to not only congratulate Mr. Jones on becoming a distinguished centenarian but also express my profound admiration for his outstanding Christian stewardship and dedication to his church and family.

Truly to God be the glory!

IN RECOGNITION OF NATALIE BERG

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 19, 2012

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Dr. Natalie Berg who today is receiving the 2011 Silver Spur Award from San Francisco Planning and Urban Research (SPUR). This award recognizes a lifetime of civic achievement of a San Franciscan.

Dr. Berg has had parallel careers in higher education and land use issues. She is a member of the Board of Trustees at City College of San Francisco and she is the President of NKB Strategies, a consulting company specializing in strategies for land use.

For twelve years, she was Senior Vice President of Forest City Development where she was responsible for obtaining the entitlements for the Westfield San Francisco Centre and now continues to be a consultant there. She also served as the president of the Yerba