

AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, an open letter to President Barack Obama.

Dear Mr. President:

In 2009, less than a year after assuming the Presidency, you accepted the Nobel Peace Prize. You began your acceptance of this honor by acknowledging that it was bestowed at the “beginning, and not the end of, my labors on the world stage.”

You spoke on that day with eloquence and conviction about fundamental human rights, rights that are endowed not by accidents of birth like nationality or ethnicity or gender, but by our common humanity. And the principles that you articulated have indeed guided and defined your Presidency.

In your foreign policy, you have emphasized the rights of ethnic and religious minorities worldwide and put these causes closer to the center of our foreign policy. You have extended aid to refugees fleeing horrific violence. You established the Atrocities Prevention Board to coordinate and monitor our efforts to prevent mass atrocities and genocide.

In a few days, you will have a chance to add to your legacy. On April 24, the world will mark 101 years since the systemic extermination of 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman Empire, from 1915 to 1923. The facts of the slaughter are beyond dispute, and I know that you are well-acquainted with these horrors visited upon the Armenian people, having spoken eloquently about them as a Senator.

I have sat with survivors of the genocide, men and women, their numbers dwindling year after year, and heard them recall the destruction of their lives and their families and all they had known. As children, they were forced from their homes and saw their family beaten, raped, and murdered. They fled across continents and oceans to build lives in our Nation.

Mr. President, for them and for their descendants, the word “genocide” is sacred because it means that the world has not and will not forget. To deny genocide, on the other hand, is profane. It is, in the words of Elie Wiesel, a “double killing.”

This April 24 will be your final opportunity to use the Presidency to speak plainly about the genocide. In past years as President, you have described the campaign of murder and displacement against the Armenian people as a “mass atrocity,” which it surely was.

But, of course, it was also much more; and you have avoided using the word “genocide,” even though it has been universally applied by scholars and historians of the period. In fact, as you know better than most, the Ottoman Empire’s campaign to annihilate the Armenian people was a prime example of what Raphael Lemkin was trying to describe when he coined the very term, “genocide.”

I know that, as you consider your words this year, you will hear the same voices as in the past who will tell you to hold your tongue and speak in euphemisms. They will say that the time is not right, or that Turkey is too strategically important, or that we should not risk their ire over something that happened a century ago. Mr. President, regardless of what you say on April 24, there can be little doubt that Turkey will do exactly as it has always done in its relations with the United States, and that is whatever Turkey believes to be in its self-interest.

Many of our European allies and world leaders, including Pope Francis, have recognized the genocide, yet they have continued

to work closely with Turkey because that has been in Turkey’s interest. The same will be true after U.S. recognition of the genocide.

I dearly hope, as do millions of Armenians descended from genocide survivors around the world, that you take this final opportunity to call the Armenian genocide what it was—genocide; to say that the Ottoman Empire committed this grotesque crime against the Armenians, but their campaign of extermination failed; and that, above all, we will never forget and we will never again be intimidated into silence. Let this be part of your legacy, and you will see future administrations follow your example.

When you spoke in Oslo more than 7 years ago, you closed your remarks by returning to the counsel of Dr. Martin Luther King and said: “I refuse to accept the idea that the ‘isness’ of man’s present condition makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal ‘oughtness’ that forever confronts him.”

Mr. President, confronting painful, difficult but vital questions “is” who you are. Help us be the America we “ought” to be, that beacon of freedom and dignity that shines its light on the darkness of human history and exposes the vile crime of genocide.

Sincerely, Adam Schiff.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and not to a perceived viewing audience.

CELEBRATING SOUTH FLORIDA’S NATIONAL PARKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight south Florida’s wild and wonderful national parks—Biscayne, Dry Tortugas, and Everglades—during National Park Week and the National Park Service Centennial.

American Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and historian Wallace Stegner is quoted as having said that our national parks were “the best idea we have ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst.”

Indeed, south Florida is supremely fortunate to have Superintendent Pedro Ramos in charge of Dry Tortugas and Everglades National Parks. Superintendent Ramos understands and appreciates the importance of public access, the importance of the public’s experiences, and the importance of continuing to reconnect the people of south Florida with the natural lands and waters that surround and support our community.

Ultimately, enhancing public access and recreational opportunities in our national parks are vital to conserving America’s natural and cultural heritage. That is why I am so troubled, Mr. Speaker, by the fishing access restrictions included in the 2015 general management plan of another iconic south Florida park, Biscayne National Park.

The plan’s marine reserve zone imposes a permanent moratorium on fish-

ing across 10,500 acres of State waters, including 30 percent of the reef tract, denying fishing access to families and professional fishermen alike, without adequate scientific evidence to back it up.

My Preserving Public Access to Public Waters Act, which passed the House in February as part of the SHARE Act, and its newly introduced Senate counterpart, from Senators BILL CASSIDY and MARCO RUBIO, would help ensure that Federal bureaucrats and special interest groups do not overrule local community needs and concerns in this way anymore.

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If our national parks are to remain absolutely American and absolutely democratic, then it is long since time for the National Park Service to consistently represent the Federal Government at its best rather than at its worst once again.

The Park Service’s stated mission is to preserve “unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations by cooperating with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resources conservation and outdoor recreation throughout the country and the world.”

Everglades National Park Superintendent Ramos has demonstrated that he is a true ambassador for this lofty and worthy mission. He represents the National Park Service and the Federal Government at its best: open and inclusive, seeking balanced solutions, and guided by a profound sense of service to the American people.

Meanwhile, Biscayne’s general management plan represents some of the worst aspects of the National Park Service and the Federal Government. It is focused so much on a narrow definition of preservation that it continually and completely fails the National Park Service’s mission and disregards a whole community of park users.

What is worse, with the varied threats facing south Florida’s coral reefs, from changing ocean conditions to water quality issues, today fishing is a relatively minor contributor to coral reef decline in Biscayne.

The real effect of Biscayne’s marine reserve zone plan will be to continue losing coral at a drastic pace while also undercutting the public support needed to develop and implement real solutions to what ails our reefs.

The National Park Service can, should, and must do better, and they should look to Superintendent Ramos and his leadership over similar issues at Everglades National Park for inspiration.

Everglades National Park’s own recently finalized general management plan, lauded by both fishermen and environmentalists, clearly represents what is possible when guided by a true sense of the Park’s mission.

CELEBRATING EARTH DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate our 46th Earth Day, it is critical that we recognize the opportunities that stem from addressing some of our most pressing environmental problems.

All too often we hear the argument that environmental policies are agents of economic destruction. From the Clean Power Plan to renewable energy development and energy-efficient technologies, every time a new environmental policy is proposed, we hear the same rhetoric: This will kill jobs, drive up costs, destroy trade, and stifle America's ability to succeed.

But the reality is those claims are simply not true. They have been debunked and proven wrong time and again, but the truth doesn't seem to matter when it comes to protecting our environment.

Without a doubt, one of America's greatest assets is the ingenuity of its people. Throughout our Nation's history, American innovation has triumphed in the face of great challenges. Unleashing that American innovation can bring big wins for both the environment and the economy.

There is no better example of this than when we look at our renewable energy sector. For decades, America has chased the promise of clean, domestic energy.

In recent years, costs for numerous critical clean energy technologies—wind power, solar panels, super-energy-efficient LED lights and electric vehicles—have fallen dramatically.

The accompanying surge in deployment has been impressive. While these technologies still represent a small percentage of their respective markets, that share is expanding at a rapid pace and influencing other markets.

Today the U.S. generates 3 times as much wind power and 20 times as much solar power as we did in 2008. This kind of thinking will help States meet the EPA's requirements laid out in the Clean Power Plan.

Compared with fossil fuel technologies, which are typically mechanized and capital-intensive, the renewable energy industry is more labor-intensive.

This means that, on the average, more jobs are created for each unit of electricity generated from renewable sources than from fossil fuels.

In addition to creating new jobs, increasing our use of renewable energy offers more important economic development benefits. Local governments collect property and income taxes and other payments from renewable energy project owners while owners of the land that wind projects are built on also receive lease payments ranging from \$3,000 to \$6,000 per megawatt of installed capacity.

A new study from the U.S. Energy Information Administration suggests

that, in the coming year, the booming solar sector will add more new electricity-generating capacity than any other energy sector, including natural gas and wind.

The more we support clean energy innovation and new technological ideas, the better positioned we are to reap the economic rewards.

Examples of those wins are all around, leading to States and communities investing in clean energy innovation and developing smart, low-cost technologies to help reduce energy costs.

On this front, my home State of Illinois is moving full steam ahead. The city of Chicago has partnered with utility companies and citizen groups to work on a new initiative to get 1 million smart thermostats into northern Illinois homes by 2020.

The innovative partnership offers rebates that will nearly halve the cost of thermostats that allow residents to control the temperatures of their homes via mobile devices. This helps us once again move the needle against climate change.

Of course, clean energy technology isn't our only energy innovation success story. Energy efficiency is truly our Nation's greatest energy achievement.

Without the gains in energy efficiency made since 1973, it is estimated that today's U.S. economy would require 60 percent more energy than we currently consume.

Energy efficiency improvements over the last 40 years have reduced our national energy bill by more than \$700 billion.

Instead of working from the assumption that tighter regulations will hurt our government's export share, we should focus on the edge that we gain from innovation.

This Earth Day, I challenge my colleagues to realize the opportunity that climate change provides us and support solutions that allow us to turn what used to be daunting challenges into profitable opportunities.

MINNESOTA'S SIXTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT IS THE LAND OF HOCKEY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. EMMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate two young men from my district, Riley Tuft and Nick Althaus; Nick Althaus for his memorable performance at the Minnesota High School State Hockey Tournament last month, and Riley Tuft for his performance on the hockey rink all year.

Riley Tuft of Blaine has been named Mr. Hockey, an award given to the best high school senior hockey player in our great State of Minnesota. This season alone, Tuft scored an incredible 49 goals and had 36 assists for 85 points in only 31 games. That is an amazing 2.74 points per game.

Nick Althaus of St. Cloud won the Frank Brimsek Award, an annual award given to Minnesota's top senior goaltender.

In Minnesota, hockey is not just a sport, it is a way of life. Many young men and women work and train to win and participate in the best State hockey tournament in the country.

Congratulations to Nick and Riley for their hard work and incredible success this year, and best of luck in the future, both on and off the rink.

A STRONG WOMAN—INSIDE AND OUT

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the strength and endurance of St. Cloud native Laura Knoblach, who just, last month, became the youngest woman to finish a double triathlon.

Laura finished the Double ANVIL Ultra Triathlon, a rigorous event that consisted of swimming 4.8 miles, biking 224 miles, and running two consecutive marathons. She finished all of this in less than 36 hours.

Not only did Laura complete an arduous triathlon, but she did so for a good cause. She created a GoFundMe page titled "A Tri to End Trafficking," which raised money to help educate South African girls and prevent them from becoming victims of sex trafficking.

Laura Knoblach is currently a junior at the University of Boulder in Colorado, where she studies secondary education and majors in English and Spanish. She hopes to one day teach English as a second language.

I have no doubt that Laura will accomplish all of her goals and more, as she is the perfect example that anything is possible if you work hard enough.

A COACH REMEMBERED

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember the astounding life and legacy of Coach Dean Taylor, who recently passed away.

Coach Taylor founded the football program at Sartell High School and built it into the powerhouse program it is today.

From Sartell, he went on to become an assistant coach at St. John's University for eight seasons and then became head coach at St. Cloud Cathedral from 2009 to 2012. Coach Taylor's impressive football resume ultimately led to his induction into the Minnesota State Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

However, it is not just the X's and O's of coaching that we will remember about Coach Taylor. Coach Taylor will also—and maybe even more importantly—be remembered for the incredible impact he made on the lives of all the student athletes he touched.

Condolences to his wife, Kathy; his children, Steve and Kristi; as well as his many friends and loved ones. I thank you for sharing your husband and father with our community.

RESTORING AMERICANS' TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, in recognition of the fact that