

FREE OSCAR LOPEZ RIVERA

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

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I visited four cities in four States to meet with Puerto Rican elected officials, leaders, and members of the Puerto Rican diaspora about a very important campaign.

I was in Hartford, Connecticut; Springfield and Holyoke, Massachusetts; New York, New York; and Newark, New Jersey, for activities, parades, and discussions that were very successful. This week, I will be back in Chicago with my fellow Puerto Ricans at the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture to honor the organization and to recognize the talent and cultural contributions of Antonio Martorell and Lin-Manuel Miranda, who make us all proud.

But I am not traveling on a campaign for President or for a political candidate. Rather, I am meeting with people all over about a campaign for the current President to take action before he leaves office in January to free Oscar Lopez Rivera, the last political prisoner from Puerto Rico, who has been held for 35 years in an American prison.

No one disputes that the President of the United States has the power to grant pardons, commute sentences, and grant clemency. It is a power the President alone possesses as our chief executive. Congress and the courts can do nothing to override him in this case.

Puerto Ricans and allies all over the world are asking the President to grant clemency to Oscar Lopez Rivera. He was not convicted of committing a violent crime. Rather, he was convicted of seditious conspiracy, espousing the belief that the people of Puerto Rico are capable of, entitled to, and have the right to self-determination and freedom.

This man, Oscar Lopez Rivera, who is now in his seventies and has spent half of his life in prison, is no threat to the United States or Puerto Rico. He harbors no nefarious plot to harm anyone. He is simply a man who served an inordinate sentence for the crime for which he was convicted. And now Puerto Ricans want their elder statesman to live out his days in Puerto Rico. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are few issues that unite the Puerto Rican people more than the united front that is assembling to call for the release of Oscar Lopez Rivera.

Hundreds have already pledged to join us on October 9 in Lafayette Park in Washington, D.C., to make our unity and our commitment known. I know from my own experience that all too often Puerto Ricans are divided from each other along so many lines of politics, class, and geography. But in this case, in this cause, in the united call, Puerto Ricans are united as never before.

The House and the Senate of the island's legislature, all the candidates

for Governor and major office, current and past elected officials, city councils and municipal governments across the island, from San Juan to the smallest villages, support the release of Oscar Lopez Rivera—across party lines, across lines that often separate statehood advocates and independence and commonwealth advocates. Practically every bishop, every denomination, every congregation, parish, and church—almost the entire faith community on the island—has called for Oscar's release.

It is not just a Puerto Rican thing, Mr. Speaker. It is a movement that has sparked followers across the United States as well. The AFL-CIO, AFSCME, SEIU, Communications Workers of America, and other allies in the labor movement are standing up for justice and standing up for the release of Oscar Lopez Rivera.

The ACLU, the Hispanic National Bar Association, and religious leaders of all stripes are onboard. The City Council of New York City and the Newark, New Jersey Municipal Council passed resolutions. My friends and colleagues on the Congressional Hispanic Caucus here in Congress have joined us in the call for Oscar Lopez Rivera to be released. I thank the members of the Hispanic Caucus.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Oscar Lopez Rivera's case and the call for him to be released has received international attention and validation. Presidents, Nobel laureates, leaders, artists, activists, and the world over, know it is time to let Oscar return in peace to his island.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Archbishop Emeritus of the Anglican Church in Cape Town, a true champion of justice across the globe, has expressed his unwavering support for the release of this prisoner.

Mr. Speaker, based on the merits of this case, the outpouring of support, and the moral obligation and power that has been placed in his hands, I join freedom fighters, justice lovers, Puerto Ricans, and individuals across the globe in asking President Obama to use his pen to free Oscar Lopez Rivera.

Please join us in Washington, D.C., on October 9 in Lafayette Park and let your voice be heard.

COMMEMORATING THE NICKLAUS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL SCHOOL LIAISON PROGRAM

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 commemorate the efforts of my former staff member, Janelle Perez, and her partner, Monica Ruiz, in helping the School Liaison Program for Nicklaus Children's Hospital, located in my congressional district.

Having both been affected by cancer in different life-altering ways, Janelle and Monica collaborated with the

Miami Children's Health Foundation on methods that could have the largest and most profound impact on the lives of so many children who are undergoing treatment at the Nicklaus Children's Hospital.

Through Janelle and Monica's passion for children and education, the School Liaison Program was born. The program is designed to provide guidance and advocacy to patients and their families in order to continue academic growth while undergoing clinical treatment.

The program aids in recovery by bringing a sense of normalcy and confidence to these children, instilling in them the hope that they will recover and soon return to the normal day-to-day activities they enjoyed before becoming ill.

Congratulations to Janelle and Monica for helping sick children through the Nicklaus Children's Hospital School Liaison Program.

COMMEMORATING THE MIAMI CHILDRENS THEATER ON ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Miami Children's Theater on its 20th anniversary as an invaluable education center for children and young adults in our south Florida community. I would like to recognize its outstanding leadership team, including their executive producing director and founder, Angela Ardolino.

Originally an after-school program at the Coral Gables Youth Center, located in my congressional district, it was Angela's efforts and strategic vision that transformed this prominent center into what it is today.

Miami Children's Theater was the first children's theater in the Nation to be granted rights to the student edition of *Les Misérables*.

More importantly, children and young adults from all over the community are given the opportunity to explore the arts and expand on their creativity both on stage and in classes.

It is my honor and privilege to recognize the Miami Children's Theater and wish all of the members the best as they work toward the next 20 years of service to our south Florida community.

HONORING THE EPILEPSY FOUNDATION OF FLORIDA

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the Epilepsy Foundation of Florida as it celebrates its 45th anniversary.

From support groups to case management and medical services, the Epilepsy Foundation offers diverse programs and resources and serves as a pillar of support to the over 400,000 Floridians living with this condition.

Mr. Speaker, this neurological disorder is in need of greater public attention. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people with epilepsy experience health and social disparities, such as a worse health-related quality of life and low socioeconomic status.

Organizations like the Epilepsy Foundation of Florida are stepping up to the challenge and informing communities in Florida and across our Nation about these issues, advocating for better public policies and working every day to improve the lives of individuals afflicted with this difficult disease through research and education. Epilepsy can affect anyone, children and adults alike, and it is crucial to inform communities on how to respond in an emergency.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my south Florida community to join and celebrate this wonderful organization at the annual Unmasking Epilepsy Masquerade on October 13 in the Coral Gables Museum, located in my congressional district.

Thank you to the Epilepsy Foundation of Florida for all that it continues to do.

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Mr. Speaker, I would like to honor Susan Dean, who will be retiring from this esteemed institution at the end of October, after 19 years of invaluable service to so many women Members who have made their marks in the Halls of Congress.

Susan has been in charge of the magnificent Lindy Claiborne Boggs Congressional Women's Reading Room with professionalism, efficiency, and care, while keeping the historical room so immaculately preserved.

From changes in leadership, to the enactment of landmark legislation, to the inauguration of the Capitol Visitor Center, to the unveiling of a myriad of statues and portraits and innumerable nights where votes have run past midnight, much has transpired during Susan's tenure in the House.

Since I met Susan in 1997, I have heard her recount the magnificence of the Lindy Boggs suite, and it truly never ceases to amaze me. Susan has provided a great service to our constituents by graciously offering them a personalized tour of this hidden gem.

The people's House will suffer a great loss with Susan's departure, and she will be deeply missed by her many friends here in this Chamber.

Please join me in wishing Susan Dean all the best as she enjoys her first few months of retirement traveling across our country visiting family and friends.

Godspeed, Susan Dean, mi amiga.

REPUBLICAN CRUSADE AGAINST THE IRS

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, currently, in the House Judiciary Committee, there is an unusual spectacle unfolding. Now, a number of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have made it a crusade to war against the IRS. They have cut staff, budgets,

refused to help it collect money that is due and owed. They have made it easier for cheats to avoid their obligations. But this assault on the IRS Commissioner takes that war to a new low.

I would invite anybody listening to this presentation right now to go to the internal channel in the House, number 42, or go to cspan.org to be able to watch it yourself. Walk down to Room 2237 Rayburn and watch this play out.

I have had a chance to get to know John Koskinen, the IRS Commissioner, over the course of this last year, and I have come to respect and admire him. I would suggest to anybody trying to put this in context, trying to understand the give-and-take, google Mr. Koskinen, and then google some of his fiercest critics who are going to be on display at the Judiciary Committee today.

Which of his critics would you imagine to be entrusted with being the chair of the board of trustees for their prestigious university, should they have attended one? Mr. Koskinen was.

Which of them would have been successful in business as a turnaround artist in some of the most difficult and challenging commercial transactions? Mr. Koskinen was. And then walk away from material and business success to volunteer for some of the most challenging jobs in Government? Mr. Koskinen did.

Which of these members of the Judiciary Committee that are attacking Mr. Koskinen would have been picked by a President of their own party to take some of the most challenging and difficult and important tasks? Mr. Koskinen was. The Y2K czar, when we were concerned about what would happen in the year 2000 and the integrity of computer systems; Mr. Koskinen was administrator for the District of Columbia when that city was turned around.

Which of them would have been asked by a President of the other party to step in and handle a major systemic challenge? The IRS Commissioner, a Democrat, was asked by the Bush administration to step in and right the ship of Freddie Mac during the near meltdown of the global economy.

And he came back, volunteering for one of the most difficult tasks in government, to deal with an IRS that has been underfunded, understaffed, while Congress makes its job almost impossible by making the Tax Code more complex each and every year. John Koskinen did.

Google the people who are attacking him and see if any of them have accomplishments that are remotely equal to what this distinguished American did and has done and continues to do.

This is a shameful display. This gentleman is being attacked for things that predated his tenure, not high crimes and misdemeanors and corruption, but because they don't like what went on there, and they are trying to find somebody to blame other than themselves.

Look at what is going on in the Judiciary Committee. Google these people; evaluate for yourselves.

The American people deserve better than what is going on now, and certainly, Mr. Koskinen does.

CONGRATULATING CLEARWATER POLICE OFFICER JONATHAN WALSER

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

Mr. JOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a man who has served our country and his community as a U.S. Marine, a sheriff's deputy, and as a police detective.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my very dear friend and American patriot, a man of deep and abiding Christian faith, Mr. Jonathan Walser, on his retirement from the Clearwater Florida Police Department.

After serving his country in the United States Marine Corps for 6 years, Officer Walser opted to continue serving his community by joining the Pasco County Sheriff's Department in 1994 as a detention deputy. Two years later, Walser joined the Clearwater Police Department and began a career that has made an incredible impact on our entire Clearwater community.

Early on, Officer Walser demonstrated remarkable commitment and leadership, earning a highly successful rating at the conclusion of his new-hire probationary period.

Officer Walser would serve in several specialty assignments during his career. He served as a field training officer and a member of the emergency response team.

He also served for more than a decade on the Clearwater Police Department honor guard team. As an honor guard member, Officer Walser has represented the department at hundreds of funerals and memorial services and, in particular, has honored the families of fallen officers, a duty most personal to him.

Officer Walser served as a community police officer on Clearwater's Wood Valley Community policing team in 2001 and 2002.

In June 2002, Officer Walser was assigned to serve on the traffic enforcement team motorcycle unit, a role in which he focused on traffic safety, intoxicated driving, and crash investigations. Jonathan most compassionately used his department motorcycle as a tool to connect with the community, frequently posing for photos with kids sitting on the motorcycle.

In August 2011, Officer Walser transferred to the criminal investigations division burglary unit to serve as a detective. During his time as a detective, he was continually lauded for his superior investigative abilities and report-writing skills, in addition to his passion for being actively engaged in the community and volunteering at local events.