

A majority of Americans believes that certain crimes are so vicious and heinous that capital punishment is appropriate. Most of the States have enacted laws to conform with the Supreme Court's opinion on when capital punishment is constitutional.

In August 1989, a commission chaired by Justice Powell concluded that the Federal habeas corpus process "has led to piecemeal and repetitious litigation," "years of delay between sentencing and judicial resolution," and an "undermining of public confidence in our criminal justice system."

But the efforts of the States and the Congress to make capital punishment more than a paper tiger have been frustrated by endless habeas corpus appeals by prisoners on death row. The bill before us changes laws affecting the death penalty in an effort to create consistent and fair procedures for its application and to streamline the appeals process.

Our current system doesn't work. There are endless and often frivolous appeals, with few limits on prisoners raising the same issues repeatedly. Today, prisoners on death row can appeal whenever there is a change in the law or a new Supreme Court ruling. This endless litigation costs the taxpayers millions of dollars and more importantly, denies justice to the victims of crime.

H.R. 729 establishes strict, but fair limits on appeals. It creates a 1-year limitation period for filing a Federal habeas corpus petition contesting a State court conviction and a 2-year limitation period for a Federal conviction. The bill outlines special habeas corpus procedures that States may adopt for capital cases and limits the granting of stays when prisoners have failed to file a timely appeal. The bill also directs the courts to accelerate the process, by imposing a 60-day deadline for Federal district courts to decide a habeas corpus petition and a 90-day deadline for appeals courts to decide an appeal. Finally, in keeping with this Congress' commitment to stop passing mandates on the States, H.R. 729 will help States pay for the costs of defending their convictions against habeas corpus claims in capital cases.

Mr. Chairman, this legislation is in line with the 1991 ruling of the Supreme Court that death row prisoners may file only one habeas corpus petition in Federal court unless there is a sound reason why any new constitutional claim was not raised the first time.

I note that the California District Attorneys Association unanimously adopted a resolution in support of H.R. 729, calling it a significant step in the right direction.

Let us heed the advice of those who know best—the district attorneys, the Powell Commission, and leading constitutional experts. Let's pass H.R. 729 and enact meaningful capital punishment reform.

SUPPORTING MOVEMENTS FOR
FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY, AND
HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 9, 1995

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that today Iranians who hope for free-

dom and democracy in their own country stood at the Capitol Building of the United States—a symbol of democracy and freedom for millions of people all over the world—to remember that 16 years ago this Saturday the dreams and hopes for democracy and freedom in Iran were destroyed with the creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Since then Iran has unleashed a reign of terror from the streets of Tehran to nations all over the world. Through their support, encouragement and perpetuation of international terrorism the Islamic Republic of Iran has burdened, maimed and stolen the lives of innocent citizens of the world community. In the last 16 years, the Iranian Government has held hostage United States, British, French and other foreign nationals. The government continues to hold its own entire nation hostage with millions of people paralyzed due to fear of imprisonment, torture and death.

The Iranian Government has one of the worst human rights records in the world. They have no desire to join the international community as nations move toward democratic reform and greater freedom and protection of human rights.

In Iran today there is a complete disregard for the dignity of human life. We can see this clearly in the area of religious liberty. A Shari'a court has ruled that the members of the minority Bahai community are "unprotected infidels," not worthy of legal protections. They are described as "misguided" and the Iranian Government persecutes them in an effort to "purify" Islam.

The Christian minorities were shaken last year with the tragic deaths of Bishop Haik Mehr, Mehdi Dibaj, and Tateos Michaelian. All three were giants in Iran's small but vibrant Christian community. Eight converts from Islam were beaten and tortured in an effort to make them deny their Christian faith.

United States resident Hassan Shahjamali, a Christian visiting his family in Iran, was detained by security police and held incommunicado for several days last May. Only after the international community loudly protested and called for his release did the Iranian Government finally release him and allow him to return to the United States.

The Iranian Government's support of terrorism world wide has unleashed a wave of violence and fear. Each year thousands have died because of Iranian supported terrorist activities. Murders and bombings in Germany, Turkey, Switzerland, and Argentina; the direct attack on Americans on Pan Am Flight 103, at the United States Marine Barracks in Beirut and the bombing of the World Trade Center have all been traced to Teheran.

Yet after 16 years of terror, and repression; after 16 years of brutality and systematic abuse, the spirit of the real Iranian people lives on. Thousands of Iranian believers have not given up their dream of freedom and democracy. They continue to raise their voices and they challenge us to do the same.

Just days before his death last January Bishop Haik Mehr predicted his martyrdom. As he departed a conference in Pakistan in December he told Brother Andrew, the champion of religious freedom, justice, and tolerance that "when they kill me it will not be because of my silence." On January 20, 1994 Bishop

Haik's body was found. He had been tortured before he was killed. He knew the risks if he acted on his convictions—and he paid the price.

Today we stand with Bishop Mehr and the thousands of others of all faiths and walks of life who have raised their voices for freedom and justice in Iran. We honor them by supporting freedom, democracy and justice. We, too, look to a day when Iran will be free. Only then will the world have an opportunity for peace and stability, free from the fear of terrorism and tyranny.

IN RECOGNITION OF MR. CHESTER
"CHET" ZABLOCKI

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 9, 1995

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge an exemplary citizen who has earned the moniker of Mr. Polka in my northwest Ohio district, Mr. Chester "Chet" Zablocki. Chet has been an active leader in our community for many years and in the polka music industry since 1947. Allow me to share with my colleagues just a few of this remarkable and fine gentleman's accomplishments. His voice and name are synonymous with Toledo.

Chet became active in his community at the age of 15 by forming a polka band to entertain his family and friends. After serving in the Air Force, he married his childhood sweetheart, Helen Zdawczyk in 1942. Sharing his love for music, Chet and Helen began the "Polish Festival" radio show on the new local radio station, WIOD. In 1951, Chet recorded his first record for Continental Records, which featured him as the vocalist on "Johnny from Poland." In 1963, Chet began a local polka newspaper called the Polka Star to inform the local patrons about the polka music and dance industry.

In 1968, part of the heart of the "Helen-n-Chet's Polka Party," as the show was known then, was lost with the death of Helen. Chet continued to broadcast the show alone the next 5 years, with the occasional assistance of his sister, Carol. Chet was remarried in 1973 and the show became "Sharon and Chet's Polka Party." The show continues to air every week over northwest Ohio's airwaves reaching into the homes of thousands of listeners.

Along with the radio show, Chet unselfishly conducts benefits for the American Cancer Society, the WIOD Penny Pitch, the Diabetes Foundation and the Polish American Festival. He also serves as the executive director of the Central Lagrange Senior Center. In August, Chet was inducted in the International Polka Association's Polka Hall of Fame in Chicago for his extensive work in our community and in the polka industry.

Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues join me in recognizing the efforts of Mr. Chester Zablocki, a truly devoted individual who has enriched our lives with his love for his community, family, and the music which has lightened our hearts in northwest Ohio for nearly 50 years.