

Whereas Greece is one of the only 3 nations in the world, beyond the former British Empire, that has been allied with the United States in every major international conflict this century;

Whereas the heroism displayed in the historic World War II Battle of Crete epitomized Greece's sacrifice for freedom and democracy as it presented the Axis land war with its first major setback and set off a chain of events which significantly affected the outcome of World War II;

Whereas these and other ideals have forged a close bond between our 2 nations and their peoples;

Whereas March 25, 1998, marks the 177th anniversary of the beginning of the revolution which freed the Greek people from the Ottoman Empire; and

Whereas it is proper and desirable to celebrate with the Greek people and to reaffirm the democratic principles from which our 2 great nations were born: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates March 25, 1998, as "Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy"; and

(2) requests the President to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

NOTICES OF HEARINGS

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I would like to announce for information of the Senate and the public that an Executive Session of the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources will be held on Wednesday, February 4, 1998, 9:30 a.m., in SD-430 of the Senate Dirksen Building. The Committee will consider S. 1579, Rehabilitation Act amendments.

For further information, please call the committee, 202/224-5375.

NOTICE OF ADDITION TO HEARING AGENDA

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that the nomination of Margaret H. Greene to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the United States Enrichment Corporation will be considered at the hearing scheduled for Wednesday, February 4, 1998 at 9:30 a.m. in Room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office building in Washington, D.C.

For further information, please call Allyson Kennett at (202) 224-5070.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

THE CRISIS IN CHIAPAS

• Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, every day we read about bone-chilling atrocities around the world, in Algeria, Colombia, Sri Lanka, and even in Mexico.

I have always felt relations between the United States and our southern neighbor left a lot to be desired. On the one hand it is a relationship fraught with tensions fueled by illegal immigration, racism, drug trafficking, and a

long history of misunderstanding. Yet on the other hand it is a relationship based on friendship and respect, and of many shared interests.

A traveler to Mexico is immediately struck by the great disparity in the standards of living between our two countries. Millions of Mexico's people, especially members of indigenous groups, live in poverty. If they are lucky they own a piece of land, but rarely enough to support their families. They work from sunrise to nightfall bent over a hoe in the fields, or at some other backbreaking job. They sleep in a house built of scraps of wood and tin with a dirt floor, wash in a polluted stream, live in fear of the police, and do their best to care for half a dozen poorly clothed, hungry children who have little hope of anything better.

But there is another Mexico. It is one of modern factories, busy cities, a government that is evolving from one-party rule to democracy, and an economy that has been largely state controlled becoming increasingly market-based. It is managed by well-educated professionals who grapple daily with seemingly intractable problems.

Mexico is, above all, a land of contrasts, and the United States has an enormous stake in Mexico's development. Our economies are increasingly interdependent. Some of our most pressing problems are also Mexico's. No fence, no matter how impenetrable, along our border, will solve those problems, whether they are drugs, other types of crime, infectious diseases, polluted air and water. If we are to combat these threats successfully, we have to work together.

It is for that reason, Mr. President, that the recent violence in Mexico—in the states of Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca—should be of such concern to both our countries. Last July I spoke on this floor about the situation in Chiapas, and warned that unless the Mexican Government dealt effectively with the causes of the conflict there, renewed violence was likely. My warning, like similar warnings by many others, was ignored. Today I rise to speak again about Chiapas, and the tragic events there shortly before Christmas. But I want to emphasize that Chiapas is representative of a much larger problem in Mexico—as in so many other parts of the world—which can most succinctly be attributed to the widening disparity between the haves and have-nots.

The brief but dramatic Zapatista uprising in 1994 was the result of centuries of discrimination and mistreatment of indigenous people in Chiapas, a situation largely unknown outside Mexico's borders. That violent outburst shook the nation, and led to talks between the Zapatistas and Mexican authorities which sought to address the underlying causes of the unrest. Those negotiations resulted in the San Andres Accords, but the Mexican Government walked away from that agreement apparently concluding that it was too favorable to the Zapatistas.

Whatever hope there was that those negotiations would lead to profound changes in Chiapas had been virtually extinguished by the end of last year. The Mexican Government's attention was focused elsewhere, mostly on the national elections which to its credit were the most free and fair in Mexico's history.

Meanwhile, Chiapas has remained in an undeclared state of war between the Zapatistas and their sympathizers, and anti-Zapatista paramilitary groups who have been encouraged and supported by local and state authorities. Tens of thousands of Mexican soldiers have also been sent to Chiapas, where they have contributed to the tensions and they have apparently stood by as local officials have armed the paramilitary groups. Caught in the middle are the people of Chiapas.

Three days before Christmas, Chiapas again exploded in violence. In the village of Acteal, 45 unarmed Indian men, women and children were slaughtered in cold blood by paramilitary forces reportedly with the support of government authorities. Two weeks later, Mexican police fired on a crowd in the town of Ocosingo that was protesting the December 22nd massacre, killing a woman and wounding her 3 year-old daughter and a 17 year-old boy.

Mr. President, who but the most hate-filled people would carry out such a barbaric deed? The fact that government officials are reputed to have had a role in the slaughter is particularly outrageous. But it should not surprise anyone who knows the history and has followed events in Chiapas. In fact, in the months leading up to the Acteal massacre human rights groups issued report after report describing acts of provocation and violence by paramilitary groups and Mexican soldiers. Members of Congress sent letters of concern to President Zedillo. Yet these reports and letters did not even receive a response. Chiapas was a powder-keg waiting to explode even before the Zapatistas first emerged on the scene in support of indigenous concerns about discrimination, land rights and the lack of social services. What happened in Acteal is only the latest example, albeit a particularly atrocious one, of the kind of brutality that is a fact of daily life for many indigenous people in Chiapas.

Since then, the Mexican Government has taken several encouraging steps. A federal investigation is ongoing. At least 40 persons suspected of committing the murders have been arrested. State and local officials who allegedly instigated the attack, and who later tried to cover it up, have been arrested or removed from office. The Minister of the Interior has been replaced. The Government of the State of Chiapas freed several hundred prisoners, in an attempt to restart the peace talks. These are important steps. Had the government taken the advice of so

many people years ago and treated this situation with the sensitivity and urgency it deserved, this entire debacle might have been avoided and many people might be alive today.

The situation in Chiapas remains tense. While the recent violence seems to be primarily a result of local and state officials taking the law into their own hands and unpardonable passivity on the part of federal authorities, I also continue to receive reports of provocative acts by Mexican soldiers. It is a situation the United States cannot ignore, both because Mexico's political and economic stability are of great importance to us, and because we have trained and supplied Mexico's security forces for many years. That training and equipment has been provided exclusively to combat the drug trade, but has it always been used for that purpose? Or have US-trained police or soldiers, armed with US-made weapons, also been involved in counter-insurgency operations? Were any of the weapons used by the assailants in Acteal and Ocosingo obtained from the United States—either through the anti-drug assistance program or through commercial sales licensed by the US Government?

These are not accusations, they are only questions. But they need answers. So far, I am not aware of any evidence that US equipment was used in the Acteal or Ocosingo killings. I hope there is none. It would be totally contrary to the understandings between the Congress and the administration, and between the United States Government and Mexican Government, if our assistance were misused in this way.

Two years ago I wrote an amendment, which was enacted into law and re-enacted last year, which has become known as the Leahy Human Rights Law. It is quite simple. It says that if the Secretary of State has "credible evidence" that a unit of a security force of a foreign country has committed gross violations of human rights, then we cannot provide assistance to that unit unless the foreign government is taking "effective measures" to bring the responsible individuals to justice.

Accordingly, I have posed my questions in a letter to our Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Jeffrey Davidow, who I respect and who may become our next Ambassador to Mexico. I have, in that letter, also asked for additional information, such as what assistance we have provided to Mexico's security forces, and which units of those security forces have received our assistance. I have urged the administration to carefully review the evidence to determine if the recent events in Acteal and Ocosingo would trigger the Leahy Law cut-off of assistance.

I would also urge the administration to examine whether any US weapons, helicopters or other military aircraft which were licensed for sale to Mexico have been used by paramilitary or gov-

ernment security forces in counter-insurgency operations in Chiapas. I further urge the administration not to grant any license applications of this kind until we have a full accounting of these recent incidents.

Mr. President, Chiapas is not unique. There are countless examples around the world of indigenous groups that are suffering from government neglect and violence. It should also be emphasized that the crisis in Chiapas is a Mexican problem that only the Mexican people can solve. But as their northern neighbor with a long history that links us culturally, politically, and economically as well as geographically, we have, as I have said, many shared interests. And one of those interests is to ensure that human rights are not violated and that the United States is not implicated in those violations.

President Zedillo has said the investigation of the violence in Chiapas will be carried through to its conclusion. I hope that includes not simply the Acteal and Ocosingo killings, but the activities of paramilitary groups throughout the region. The government also needs to address the plight of the thousands of indigenous people in Chiapas who have fled their homes to escape the paramilitary groups and are living in makeshift camps. They are suffering from acute shortages of drinking water, food and shelter. It is a miserable situation and the sooner they can safely return to their homes the better.

President Zedillo has also said that he wants to resume negotiations with the Zapatistas. I know this has the support of the US Government. What is lacking, I am afraid, is a clearly defined strategy, or road map, for resolving this conflict. Unless both sides have confidence that such a strategy can lead to an acceptable resolution, it will be only a matter of time before another violent outburst, and more needless deaths.●

DOLLARS TO THE CLASSROOM ACT

● Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I am pleased to join with my good friend from Arkansas, Senator TIM HUTCHINSON, in introducing the "Dollars to the Classroom Act". This is a critically important piece of education legislation, of which I am honored to be an original cosponsor.

The "Dollars to the Classroom Act" will send funds supporting roughly thirty one K-12 education programs in a block grant to states, with the requirement that 95 percent of these funds go to local schools. This is a very simple concept. We should demand that 95 percent of the Federal money we spend on elementary and secondary education must be spent in the classrooms of our local schools. That's it.

Let me be clear about one thing. This legislation does not reduce the funding for the schools. Rather, it makes sure that the tax monies our citizens give

for education actually makes it to the classroom.

Mr. President, I served as a public school teacher. My wife served as a public school teacher. And let me say this, there is nothing more special, than the moment when a young student and a teacher connect in the classroom. Unfortunately, there exists a complex, confusing, paperwork driven federal system that too often hinders rather than helps the students. Mr. President, this bill provides the badly needed resources to not only enhance these magic moments between students and teachers but it also guarantees that every single student and every single teacher will have the resources needed to make this all possible.

Mr. President, this is how the bill works. Instead of sending the education dollars through the usual bureaucratic gauntlet—paying the bureaucrats at the Department of Education and the state education establishments—individual tax dollars would go directly to the states in a block grant administered by the Governor. Local school districts, parents, teachers, and local school officials could then use those funds for education priorities they think are most important. Mr. President, this will allow parents and local education officials to decide how to spend these dollars. They would decide their schools' priorities and, most importantly, how best to allocate these funds.

There is another important reason for this legislation. Federal education programs and their grant processes have become so burdensome many local schools are not even applying for funds. Often our local schools and school officials are forced to spend a significant amount of their Federal education tax dollars just to apply for these funds.

Let me give you an example. The Mobile County Public Schools system, my home county in Alabama, which contains 65,443 students in grades K-12 was forced, on two different occasions, to hire grant writers at \$50,000 a year just to help the school system apply for these federal grants. These grant writers were in addition to the many administrators, principals and teachers who are forced to dedicate their valuable time to filling out the paperwork associated with applying for these grants instead of educating the students of Mobile County.

And there are countless other examples. The state of Ohio calculated in 1990 that over 50 percent of its paperwork burden was related to federal education programs, even though only 5 percent of its education revenues came from federal sources.

A recent audit of the New York City public schools found that only 43% of their local education budget reaches the classrooms.

A 1996 Heritage Foundation study of federal spending on elementary and secondary education found that only 85