

Since the Nation's founding, over a million Jews from throughout the world have sought refuge in Israel. Israel has, over the last 50 years, rebuilt a nation, maintained a pluralist democracy, the only one in the Middle East, and based that democracy on freedoms and the rule of law. It has developed a thriving economy and a society, transforming the desert into a land of milk and honey.

On this 50th anniversary we have a chance to reflect on the courage and leadership of President Harry Truman who, against the advice of experts in the State Department, et cetera, stood with the people of Israel and recognized their declaration of independence.

Over the last 50 years, governments of the United States, both Democrat and Republican, have supported the people and the State of Israel. Likewise, governments of Israel, Likud and Labor, have supported the people and the government of the United States. We have a friendship that transcends party; and whichever policies may rule the day in Jerusalem or here in the United States, that bond stands.

We should note that Jerusalem has been the eternal and indivisible capital of Israel, both 3,000 years ago and for the last 50 years. The United States Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act calling for the American Embassy to Israel to be moved to Jerusalem in 1999. What better way for us to celebrate the rebirth of the State of Israel than for the State Department to announce today that they will abide by, rather than seek waivers from, the Jerusalem Embassy Act.

But because the State Department may decide to try to waive that act, I will be introducing, hopefully with substantial support, a bill that states to the Department of State that, before they open a new embassy in another formerly divided city, Berlin, they must open at least a temporary embassy, and, hopefully, a permanent embassy, in the indivisible and eternal capital of Israel: Jerusalem.

I rise today to congratulate the people of Israel on their 50th anniversary of the new State, and I rise today to say that when it comes to America's embassy to Israel: next year in Jerusalem.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MAIL FRAUD AND TELEMARKETING SCAMS TARGETING SENIOR CITIZENS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call my colleagues' attention to a serious crime being perpetrated against some of our most vulnerable citizens: mail fraud and telemarketing scams targeting senior citizens. In my own district, one gentleman pleaded with me, "The mail is still coming. I don't have the money to send."

Some companies peddling questionable products or promoting unwinnable contests make a living out of targeting senior citizens. It is estimated that telemarketing fraud robs Americans of at least \$40 billion a year.

The actual number may be much higher, as telemarketing fraud has always been a part of our Nation's underground economy. Not all losses have been clearly documented. Some consumers are too embarrassed to report that they have been defrauded or they do not recognize the extent of the fraud that has been perpetrated upon them.

Mr. Speaker, I held a meeting on this issue in my district recently; and I was appalled at the number of people in the audience who came up to me after a discussion led by members of the FBI, led by members of the Post Office, the Postal Inspector Section, after the recitation of statistics and perspective by myself, and yet asked me afterwards if I could give them my personal assistance in contacting some of the fraudulent companies to see if it was not possible for them to perhaps receive their prizes or be acknowledged for the funds that they had been sending.

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Mr. Speaker, I can assure my colleagues that this is a heart-wrenching situation. It is taking place all over the country, and it prompts me to rise today to extend these remarks to my colleague and to the other Members.

Older Americans, Mr. Speaker, are the target of many fraudulent telemarketers because they are generally at home more often than younger persons, they may be more trusting. That is certainly the case with those that I spoke with recently in Honolulu, Mr. Speaker, and may look upon a smooth-talking telemarketer as a trusted friend rather than someone preying upon their life savings. These fraudulent activities are a disgrace, and we should do all we can to stop them.

On April 8, 1998, as I indicated, I sponsored a mail and telemarketing fraud briefing for senior citizens in my district in Honolulu, Hawaii. This education national briefing was designed to give vulnerable senior citizens a fighting chance against an industry designed to victimize them.

John Gillis, a supervisory special agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Honolulu, and Byron Dare, a postal inspector for the United States Postal Service in Honolulu, presented testimony on their agencies' efforts to combat mail and telemarketing fraud and educated seniors on how to avoid becoming victims of such schemes.

Mr. Speaker, I most sincerely urge my colleague and other Members to take advantage of FBI offices in our districts, as well as postal service inspectors in our district, to hold similar briefings for senior citizens in our areas. Senior citizens need to be protected from these scam artists, and one of the best ways to do this is educate them on how fraudulent information is presented.

I am preparing legislation on this issue. I am already a cosponsor of the Protection against Scams on Seniors Act, H.R. 3134. This bill authorizes the Administration on Aging to conduct an outreach program to educate seniors on telemarketing fraud. I plan to continue my outreach efforts to reach Hawaii's elderly population from falling prey to these unscrupulous mail and telemarketers.

I also support the efforts of Federal agencies and private organizations who have been actively involved in this issue. The American Association of Retired Persons, the AARP, has created a profile of telemarketing and mail fraud victims. The profile shows the average victim is not only an older American, but relatively affluent, well-educated, well-informed, and socially active in his or her community.

AARP's research indicates that the critical difference between victims and nonvictims is their ability to recognize that telemarketing fraud is a crime. Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that. The key here, the critical difference between being a victim and a nonvictim is their ability to recognize that telemarketing fraud is a crime.

Many people find themselves the victim of fraud and do not recognize that it is, in fact, criminal activity, and there is something they can do about it. AARP has produced educational materials in English and Spanish. If seniors would contact the AARP in their area, they will be happy to provide them with materials, telephone numbers, et cetera, which will aid them.

The AARP has produced educational materials in English and Spanish that inform recipients of telemarketing calls about ways to distinguish between legitimate and fraudulent calls; how to respond safely to calls without becoming a victim; and how to report suspicious calls. I am making sure this material is available in all the senior centers in Honolulu.

In Hawaii, state laws on telemarketing require specific disclosures by the telemarketer regarding prize and gift promotions. Our state law also provides consumers with a right to sue for damages and obtain relief on his or her own initiative, aside from any state action. Maximum penalties for a violation of Hawaii's telemarketing laws are set at \$10,000.

Uncovering these schemes, returning money owed to its victims, and educating seniors are worthwhile efforts I will continue to pursue. I am happy to have the support and knowledge of many organizations who also promote these goals. I will continue to educate senior citizens in my district of this \$40 billion rip-off. I hope my fellow Members of Congress will do the same. With a concerted effort, we can protect our senior citizens and put mail and telemarketing con-artists out of business.