

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

SPEECH OF

**HON. MICHAEL F. DOYLE**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 29, 1998*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4194) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes:

Mr. DOYLE. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the brownfields redevelopment initiative and the Frelinghuysen-Stokes-DeGette amendment which seeks to eliminate the bill's restrictions on the use of EPA funds for brownfields cleanups. The bill prohibits brownfields funds from being used by localities to set up a revolving loan fund program. In addition, the bill also prohibits brownfields funds from being used for research, technical assistance, education and community outreach.

As a lifelong resident of Pittsburgh, I have seen our region go through many changes. When I was growing up, we were a thriving industrial center. There were plenty of good jobs to be had. These jobs weren't glamorous, but they paid well and families in the region knew there was always going to be an opportunity for their children to earn a good living in the area.

About the time I went to college in the early and mid-70's, the economic dynamics began to change. The global competitiveness of U.S. heavy industry began to fade. Our domestic economic focus began to shift from manufacturing to the service industry. This meant hard times for older industrial areas in Pittsburgh. As a result, many of these industrial sites like Homestead, McKeesport, and Dusquene lie abandoned or under used.

I am proud of the brownfields initiative, as it provides much-needed economic stimulus without erecting a massive government program. Instead the program encourages public-private partnerships that can work efficiently to revitalize our economy. We need to make sure that the federal government is working with these private partnerships, not against it.

In my state, there are several programs that are designed to foster private-public partnerships and help turn brownfields into viable properties. For example the Industrial Sites Reuse Program and Infrastructure Development Program are both financing programs that are targeted to brownfields sites, in which Pennsylvania has their fair share.

In fact, many local volunteers, service organizations and non-profit groups in conjunction with community leaders in Pennsylvania have begun to volunteer their time and have started cleaning up these sites. In addition, local governments are working with private companies in offering them incentives, like tax credits, in order for them to move into these reclaimed brownfields. In Pennsylvania, these programs are gaining momentum and that is why it is crucial that we continue to fund this viable program.

We have one of the most important economic development tools in the brownfields program. The program authorizes money to be used for outreach, clean up, technical assistance and research that will stimulate and return these sites for industrial use. Once these sites are cleaned up, new businesses looking to relocate in our region will find it much more feasible and attractive.

As some of my colleagues will recall, in the early version of H.R. 2014, the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, there was no language dealing with brownfields redevelopment nor expanding the number of Empowerment Zones. So I decided to lead a bipartisan effort to rally for this language to be inserted in the final version of H.R. 2014. Thanks to our hard work the brownfields funding and the Empowerment Zone program were expanded and now more communities can take advantage of these two programs.

A vote against the Frelinghuysen-Stokes-DeGette Amendment will discourage these partnerships and send our communities the wrong message. A vote for this Amendment will ensure our communities that the federal government is committed to reclaiming and utilizing our abandoned industrial sites. I urge my colleagues to vote yes on the Frelinghuysen-Stokes-DeGette Amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

SPEECH OF

**HON. CARLOS A. ROMERO-BARCELÓ**

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 29, 1998*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4194) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes:

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Chairman, today, the House of Representatives is considering the VA-HUD appropriations bill. An amendment was presented—and defeated—on the floor of the House that would have prevented the Veterans Administration from implementing and administering the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation System, commonly known as VERA.

I opposed this amendment because the American veterans in Puerto Rico deserve to be treated fairly and equitably. Our Nation has a moral obligation to fulfill our promises to the men and women who have patriotically defended our democracy and the very values that enable us to enjoy our freedom, liberties and rights. Puerto Rico already has one of the largest veterans populations nationwide. In the past we have been shortchanged in the allocation of resources; a failure that has discriminated against the very men and women who deserve our utmost respect.

As Congress continues to cut funding for veterans programs, we must look to the best

way to maximize the available resources so that all veterans nationwide are treated equally and fairly. This is what VERA does. This innovative VA program provides a more efficient and effective allocation of resources that considers workload and demand, promotes a better labor-patient mix and supports research and education funding per patient. The end result is a more equitable distribution of much needed funds that takes into account population shifts in the provision of quality health care to our Nation's veterans.

I salute my colleagues in the House of Representatives for considering the needs of American veterans and in particular their support for the veterans in Puerto Rico. It is our responsibility and duty to provide our veterans the quality care they have so valiantly earned in a prompt, respectful and courteous manner. We need to keep our promises.

A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE ON A VISIT TO ALGERIA AND EGYPT

**HON. FRANK R. WOLF**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 30, 1998*

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, over the July recess, I traveled to Algeria and Egypt on official business to learn about the human rights problems in both countries.

In Algeria, I met with government officials, parliamentary leaders and representatives of non-government organizations. I also had the opportunity to visit the sites of a recent massacre to talk with individuals who lost loved ones to terrorism. Encouraging political reform, pluralism, rule of law and democracy may help bring an end to the conflict.

In Egypt, I met with government officials, Coptic Christians and others to discuss human rights abuses and the problems facing Christians living in Egypt.

I submit here the report of my trip to share with our colleagues.

REPORT OF A VISIT TO ALGERIA AND EGYPT: A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

(This report provides details of my trip to northern Africa during the period July 5-10, 1998. This visit included a two-day stop in Algiers (July 6-8) followed by a two-day visit to Cairo (July 8-10). The relatively short traveling time between Algiers and Cairo afforded the opportunity for back-to-back visits. Algeria is rampant with terrorism which is largely unreported to the outside world. Nearby Cairo afforded the opportunity to meet with and see in their homeland Coptic Christians and to develop a broader perspective of human rights conditions there.)

I have, for several years, followed events in Algeria and have a growing concern about the terrible toll on human life that ongoing, unabated terrorism and the government's response to it are having in this violent land.

Algeria has deep roots in history. Saint Augustine (354-430), one of the greatest leaders of the early Christian Church and the author of Confessions, one of the first great autobiographies, was born in the city of Tagaste, near what is now Constantine, in the northeast corner of Algeria.

In 1815, a U.S. Naval Squadron under Captain Stephen Decatur attacked Algiers and forced its governor to sign a treaty banning piracy against American ships. Continuing piracy on European shipping led ultimately

to the French invasion of Algiers in 1830 and the occupation of Algeria which continued for more than 130 years until 1962.

During eight years of intense fighting with the French immediately before winning independence in 1962, Algeria paid a terrible price. It has been said that one million people were killed and two million lost their homes. An independent nation emerged with no infrastructure and no skilled labor force to keep the country running. Various experiments in governance followed. But it wasn't until the collapse of oil prices in the late 1980s on which Algeria's economy was largely based and the disappearance of Soviet influence and support that a movement toward democracy and a free-market economy took shape.

Beginning in 1989, legitimate opposition to the government in power emerged under a new constitution. Municipal elections were held in 1992 and the opposition Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) won a large majority. The military quickly intervened, canceled the elections, imposed a state of emergency and outlawed the FIS. The government justified its actions on two fronts: the need to prevent the FIS from overthrowing the government and imposing an Islamic state, and the existence of the FIS contravened a law on political parties stipulating that no party can be based upon religion.

The move toward democracy was put on hold. Leaders and members of FIS were targeted, imprisoned and punished by the government. In response, terrorist bands began to form and violence and killing in Algeria escalated. These bands continue to wreak fear and death on the country and its people. Several sources said that some of these Algerian terrorists were trained to fight in Afghanistan against the Soviet army and were called Mujahideen. As many as 70,000 people have been killed by terrorists since 1992. Many more have been injured and the toll continues to grow. Ten people were killed and 21 were injured in a terrorist bombing in Algiers the day we departed on July 8.

While in Algeria, we visited the tiny villages of Sidi Hamed and Sidi Rais near the town of Blida less than an hour's drive from Algiers. These villages are the sites of recent terrorist acts and massacres. Late on the night of January 10, 1998, terrorists attacked residents of Sid Hamed and killed 103 men, women and children and wounded many more. We visited a home at the center of the massacre and spoke with the owner who lost his wife and family in the raiding and burning that took place. We met with young children who lost parents and family to that night's terrorist attack. We visited a cemetery with 103 fresh graves.

The fear that was evident in Sidi Hamed was shared by virtually all the Algerians we met. The 2,000 to 4,000 terrorists estimated to be active in Algeria are holding hostage the entire country, its people and, to a significant degree, future progress and development.

Algerians have much on which to base this fear. Terrorist groups have threatened to "slash the throats of all apostates and their allies." They have certainly made good on these threats. On May 14, 1997, for example, terrorists in the town of Douar Daoud slaughtered more than 30 residents including two infants, 15 other children and seven women. On April 16, 1997, bodies of four young girls were found outside the village of Chaib Mohammed. They had been raped before their throats were slit. During this same period, 18 people, mostly young men, were shot or hacked to death at a phony roadblock near Saida. The largest massacre took place in Sidi Rias on August 28, 1987, when up to 300 people, many of them women and children and even small babies were killed.

About 100 more were injured. This pattern of terrorism, brutality and violence continues today.

We met with a number of Algerian government officials including the prime minister, a regional governor, the speaker of the lower house and senior members of the upper body of parliament, the foreign minister, representatives of most of the major political parties and factions. We also met with representatives of human rights and terrorism watch organizations, with representatives of the Algerian press, business, student and women's groups and with a number of terrorist victims who were personally injured and/or who lost close family members.

By most accounts, incidents of terrorism have measurably declined since about 1994-95. Still, there is more than enough terrorism to instill in the people an elevated level of fear, caution and reluctance to venture out, especially after dark. Terrorists have targeted specific groups, among them members of the press, Westerners, police and government officials and other high-profile individuals. Sometimes, fake roadblocks are established by terrorists dressed as police or army members and passersby are stopped and killed. This is most prevalent in the countryside away from Algiers.

The government and the army have been strongly criticized on two fronts. The first is for not responding quickly enough or with sufficient force to combat incidents of ongoing terrorism. While some of this criticism is justified, it is noted that Algeria has an armed force of 125,000 or less. Subtracting those in the navy and air force and the poorly equipped and trained conscripts, there are only about 25,000 regular soldiers in a country whose size approximates the United States east of the Mississippi River. Only about half of this number is mobilized at any time. It is also noteworthy that the army has been trained by and patterned after the former Soviet military, which is not known for rapid response to crises.

Criticism has also been leveled at the government for "extra-judicial" actions taken in response to terrorism or under circumstances attributed to terrorism. Frequent occasions were mentioned when government actions outside the rule of law occur. Reports have been made of several hundred apprehensions of individuals by government and police forces where the person taken was never again heard from and family members cannot learn what happened from the government.

The Algerian government has been urged to become more "transparent" in its efforts to combat terrorism and to discipline police and military forces to work within the rule of law. Progress in this area is slow and perhaps human rights training of military units should be provided.

Unemployment is high (above 20 percent) and there is a critical shortage of sufficient housing. Improvement in these areas could reduce the numbers of young people willing to turn to terrorism. Median age of the 30 million Algerian population is 15 years. There is also the age group hardest hit by high unemployment. Privatization of government-run industries (Air Algérie, the primary airline serving Algeria, is an example) would help. Many foreign investors are doubtless reluctant to move into Algeria with the level of terrorism that exists. Efforts to drive down the killings, bombings and other acts of terror would do the most to help.

The United States is presently Algeria's most important trading partner with 1998 exports to the U.S. projected to be \$2.2 billion (mostly hydrocarbon/petroleum industry). Imports from the U.S. in 1998 are predicted to be \$920 million. U.S. trade with Algeria is

expected to continue to increase. There are tremendous business opportunities there.

There is a lack of qualified outside observers to provide commentary and conscience to heavy-handed government activities in Algeria. The permanent presence of ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), Amnesty International, and other human rights watch organizations would be helpful in curbing extra-legal behavior and in certifying legitimate forceful response as conditions improve. At a minimum, observers should be allowed to visit whenever they want and the government should cooperate with them.

The Algerian Parliament has recently passed legislation that imposes Arabic as the sole official language. This action resulted in strong protest by Berbers, who make up about 30 percent of Algeria's population. Algeria has not yet found the key to democratically balancing the legitimate concerns and interests of all its minority and citizens groups.

Still, with all the fear, terrorism and sometimes massacre that are part of each day, the Algerian people are going about their daily life, working, attending school and making a home as best they can with determination and resilience as they try to change their country. We were told that Algerian women strongly influence this balanced daily lifestyle.

From my observations while in Algeria, I offer the following recommendations:

1. Terrorism and violence taking place in Algeria should be condemned in the strongest terms by the U.S. and by all nations.

2. The government should be encouraged to invite ICRC, Amnesty International and other human rights organizations to Algeria on a permanent basis.

3. Efforts to increase international press coverage and ensure uncensored national press should be encouraged.

4. The U.S. should consider providing human rights training to Algerian military and police.

5. Ongoing labor training provided by the AFL-CIO to help union leaders cope with events as the economy is privatized should continue and perhaps increase.

6. Parliamentary exchange programs should be developed and encouraged to assist Algerian progress toward democracy. Exchange programs in other areas such as business, academia, government, medical and others should also be encouraged and supported.

7. Assistance to and education about the criminal justice system are required to strengthen safeguards and ensure that human rights are protected.

8. More housing must be constructed and help to develop the private ownership of homes is required. Organizations such as Fannie May can provide advice and information to assist in this effort.

In conclusion, I would add the comment that U.S. interests are extremely well served by our ambassador, Cameron R. Hume, and his able embassy staff who ensure we are effectively represented under always trying and sometimes dangerous conditions. They do an outstanding job and America is fortunate to have them there.

#### VISIT TO CAIRO

I also visited Cairo for about two days during this trip. I met with President Mubarak and others in the government, members of the Coptic Christian community, Muslims and representatives of various human rights action and assistance groups. I was not able to visit the upper Nile where many problems regarding Coptic Christians have been reported. This is an area I would like to visit in a future trip.

Areas of human rights and religious tolerance are slowly progressing although much more could be done. About one fourth of Egypt's 65 million population lives in Cairo and huge numbers live in abject poverty. We visited one of five "garbage cities" in Cairo. These are huge garbage dumps where hordes of the poorest live and eke out an existence by sorting, selling and using garbage under indescribably horrific conditions.

Under Egyptian law, a church cannot be built without approval of the president. Until recently, this restriction also applied to existing churches being allowed to make even the most minor repairs. Although the law remains unchanged, authority to allow repairs has now been delegated to the presidentially appointed governors. It is uncertain how successful this new delegation of authority will be.

President Mubarak said that the concept of discriminating against people is not the policy of Egypt. Many Copts with whom I spoke agreed that there is little if any systematic government persecution. Still, in the course of daily life, with virtually no important government or other positions filled by Coptic Christians, interpretation of laws and regulations, judgments between Copts and other Egyptians, the meting out of routine rulings and the normal conduct of business imposes hardships and unfairness on Copts. Clearly, there are difficulties being faced by Coptic Christians. Many would agree with the statement in an Australian report on Copts in Egypt that "although the government of Egypt would like to believe that keeping silent about the issues will make them go away, it's clear the government could do more to insure the Coptic minority is treated equally."

I would also like to thank the staff at the American Embassy and particularly Ms. Molly Phee who accompanied us during our stay in Cairo. Our Foreign Service corps does an exceptional job under trying and demanding conditions.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

SPEECH OF

**HON. BARBARA B. KENNELLY**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 29, 1998*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4194) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes:

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the Hilleary Amendment which would cut critical funding for the Housing Opportunities for People with Aids program. While I certainly understand the need to support our veterans, this amendment looks to cut funding from the wrong place. It would result in an approximately ten percent cut in a program that makes housing available to the over 100,000 veterans living with AIDS. The HOPWA program is the only federal housing program designed to address the housing crisis of the AIDS epidemic and it pro-

vides vital assistance to 52,000 individuals in 29 states. HOPWA is cost effective and provides needed care and housing for individuals who would otherwise be without a place to live.

Even with last year's increase in funding, Connecticut and the Hartford and New Haven areas actually saw a decrease of \$480,000 in funding because new areas became eligible for funds. A further cut in funding will make precious HOPWA dollars even more scarce particularly since seven new jurisdictions are expected to qualify for funds in fiscal year 1999.

Connecticut is a leader in AIDS housing, and at one time boasted the only statewide AIDS residence coalition in the nation. But even in a state that runs an effective AIDS housing program, the need for funding is great. In 1997, as many as 400 requests for housing in Connecticut were denied solely on the basis of the lack of space. The alternative for many of those denied housing is homelessness, something none of us should feel comfortable with.

Finally, let me talk about the cost of AIDS housing. The average cost of an acute care hospital bed for an AIDS patient is \$1,085 per day, while the cost of HOPWA community housing is far cheaper at a cost of only between \$55 to \$110 a day. In fact, HOPWA programs save an estimated \$47,000 per person per year on emergency medical expenses. The HOPWA program is cost-effective, while providing quality care for people living with AIDS.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment, and to support funding for this important housing program.

IN HONOR OF THE AMERICAN GI FORUM OF THE UNITED STATES

**HON. THOMAS M. DAVIS**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 30, 1998*

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the American GI Forum of the United States, a truly outstanding organization that has served our Nation's veterans for fifty years. They are dedicated to addressing critical issues affecting veterans, with special emphasis on Hispanic American veterans and their families.

Hispanic Americans have always been willing to fight for America's freedom and to defend our peace. They know what it means to wear the uniform of our country and to be willing to bear any sacrifice to keep America free. The American GI Forum has helped to resolve problems of discrimination or inequality endured by Hispanic American veterans.

The American GI Forum is a national veterans family organization and was founded on March 26, 1948, in Corpus Christi, Texas by the late Dr. Hector P. Garcia, a medical doctor who was a veteran of World War II, and other Hispanic American veterans.

The American GI Forum has more than 500 chapters in the United States and Puerto Rico. Although the Forum is predominantly Hispanic, it is a fully interracial organization. The American GI Forum is made up of three separate groups—the Veterans Forum, the Women's Forum, and the Youth Forum.

The American GI Forum is the founding organization of the American GI Forum Hispanic Educational Foundation (HEF), a national educational and scholarship program. It was also the founding organization of the American GI Forum National Veterans Outreach Program, Inc. (NVOP), which is the Nation's premier nonprofit community based service provider of employment and training, economic development, housing, and social service programs.

Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues join me in saluting the members of the American GI Forum. Their hard work and dedication for America's veterans have set an example for all of us, I congratulate the American GI Forum on their fiftieth anniversary and I wish them continued success in all their future endeavors.

1998 UNITED STATES SINGLES AND PAIRS LAWN BOWLS CHAMPIONSHIPS

**HON. JIM McDERMOTT**

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 30, 1998*

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring your attention to the 1998 United States Singles and Pairs Lawn Bowls Championship, sponsored by The American Lawn Bowling Association and The American Women's Lawn Bowls Association (ALBA/AWLBA), which will be held in Seattle, Washington, August 17–August 21, 1998.

The sport of lawn bowls, also known as bowling on the green, has been played throughout Europe in various forms since it was introduced by soldiers of the Roman empire. Similar to the games of bocce ball and curling, it was one of the first sports introduced to the New World. Records show that Williamsburg, Virginia had a bowling green as early as 1632, and that another green was built in 1670 at what is now Bowling Green, Virginia. The American Lawn Bowls Association, one of the oldest national sports federations in our country, was founded in 1915, and since 1918 has consistently sponsored a national championship. During the 1930's, the Works Progress Administration built greens at a number of public parks across the country, and the sport experienced a small boom. It declined after World War II, but began to rebound in the mid-1970's, and has gained considerable popularity in California and in areas of Florida, particularly around St. Petersburg.

Although lawn bowls has been thought of as a pastime primarily enjoyed by senior citizens, the game is beginning to attract more young players as a competitive sport and leisure activity. Over eight thousand people, some over 70 years old, are affiliated with ALBA/AWLBA, and compete in numerous lawn bowl clubs in every region of the country. ALBA/AWLBA is committed to promoting the benefits associated with the sport in hopes of expanding participation in lawn bowling. Studies have shown that for a variety of reasons, Americans young and old, are becoming more sedentary. Many health problems can be avoided by the inclusion of a regular regimen of exercise. The inclusion of a physical activity such as the game of lawn bowls, is essential for the maintenance of good health and mental spirits.

In my district, the 7th Congressional District of Washington, the Jefferson Park Lawn Bowls