

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, and I will not object, but under my reservation I would be pleased to allow the chairman of the Committee on House Administration, the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS), the opportunity to explain the resolution.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HOYER. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

As was indicated, this is the use of the rotunda for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of NATO, and it is an especially important fiftieth anniversary because of the beginning of the expansion of NATO across what we used to know historically as the Iron Curtain.

□ 1615

It is, in fact, probably the best evidence we have seen of the reunification of Europe with the admission of the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary and the Czech Republic.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, further reserving the right to object, I of course agree with the characterization of this resolution and would add, under my reservation, my own remarks that it is certainly appropriate that this House recognize and allow the recognition of NATO in the Rotunda.

NATO is one of the, perhaps, if not the most successful alliance in the history of the world in terms of maintaining and keeping peace. There is certainly none that excel it. And I am pleased to join with the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) in the support of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, but I will not object, I welcome this measure. Next week we will be privileged to host in Washington the 50th anniversary of our North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The Congress is honored to be able to play a part in these festivities.

The resolution will enable us to utilize the Rotunda to hold an appropriate ceremony in connection with this very important 50th anniversary commemoration. I urge my colleagues to support the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the concurrent resolution, as follows:

H. CON. RES. 81

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring). That the rotunda of the

United States Capitol is authorized to be used on April 23, 1999, for a ceremony in honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and welcoming the three newest members of NATO, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Hungary, and the Czech Republic, into NATO. Physical preparations for the ceremony shall be carried out in accordance with such conditions as the Architect of the Capitol may prescribe.

The concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNIZING AND HONORING CREWMEMBERS OF U.S.S. "ALABAMA" AND U.S.S. ALABAMA CREWMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Mr. CALLAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be discharged from further consideration of the resolution (H. Res. 123) recognizing and honoring the crewmembers of the U.S.S. *Alabama* (BB-60) and the U.S.S. *Alabama* Crewmen's Association, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Alabama?

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 123

Whereas the U.S.S. ALABAMA (BB-60) was a South Dakota class battleship that served first in the North Atlantic and then in the Pacific Fleet during World War II;

Whereas in the course of World War II, the crewmembers of the U.S.S. ALABAMA directly shot down 22 enemy aircraft;

Whereas the crewmembers of the U.S.S. ALABAMA earned the American Service Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with 9 Battle Stars, the Philippine Republic Presidential Unit Citation, the Philippine Liberation Ribbon, the World War II Victory Medal, and the Navy Occupation Service Medal;

Whereas the crewmembers of the U.S.S. ALABAMA were a courageous group, braving both the Arctic chill and the Pacific heat to help defend the Nation against enemy oppression;

Whereas many former crewmembers of the U.S.S. ALABAMA belong to the U.S.S. ALABAMA Crewmen's Association;

Whereas each year former crewmembers participate in an annual reunion to celebrate their shared service, memories, and friendship; and

Whereas more than 100 former crewmembers, along with family and friends, are expected to participate in the next reunion, which will be held from April 15 to 18, 1999, aboard the U.S.S. ALABAMA at Battleship Memorial Park in Mobile, Alabama: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives recognizes and honors the crewmembers of the U.S.S. ALABAMA (BB-60) and the U.S.S. ALABAMA Crewmen's Association for their valuable contributions to victory and peace in World War II and to the security and prosperity of the Nation.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT GOVERNMENT OF FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA AND PRESIDENT MILOSEVIC RELEASE UNITED STATES SERVICEMEN AND ABIDE BY GENEVA CONVENTION

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on International Relations and the Committee on Armed Services be discharged from further consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 83) expressing the sense of the Congress that the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its President Slobodan Milosevic release the three illegally detained United States servicemen and abide by the Geneva Convention protocols regarding the treatment of both prisoners of war and innocent civilians, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, and I will not object, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) for an explanation of the concurrent resolution.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution expresses the sense of the Congress that the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its President, Slobodan Milosevic, should release the three U.S. servicemen now in his custody. This certainly is an issue of the highest national concern, and our thoughts and prayers are with these brave individuals and their families.

I want to commend the gentleman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO) for bringing this measure forward at this time. This resolution duly states that the Yugoslav authorities are responsible under the Geneva Convention for the treatment of Staff Sergeant Christopher Stone of Smith's Creek, Michigan; Staff Sergeant Andrew A. Ramirez of Los Angeles, California; and Specialist Steven M. Gonzales of Huntsville, Texas.

Frankly, it is outrageous that Milosevic and his henchmen are toying with these soldiers, exploiting them for their own purposes and at the same time refusing to honor their commitment under the Geneva Convention to permit access of the International Committee of the Red Cross to verify that these men are not being mistreated.

The only photos that we have seen of these men since their abduction indicate that we indeed have cause to be highly concerned with regard to their well-being. The fact that our servicemen were engaged in a peaceful activity, ensuring the stability of the region

and helping to prevent the spread of the conflict, only heightens our outrage over the exploitation of their captivity by the Yugoslav authorities.

I hope that we will, through this resolution, signal our strong support for our military personnel, for their families, and also send the message to the Yugoslav Government and its leaders that we are going to hold them strictly accountable for their swift and safe return.

Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to unanimously support H. Con. Res. 83.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, under my reservation of objection, I yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR).

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

I just wanted to take the floor, Mr. Speaker, to express my appreciation to the Speaker, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), for bringing this resolution to the floor in a timely fashion and for being cooperative on this. I think he does the House proud in the way he has acted on this piece of legislation, and I wanted him to know that we thank him on this side of the aisle for his courtesies and for the expeditious manner in which he has handled this.

I also want to thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), as well as my colleague from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO) who has offered this resolution and for her leadership, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDESON), my friend the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) and all of the others who made this possible.

With this resolution, the House reaffirms its deep commitment and concern for our soldiers in captivity: Christopher Stone, Steven Gonzales, and Andrew Ramirez.

And as the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) so correctly stated just a second ago, we insist that Slobodan Milosevic and the Yugoslavs follow the Geneva Convention with respect to these three soldiers and that they be allowed to be visited by the Red Cross and they be treated humanely while they are captive. These brave men are in our thoughts, and we join Americans everywhere in praying for their swift and safe return.

Again, I want to congratulate my colleague from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO) for her leadership on this issue.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, further reserving the right to object, I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT) and everybody involved. It was a joint effort. It was not just my doing. So I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) for his support and really fast-tracking it.

House Concurrent Resolution 83 expresses the sentiment not only of the

United States Congress, but of the American people that we support our three brave young men being held prisoner in Yugoslavia: U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Andrew Ramirez, Staff Sergeant Christopher Stone, and Specialist Steven M. Gonzales.

Their patriotism, their bravery, and their service to our country is both humbling and inspiring. These courageous men went to Europe prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for the noble causes of peace and freedom. Now that their own freedom is at stake, the United States, its Congress, and the American people stand firmly in solidarity with them and their families in calling for their release.

I thank all my colleagues for joining me in supporting these brave soldiers of ours and praying for their speedy return to freedom. And God bless all our servicemen throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the concurrent resolution, as follows:

H. CON. RES. 83

Whereas United States Army Staff Sgt. Andrew A. Ramirez, 24, of Los Angeles; Staff Sgt. Christopher J. Stone, 25, of Smiths Creek, Michigan and San Antonio Texas, and Spc. Steven M. Gonzales, 21, of Huntsville, Texas were abducted from Macedonian territory by Serb forces on March 31, 1999, while patrolling the Kumanovo area 3 miles from the southern Yugoslavia border;

Whereas these 3 honorable United States soldiers, serving in noncombatant status, are now in the custody of the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its President Slobodan Milosevic;

Whereas the Geneva Convention, the 1949 treaty setting forth international protocols for the treatment of both civilians and military personnel during armed conflicts and declared wars, stipulates that prisoners of war must at all times be humanely treated, provided any necessary medical assistance, protected against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity and evacuated from any area of danger;

Whereas the Geneva Convention also prohibits putting prisoners of war on trial for engaging in ordinary acts of warfare for which the capturing country's own soldiers would not be charged;

Whereas under the Geneva Convention, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has the right to nonsupervised visits of prisoners to ensure they are being treated well;

Whereas the Yugoslav Government has as yet not responded to the ICRC's requests; and

Whereas sanctions can be applied to signatories of the Geneva Convention for failing to abide by the convention: Now, therefore, be it:

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring). That—

(1) the United States Government should commend the 3 detained United States soldiers for their exemplary service, bravery, duty to their country, and part in helping to ensure a peaceful multiethnic democratic Kosovo on the basis of the Rambouillet Accords;

(2) the United States Government should continue to forcefully press the Yugoslav

Government and its president Slobodan Milosevic for the unconditional release of the 3 detained United States servicemen and, in the interim, demand their health and safety, and that the International Committee of the Red Cross be allowed to visit the servicemen and verify their condition without supervision;

(3) the United States Government should condemn any move on the part of the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to put the three detained United States servicemen on trial—an act expressly forbidden by the Geneva Convention;

(4) the United States Government should hold the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its President Slobodan Milosevic personally responsible for the welfare of the 3 detained United States servicemen;

(5) the United States Government should continue to condemn the atrocities committed by the Yugoslav Army or paramilitary forces against civilians in Kosovo, particularly crimes associated with "ethnic cleansing"; and

(6) the United States Government should support the prosecution under the Geneva Convention of all commanders of the Yugoslav Army or paramilitary forces taking part in acts of ethnic cleaning against civilians.

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE OFFERED BY MR. GILMAN

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment in the nature of a substitute offered by Mr. GILMAN:

Strike all after the resolving clause and insert the following:

That—

(1) the United States Government should commend the 3 detained United States soldiers for their patriotism, bravery, service, and duty to their country;

(2) the United States Government should continue to forcefully press the Yugoslav Government and its president Slobodan Milosevic for the unconditional release of the 3 detained United States servicemen and, in the interim, to guarantee their health and safety, and permit the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit the servicemen and verify their condition without supervision, and that all other provisions of the Geneva Conventions be fully respected;

(3) the United States Government should condemn any move on the part of the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to put the three detained United States servicemen on trial or subject them to public display; and

(4) the United States Government should hold the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its President Slobodan Milosevic directly responsible for the welfare of the 3 detained United States servicemen.

Mr. GILMAN (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the amendment in the nature of a substitute offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN).

The amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The concurrent resolution was agreed to.

AMENDMENT TO THE PREAMBLE OFFERED BY
MR. GILMAN

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I offer an amendment to the preamble.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment to the preamble offered by Mr. GILMAN:

Strike the preamble and insert the following:

Whereas United States Army Staff Sgt. Andrew A. Ramirez, 24, of Los Angeles; Staff Sgt. Christopher J. Stone, 25, of Smiths Creek, Michigan and San Antonio Texas, and Spc. Steven M. Gonzales, 21, of Huntsville, Texas were captured on March 31, 1999, while patrolling the Kumanovo area;

Whereas these 3 honorable United States soldiers are now in the custody of the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its President Slobodan Milosevic;

Whereas the Geneva Conventions, the 1949 treaties setting forth international requirements for the treatment of both civilians and military personnel during armed conflicts, stipulates that prisoners of war must at all times be humanely treated, provided any necessary medical assistance, protected against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity and evacuated from any area of danger;

Whereas the Third Geneva Convention also prohibits putting prisoners of war on trial for engaging in ordinary acts of warfare for which the capturing country's own soldiers would not be charged;

Whereas under the Geneva Conventions, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has the right to nonsupervised visits of prisoners to ensure they are being treated well;

Whereas the Yugoslav Government has as yet not responded to the ICRC's requests; and

Whereas sanctions can be applied to parties to the Geneva Conventions for failing to abide by the conventions: Now, therefore, be it:

Mr. GILMAN (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the amendment to the preamble offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN).

The amendment to the preamble was agreed to.

TITLE AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. GILMAN

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I offer an amendment to the title.

The Clerk read as follows:

Title amendment offered by Mr. GILMAN:

Amend the title so as to read: "Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress that the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its President Slobodan Milosevic release the three detained United States servicemen and abide by the Geneva Conventions regarding the treatment of both prisoners of war and civilians."

The title amendment was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY,
APRIL 19, 1999

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the

House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 2 p.m. on Monday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

HOUR OF MEETING ON TUESDAY,
APRIL 20, 1999

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns on Monday, April 19, 1999, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 20, for morning hour debates.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR
WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON
WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CHILD SUPPORT COLLECTION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, it is tax day in America. On April 15 each year, each of us has dutifully fulfilled our duty. We have filled out forms, written checks, and stood or are standing in long lines at the post office. We do this because it is our obligation and because it is the law.

Well, many parents have another obligation under the law, and that is to pay support for their children. But four out of five noncustodial parents simply do not pay, and they are getting away scot-free.

Mr. Speaker, such irresponsibility not only hurts their own children but drains the Federal budget and causes the deficit that we fill with our tax dol-

lars, a deficit that increases with increased demand on welfare and other Federal programs that our children need for those of us living up to our responsibilities.

This is simply unfair. And most of all, it is unfair and outright cruel for the children involved. When a parent fails to pay child support, children hear a clear message. The message is that they do not matter.

The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) and I believe that it is time to show these children that they do matter, it is time for us as a Nation to care as much about our children as we do about the IRS. That is why today we unveiled legislation to put the Federal Government in charge of collecting child support.

As many people know, I have a very special interest in reforming child support collection. I know firsthand about the difficulty of not receiving child support because 30 years ago I was left to fend for my three children, 1, 3, and 5 years old, when their father did not pay 1 cent of child support.

□ 1630

With no means to collect child support, even though I was employed, I went on welfare to make ends meet. Had we received the child support that was due us, we would not have been on welfare.

The legislation that the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) and I are introducing today, the Compassion for Children and Child Support Enforcement Act, makes paying child support as important as paying taxes, and it makes sure that deadbeat parents know it. Simply put, our bill will federalize child support collection and disbursement. Court-ordered support payments would simply be withheld from an employee's pay, just like other payroll deductions. It is easy, it is efficient, and it will work better than the fragmented State-by-State system now in place. After billions of dollars of Federal assistance, States still collect only 22 percent of what children are owed.

Now, to be fair, that is an increase, because 2 years ago child support collection rates were only 20 percent. But if we wait for collection to go up 2 percent each year, custodial parents will be collecting Social Security before they collect child support. Our kids cannot afford to wait that long.

In my home State of California, our children will have an even longer wait under the current system. California is one of nine States without a State-wide tracking system up and running. California has wasted \$200 million to build a system which has never gotten off the ground. Without a system in place, our State could face \$400 million in fines by the year 2002 for failing to meet Federal deadlines.

This failure is a shame. It is a disaster for California's children. But beyond that, it demonstrates the most fundamental flaw in the current system. A chain is only as strong as its