''As a member of world community committed to protecting and promoting human rights, the Republic of China would like to develop further the spirit of humanitarian concern for the Kosovar refugees living in exile as well as for the war-torn areas in dire need of reconstruction. We will provide a grant aid equivalent to about US $300 million. The aid will consist of the following:

1. Emergency support for food, shelters, medical care, and education, etc. for the Kosovar refugees, living in exile in neighboring countries.

2. Short-term accommodations for some of the refugees in Taiwan, with opportunities of job training in order for them to be better equipped for the restoration of their homeland upon their return.

3. Furthermore, support the rehabilitation of the Kosovo area in coordination with international long-term recovery programs when the peace plan is implemented.

''We earnestly hope that the above-mentioned aid will contribute to the promotion of the peace plan for Kosovo. I wish all the refugees an early return to their safe and peaceful Kosovo homes.''

This important announcement demonstrates the dedication of democratic Taiwan to the promotion of peace in the Balkan region and to the return of the Kosovo refugees. I am pleased that Taiwan has chosen to assume such an active and praiseworthy role in issues of concern to the international community.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AUTHORIZING CONGRESS TO PROHIBIT THE PHYSICAL DESECRATION OF THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

SPEECH OF

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 1999

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Speaker, to an overwhelming majority of the American people, the flag has almost a sacred meaning that words cannot adequately define—something that stands for the country's most fundamental principles of justice and opportunity and for the millions of men and women who have made freedom possible by defending these principles.

Opponents of our amendment believe flag desecration should be allowed as a right of free expression. While I understand their position, I strongly disagree with it.

Preventing someone from burning and multilating the flag in public does not diminish the values on which the country is founded, including free expression. Instead, by protecting the flag, I believe we uphold these values, we honor them, we strengthen them.

Throughout history, in fact, our country has recognized certain limitations on freedom of expression, including libel and slander laws, laws protecting the nation's security, and laws to keep tax returns confidential. Until 1990, when the Supreme Court issued its ruling in a close 5–4 vote, anti-flag descration laws were considered a legitimate exception by the court.

By passing this amendment, we can restore the historic respect that we pay to the country's ideals and to the service and sacrifice that it has taken to keep them secure.

WARTIME VIOLATION OF ITALIAN AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES ACT

HON. ELIOT L. ENGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my colleague from New York, Congressman LAZIO, to introduce the Wartime Violation of Italian American Civil Liberties Act. This legislation brings to light a tragic episode in our nation's history when Italian Americans were considered enemy aliens. The civil liberty abuses that Italian Americans suffered during this time period are not well documented and are not well known, but they did occur and the truth about this story, Una Storia Segreta—the Secret Story, must be told.

December 7, 1941 is a date that is very well known, it is the day that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. What is not so well known is that on that day Italian Americans became enemy aliens. FBI agents, military personnel, and local police began rounding up Italians labeled subversive and dangerous. Ironically, some of those labeled dangerous aliens had fought alongside the United States Armed Forces during World War I. Even more ironic is the fact that many Italians deemed enemy aliens had sons in the United States Armed Services fighting to protect the freedoms that were being taken away from their parents. Such is the case with Joe Ardent. Joe entered the service and did not know until he returned home that his father had been restricted, fired from his job, and considered an enemy alien.

Mr. Speaker, during World War II, 600,000 Italian Americans were classified as enemy aliens, more than 10,000 were forcibly evicted from their homes, 52,000 were subject to strict curfew regulations and hundreds were shipped to internment camps without due process. These civil liberty abuses stretched from coast to coast as California fishermen had their fishing boats confiscated and were either interned or forced to relocate, while on the east coast, Ellis Island, the world renowned symbol of freedom and democracy, became a detention center for enemy aliens. No Italian was exempt from these injustices. Ezio Pinza, the star of ''South Pacific'' and the singer of the signature hit ''Some Enchanted Evening'' was detained at Ellis Island. Pinza was accused of altering the tempo of his voice in order to send messages to the Italian government. Although these charges were clearly ludicrous, it took several high powered attorneys and two hearings to prevent him from being interned.

We must ensure that these terrible events will never be perpetrated again. We must safeguard the individual rights of all Americans from arbitrary persecution or no American will ever be secure. The least our government can do is try to right this terrible wrong by acknowledging the fact that these events did occur. To that end, this legislation calls on the Department of Justice to prepare a comprehensive report detailing the government's unjust policies and practices during this time period. Included in the report will be an examination of ways in which civil liberties can be safeguarded during times of national emergencies. This report is essential in order to ensure that our history is well documented as those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation also calls on the President, on behalf of the United States government, to formally acknowledge our government's systematic denial of basic human rights and freedoms to one of the largest ethnic communities in the United States. As we begin our Fourth of July recess, let us take this opportunity to reflect upon the debt we owe the Italian American community and ensure that the American public recognizes these injustices of the past in order to prevent them in the future. Sixty two of my colleagues have joined me in cosponsoring this bill, and I ask you Mr. Speaker, and the rest of my colleagues to support this important legislation.

INTRODUCTION OF THE ARCTIC TUNDRA HABITAT CONSERVATION ACT

HON. JIM SAXTON

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Arctic Tundra Habitat Emergency Conservation Act. This legislation will address the devastating impact that an exploding population of light geese is having on the fragile Canadian Arctic tundra.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been monitoring light geese populations for over 50 years. During that time, the population that migrates in the Mid-Continent region has increased from 800,000 birds in 1969 to more than 5 million geese today. This population is projected to increase more than five percent each year and, in the absence of new wildlife management actions, there will be more than 6.8 million breeding light geese in three years.

While these geese are fully protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, this unprecedented population explosion is creating serious problems. The geese's appetite for Arctic coastal tundra has created a strip of desert stretching 2,000 miles in Canada. These birds are world-class foragers, and their favorite foods are found in the 135,000 acres that comprise the Hudson Bay Lowland Salt Marsh ecosystem. In fact, they like this vegetation so much they are eating it much faster than its ability to regrow. These geese are literally eating themselves out of house and home and, in the process, destroying thousands of acres of essential, irreplaceable nesting habitat. These wetlands are critical to the survival of not only light geese but hundreds of other migratory species including brants, black ducks, mallards, and dozens of songbirds.

According to various scientists, one-third of the lowlands habitat has been destroyed, one-third is on the brink of devastation, and the remaining one-third is overgrazed.

In response to this growing crisis, representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian Wildlife Service, various State fish and game agencies, and nongovernmental organizations including Ducks Unlimited and the National Audubon Society formed the Arctic Goose Habitat Working Group. This ad hoc group met over a period of many months, and the results of their deliberations were incorporated within a report entitled ''Arctic Ecosystem in Peril''. While this report issued in

1997 contained a number of recommendations, its clear conclusion was that the population of light geese must be immediately reduced by at least 5 to 15 percent each year. This report stated: ''This habitat damage is increasing in extent and will not be corrected or reversed by any known natural phenomenon. We cannot forecast how long it will be before most of the finite supply of habitat that is available for nesting by tundra and coastal-breeding birds will be permanently degraded or destroyed.''

On November 9, 1998, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued two proposed rules to reduce the ever-expanding population of light geese. These rules did not embrace all of the recommendations of the Arctic Goose Habitat Working Group. In fact, they were a modest effort to increase the harvest of light geese by authorizing the use of electronic goose calls, unplugged shotguns, and allowing certain States to authorize hunting outside of the traditional hunting season which normally runs from September 1st to March 10th. At the time, the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stated ''Too many light geese are descending each year on nesting areas that simply cannot support them all. If we do not take steps now, these fragile ecosystems will continue to deteriorate to the point that they can no longer support light geese or the many other species of wildlife that share this Arctic habitat. The steps proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are strongly supported by the Canadian Wildlife Service.''

After issuing these proposed regulations, the Service received over 1,100 comments from diverse interests representing State wildlife agencies, Flyway Councils, private and native organizations, and private citizens. A majority of the comments strongly supported the proposed actions by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which has conducted a thorough environmental assessment of the various regulatory options to reduce the population.

On April 15, 1999, the Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans, which I chair, conducted its second oversight hearing on Mid-Continent light geese. At that hearing, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service testified that ''virtually every credible wildlife biologist in both countries, believes that the Mid-Continent light geese populations has exceeded the carrying capacity of its breeding habitat and that the population must be reduced to avoid long-term damage to an ecosystem important to many other wildlife species in addition to snow geese.''

In addition, a representative of the National Audubon Society testified that ''these burgeoning numbers of Mid-Continent lesser snow geese have caused widespread and potentially irreversible devastation to two-thirds of the habitat that otherwise would be mostly pristine tundra west of Hudson Bay in Canada. If we do not act, nature will not 'take its course' in the short time needed to halt devastation of the tundra.''

Finally, the Chairman of the Arctic Goose Habitat Working Group, who is also the Chief Biologist of Ducks Unlimited, stated that ''the finite amount of suitable goose breeding habitat is rapidly being consumed and eventually will be lost. Every technical, administrative, legal and political delay just adds to the problem. There is real urgency here as we may not be far from the point where the only choice is to record the aftermath of the crash of goose numbers with the related ecosystem destruction with all the other species that live there with the geese.''

At the same hearing, the Humane Society of the United States argued that a ''do nothing'' approach to the management of light geese was the preferred option. While the easy answer might be to let nature run its course, after all some have argued this is a Canadian problem, to sit idly by and allow this environmental catastrophe to continue to occur is simply irresponsible. Furthermore, man created this problem by providing these geese with an almost endless supply of food. In Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas alone, there are more than 2.25 million acres of rice farms that have become a buffet bar for these birds. As a nation, we have also created dozens of National Wildlife Refuges that have become sanctuaries for these birds. As a result, these geese are living longer, are healthier, and are reproducing at an alarming rate. We have already altered the course of nature and that is why the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Canadian Wildlife Service, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Flyway Councils, and almost every well-known wildlife biologist has flatly rejected to ''do nothing'' approach. It is wrong and it will cause irreparable harm to the Arctic tundra habitat.

I want to personally commend the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ms. Jamie Clark, for her tireless leadership and courage on this difficult issue. The Service went to extraordinary lengths to carefully evaluate each of the various management options, obtain the views of each of the affected stakeholders, and to do what was best for the species and its habitat. The regulations it issued were a responsible step in the right direction and they were fully consistent with the recommendation of the Arctic Goose Habitat Working Group.

Sadly, in response to a legal challenge filed in U.S. District Court by the Humane Society of the United States, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service withdrew these two regulations on June 17th. While the judge did not rule on the merits of the regulations, the Service was instructed to complete an environmental impact statement. This process will take between 12 and 18 months to complete and during that time, the tundra will continue to be systematically destroyed an acre at a time. This is an unacceptable situation.

Since I refuse to simply do nothing, I am today introducing the Arctic Tundra Habitat Emergency Conservation Act. This is a simple bill. It will legislatively enact the two regulations, already carefully evaluated and approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. What this means is that States would have the flexibility to allow the use of normally prohibited electronic goose calls and unplugged shotguns during the regular hunting season provided that other waterfowl and crane seasons have been closed. In addition, the 24 affected States are given the authority to implement conservation orders under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that would allow hunters to take Mid-Continent light geese outside of the traditional hunting framework. Both of these rules will give States a better opportunity to increase their light goose harvest.

My bill legislatively enacts these regulations in their identical form. In addition, the bill sunsets when the Service has completed both its environmental impact statement and a new regulatory rule on Mid-Continent light geese. This rule could be the same of different from those originally proposed in November of last year. My bill is an interim solution to a very serious and growing environmental problem.

As Director Clark so eloquently state, ''For years, the United States has inadvertently contributed to the growth of this problem through changes in agricultural and wetland management. Now we can begin to say we are part of the solution. If we do not take action, we risk not only the health of the Arctic breeding grounds but also the future of many of America's migratory bird populations.''

I wholeheartedly agree with that statement and urge my colleagues to join with me in trying to stop this environmental catastrophe by supporting the Arctic Tundra Habitat Emergency Conservation Act.

I am pleased that a number of our distinguished colleagues, including DON YOUNG, JOHN DINGELL, SAXBY CHAMBLISS, COLLIN PETERSON, CHIP PICKERING, DUNCAN HUNTER, DUKE CUNNINGHAM, and JOHN TANNER have agreed to join with me in this effort.

VA/DOD LEGISLATION INTRODUCED: USING ACCURACY TO ADJUST THE GEOGRAPHIC INEQUITY IN THE AAPCC

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to use accuracy as one way to address the geographic inequity of Medicare's adjusted average per capita cost (AAPCC) rate by ensuring that Medicare-eligible veterans are calculated in AAPCC updates.

Until BBA 97, AAPCC rates were determined based on five year's worth of historical per-capita Medicare fee-for-service spending. Medicare AAPCC rates also included provisions for medical education payments and Medicare disproportionate share payments.

BBA 97 de-linked AAPCC updates from local FFS spending and set a minimum 1998 AAPCC ''floor'' rate of $367. It also made a number of changes to guarantee minimum annual rate increases of 2%. BAA 97 also carved out the medical education component from the AAPCC over 5 years. Unfortunately, these changes do not address the fundamental inequity in the AAPCC calculations that Washington faces.

The trouble with the AAPCC methodology is that it punishes cost-efficient communities with low AAPCC increases while higher-priced inefficient markets receive increases well above average. In 1997, WA state health plans had an average payment rate increase of 3.8% while the national per capita cost rate increase was 5.9% Counties in other state across the nation had increases as high as 8.9%.

Currently every Washington State County AAPCC is below the national average.

USE ACCURACY AS A PARTIAL FIX

A simplified explanation of the new AAPCC calculation is that all fee-for-service costs in a given county are divided by all Medicare beneficiaries in that county to derive the payment rate.

Medicare beneficiaries who are eligible for both Medicare and military Medicare coverage