

15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR DISASTER

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 27, 2001

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 15th anniversary of one of the most terrible nuclear disasters in world history: the Chernobyl nuclear power plant explosion.

On April 26, 1986, Reactor Number Four at the Soviet-designed Chernobyl nuclear facility exploded, releasing more than 100 tons of lethally radioactive material into the environment. At the time, the only response available to Ukraine was to create an Exclusion Zone covering over 1000 square miles immediately surrounding the nuclear plant, and to quarantine an area downwind of the plant covering over 20,000 square miles. We may never know how many lost lives can be directly attributed to Chernobyl, but the death toll can be measured in the thousands. Hundreds of thou-

sands more were subjected to radiation poisoning.

Today, 15 years later, the consequences of this tragedy continue to be felt. Cancer rates among the survivors have skyrocketed. Contaminants in the groundwater sicken those in the quarantined area and threaten even greater numbers of people as the water travels downstream to urban areas. The loss of Chernobyl's generating power has caused the loss of jobs and has spurred a crippling energy shortage. By some estimates, the total direct cost to Ukraine has exceeded \$100 billion over the past 15 years.

On December 15, 2000, the Chernobyl nuclear power plant was shut down for good, ending a tragic chapter in Ukraine's history and beginning a new one. Clearly, the heavy burden for the people of Ukraine does not end with the shutdown, and the international community must do more to help remediate the damage. The U.S. has joined international experts in proposing ways to accelerate decontamination of the area and make the land economically viable, at the same time addressing Ukraine's energy needs. Congress needs to

work with the new Administration to build upon the progress that was made with the previous Administration.

Mr. Speaker, I call on every member of the House to join me in remembering the victims of this tragedy. Let us resolve to do our part to help Ukraine build a brighter future.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 27, 2001

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, on April 26, I inadvertently voted "yes" on final passage of H.R. 503, the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, when it was my strong intent to vote "no" on the bill. I feel that the best way to protect the fetus is to better protect the woman, and because this legislation fails to address the need for legislation to prevent and punish violence against women, I would not support this or any similar bill.