

killed in the November 1984 massacres in Delhi and other cities. Overall, the Indian government, which boasts about being "the world's largest democracy," has murdered over 250,000 Sikhs since 1984. The death sentence given to Professor Devinder Pal Singh Bhullar based on a false confession is the latest example of India's effort to eliminate the Sikh religion and intimidate the Sikh Nation.

Indian police arrested human-rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra after he exposed their policy of mass cremation of Sikhs, in which over 50,000 Sikhs have been picked up, tortured, and killed, then their bodies are declared unidentified and secretly cremated. Then Mr. Khalra was murdered in police custody. His body was not given to his family. Rajiv Singh Randhawa, the only witness to the Khalra kidnapping tried to give a petition to Jack Straw, then the British Home Minister and now its Foreign Minister, outside the Golden Temple in Amritsar. For this, he was arrested and tortured.

Similarly, the police murdered former Jathedar of the Akal Takht Gurdev Singh Kaunke. His body was not handed over to his family. No one has been brought to justice for the Khalra kidnapping and murder. The murderer of Akal Takht Jathedar Gurdev Singh Kaunke, SSP Swaran Ghotna, has never been brought to trial. Nor have those who carried out the massacre of 35 Sikhs in Chithisinghpura three years ago this month.

According to a report by the Movement Against State Repression (MASR), 52,268 Sikhs are being held as political prisoners in India without charge or trial. Some have been in illegal custody since 1984! Yet Chief Minister Amarinder Singh denies that there are any political prisoners at all. Have they murdered them all? Most of these political prisoners were taken into illegal custody under the Beant Singh regime, a Congress government. Can't Amarinder Singh find these records? Amarinder Singh should be commended for prosecuting corrupt government officials. Now he should keep his promise to prosecute Parkash Singh Badal and his family for their corruption during his tenure as Chief Minister. He sold government jobs for money. Services were only delivered after they received bribes. His wife Surinder Kaur is so experienced at this corrupt practice that she could tell the amount of money in a paper bag just by lifting it. What a shame for the Akali government! The Badal family has tarnished the pious Akali name of the first half of the last century. That Sikh leadership gave sacrifices for the glory of the Khalsa Panth.

The Indian regime paid over 41,000 cash bounties to police officers for killing Sikhs, according to a 1994 report from the U.S. State Department. One of these bounties was paid to a policeman who killed a three-year-old boy! In another case, a man brought suit because he had been listed as having been killed in one of these incidents but was actually alive. Who was murdered in his place?

The legs of the driver for Baba Charan Singh were tied to two jeeps which drove off in opposite directions and he was torn in half. An attorney in Ropar who defended Sikh youth was picked up along with his wife and his two-year-old son. They were made to "disappear" just like 50,000 other Sikhs. The Indian Supreme Court called the Indian government's murders of Sikhs "worse than a genocide." On October 7, 1987, the Sikh Nation declared the independence of its homeland, Punjab, Khalistan. No Sikh representative has ever signed the Indian constitution.

The Sikh nation has awakened. I call on all Sikhs to support the Khalsa Panchayat. These good Sikhs forced Jathedar Manjit Singh of Kesgarh to resign. Now Jathedar

Vedanti must resign along with him. Please help the Khalsa Panchayat in these efforts. And work to build a party that will lead a Shantmai Morcha to liberate our homeland, Khalistan, from Indian occupation. Just as the Akalis took control from the Mahants of the last century, we must take control of our future from the new Mahants, the present Akali leadership and Indian-controlled Jathedars.

India is on the verge of disintegration. Khalistan will soon be free. Home Minister L.K. Advani said that if Kashmir goes, India goes. The Kashmir problem has been internationalized. The only way to solve the Kashmir problem is to have a referendum where the Kashmiri people can decide their own future. With self-determination, the Kashmiri people will either be independent or go with Pakistan. Either way, Kashmir is going to go. As soon as Kashmir goes, Khalistan will be independent within a year. We can achieve freedom much earlier if our leadership is not under Indian control and they are sincere and honest.

Only in a free Khalistan will the Sikh Nation prosper. Only then will the Sikh Nation get justice. India must start acting like a democracy and allow self-determination in the form of a free and fair plebiscite on independence for Punjab, Khalistan and the other nations seeking their freedom from India. Let us join hands to secure our freedom, for ourselves and future generations.

Sincerely,

DR. GURMIT SINGH AULAKH,
President, Council of Khalistan.

HELP EFFICIENT, ACCESSIBLE,
LOW-COST, TIMELY HEALTHCARE
(HEALTH) ACT OF 2003

SPEECH OF

HON. TED STRICKLAND

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 13, 2003

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I speak on the floor today in opposition to H.R. 5 and in opposition to the closed rule under which we are debating the bill.

I have heard from doctors and hospitals throughout my district that they are struggling with high malpractice rates. I think we all recognize that this is a big problem in many regions of the country, and I believe we must take action to ensure patients can continue to access quality and timely health care. In my rural Ohio district, access to care is a constant problem for many of my constituents. I hear the voices of the family practice physicians who tell me they no longer may be able to afford to deliver babies. In some cases in Ohio, pregnant women must travel long distances for prenatal care and delivery services because there is only one doctor providing these services throughout a county. Something must be done, but I do not think HR 5 gets it done.

These are the reasons I have cosponsored H.R. 1124, which has been introduced by Rep. Dingell. H.R. 1124 would address high malpractice rates through moderate tort reforms, requiring attorneys to submit a certificate of merit declaring a case to be meritorious, and requiring medical malpractice insurance companies to dedicate at least 50% of the savings from these tort reforms to reducing the insurance premiums paid by physicians and other health professionals. In addition, H.R. 1124 attempts to look at the broad

issues that may have contributed to the high malpractice rates doctors across the country are facing by establishing an independent advisory commission on medical malpractice insurance. I wish Congress had acted quickly and in a bipartisan fashion last year—had we done so, we may already have more answers about why rates are now as high as they are. And finally, H.R. 1124 would create a grants program through the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that areas affected by high malpractice rates do not suffer a shortage of providers. However, we will not even hear debate about these provisions or others because the Leadership passed a closed rule that limits debate to the base bill. This does a disservice to the American people, to the House, and to the health care providers we want to help.

I believe H.R. 5 will not address the high malpractice rates our doctors are confronting. H.R. 5 fails to address or even acknowledge the complicated nature of this problem: my colleagues who have introduced H.R. 5 haven't considered how the insurance industry may have contributed to the high rates or considered how individual states' systems have affected malpractice rates.

Throughout the Energy and Commerce Committee's consideration of H.R. 5, I spoke about two provisions in, H.R. 5 that I strongly oppose.

First, H.R. 5 would limit the liability of HMO'S, drug companies, and nursing homes. These companies have never come to me to explain why their liability should be limited; in fact, I strongly believe consumers should have the right to use every tool possible to collect damages if they are injured by a drug or device company whose product is defective. My constituents have access to prescription drugs—the drugs are there in the pharmacy, ready to be purchased, and the drug companies aren't going out of business. Unfortunately, many of my constituents, especially seniors, can't afford to pay the prices these companies are charging. Since the drug companies are doing quite well, I think it's safe to say that they don't need the further protections H.R. 5 would afford them.

Second, I cannot support H.R. 5 because of its \$250,000 limit on noneconomic damages. Noneconomic damages are awarded by a jury to compensate a victim for intangible pain and suffering. These damages are often very important to low income adults, women, and children who often would not recover a large economic damage award when they are injured. In addition, someone whose injury is purely cosmetic may not have economic damages because the injury doesn't directly affect his or her ability to work. For example, the facial disfigurement 17-year-old Heather Lewinski has had to live with for the past 9 years because when she was 8 years old a plastic surgeon committed clear malpractice and scarred her for life. The years of pain and suffering Heather has lived with and testified to before the Energy and Commerce Committee two weeks ago are real. Heather's lawsuit against the plastic surgeon who injured her resulted in zero economic damages, but she did receive compensation in the form of noneconomic damages. H.R. 5 would have limited her award to \$250,000. I cannot vote for legislation that would arbitrarily limit the damages that might be so important to the average American who finds themselves injured

through medical malpractice. Although proponents of H.R. 5 contend that the bill will limit frivolous lawsuits, I believe it will not do so; instead, this provision would arbitrarily cap meritorious claims of malpractice.

I ask my colleagues: if we trust our jury system to make decisions about life and death, I believe we must be able to trust that jury system to make decisions about money.

The increase in malpractice rates is a huge problem for doctors and hospitals, and that is why I wish this bill had been crafted with input from the leaders of both parties. At the least, I wish we had the benefit of an open rule that would allow real debate here on the floor. I will not support this bill because I think it fails to prevent frivolous lawsuits, fails to address the problems with the insurance industry, and fails to provide direct relief to communities that are struggling with access problems resulting from high malpractice rates.

PROCLAMATION—POLICE-FIRE
MERGER PLATINUM ANNIVERSARY,
KALAMAZOO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

HON. FRED UPTON

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 26, 2003

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. In 1983, it was determined that the combination of Kalamazoo police and fire services could serve as an effective method of providing more efficient and productive use of resources and employees. By cross-training personnel in both disciplines, the fire department's 164 firefighters and the police department's 219 law enforcement positions were consolidated into 383 multifunctional employees. This streamlining provided an excellent public safety service to the community while minimizing expenses. The Department of Public Safety has continued to evolve and improve since its inception—forming specialty units and services and using state of the art technology. Today, the department is the largest public safety organization in the country, with 315 highly trained and educated employees, and 2003 marks the 20th year of these combined police and fire services. I wish them many more years of continued success.

RECOGNIZING MR. RONALD J.
RUFFENACH

HON. CHET EDWARDS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 26, 2003

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mr. Ronald J. Ruffennach for his many years of hard work, initiative and dedication to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and our Nation.

Ron has served the Corps for 30 years. His career encompasses working in the Pittsburgh District, Europe, and the Savannah District before transferring to the Southwestern Division's Fort Worth District Office in 1984. During his career, he has been called upon to accomplish many significant projects for the Corps of Engineers.

Ron is recognized as a leader and expert in the Corps' Public Affairs community. He has often been sought out to provide valuable public relations expertise during disaster recover efforts. His expertise was invaluable in 1989 following Hurricane Hugo in South Carolina and the earthquake in northern California; in 1991, when he was assigned to the Defense Reconstruction Assistance Office during the Kuwait Recovery; and in 1993 when he was called to the Corps' Civil Works Forward Office following the Midwest flood event.

While in the Fort Worth District, Ron's unique and selfless dedication, as the Chief of Public Affairs and Legislative Affairs, is instrumental in building partnerships and achieving consensus on many important projects in the State of Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and beyond. My staff and I have personally called upon Ron to assist us in obtaining valuable assistance on projects in my district and throughout the State of Texas.

In the community, Ron has been a trusted and well-known leader and public servant. He is a 1993 graduate of Leadership Fort Worth, and an active member of the St. Vincent De Paul Catholic Church, where he is a Eucharistic Minister and an active member of the Men's Club. He served as a past president of the Boy's Select Soccer Club, past president of the Martin High School Soccer Booster Club and was active in local school board issues. He also was a regular volunteer at the Arlington night shelter.

Over the past few years, Ron has experienced serious health issues. However, not once during that period did Ron's commitment to the nation, the Corps of Engineers, and his family waiver.

I know that you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the subcommittee would like to join me in thanking Mr. Ronald J. Ruffennach for his long, dedicated, and faithful service to the nation, the Army, and to this committee. Thanks Ron.

IN HONOR OF SAINT WENDELIN
PARISH

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 26, 2003

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the parish community of Saint Wendelin Church, as they celebrate one hundred years of healing and hope in Cleveland's Ohio City neighborhood. Throughout the past century, Saint Wendelin's has served as a spiritual refuge, opening its doors to any soul in search of guidance and peace.

The ministry of Saint Wendelin's began in 1903, originally serving the Slovak community of Cleveland's near west side. On May 3rd of that same year, the community received permission to found Saint Wendelin Parish. A small church was soon constructed and on December 6, 1903, Father Koudelka celebrated Saint Wendelin's first mass. Not long after, the Sisters of Notre Dame established Saint Wendelin's School. The order would continue to provide quality Catholic education for the next seventy years.

In 1925, the current church and school complex was dedicated. Always reaching outward, Saint Wendelin's welcomes all believers to join

in worship. It is a testament to the Saint Wendelin ministry that Catholics from all corners of the city heed the call to celebrate at the little church on Columbus Avenue.

Cleveland's vital tradition of Catholic education is reflected at Saint Wendelin's with their active participation in the Urban Community School. Saint Wendelin's facilities serve as a second home to over 300 students of Urban Community School.

My fellow colleagues, please join me in honor and recognition of every member of Saint Wendelin Church, and its leaders—Pastor Jerome Lajack and Deacon James J. Armstrong, as they celebrate mass with Bishop Anthony Pilla in commemoration of one hundred years of service to God and community. Saint Wendelin parish continues its dedication to social justice and spiritual healing—within the neighborhoods of Ohio City, and the world community beyond.

IN RECOGNITION OF DOMINIC
POLIMENI WHO RETIRES AFTER
13 YEARS OF DEDICATED AND
DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AS
CITY COUNCIL MEMBER FOR THE
CITY OF SAN GABRIEL

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 26, 2003

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dominic Polimeni who will retire from the San Gabriel City Council after 13 years of service to the city and community.

Born May 23, 1940, in Dunmore, PA, Dominic Polimeni was raised and educated in Buffalo, NY. He attended the University of Buffalo and graduated from Bryant and Stratton Business Institute. A 31-year resident of San Gabriel, Mayor Polimeni was elected to the San Gabriel City Council in April, 1990.

Reflecting a team spirit approach and courteous respect for others, Mayor Polimeni's example encouraged a cohesive city council whose collective objective is to put San Gabriel first in order to accomplish community and regional goals.

Dominic Polimeni's city council highlights include building municipal economic reserves, creation of an Economic Redevelopment Agency, revitalization of the historic San Gabriel Mission District, implementation of the \$5 million Millennium Miles Program to rehabilitate San Gabriel's streets, seismic and ADA retrofitting of City Hall, restoration of the legendary San Gabriel Civic Auditorium, the three-acre Smith Park Expansion Project, created ordinances and supported public safety and other department programs to improve the quality of life for San Gabriel residents.

An active member of the San Gabriel community, he has supported and participated in the creation of exciting, fun-filled programs and events to educate and communicate the unique story that is San Gabriel and celebrate San Gabriel's diversity such as the Alhambra-San Gabriel Lunar New Year Parade and Festival, Christmas in April, Three-day San Gabriel Birthday & Festival, California History Day, Mission District Mercado, National Night Out, and Kids Day.

Dominic Polimeni retired from the County of Los Angeles as Administrator of Alhambra Municipal Court in 1996 after a distinguished career spanning 36 years. Mayor Polimeni and