

MILITARY FAMILY PEACE OF
MIND ACT**HON. WALTER B. JONES**

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 7, 2003

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my dear friend from California, Mr. GALLEGLY, to introduce the Military Family Peace of Mind Act. We believe this is simple, but important legislation for the loved ones of military personnel who have died in the service of our nation.

It goes without saying that the loss of a loved one is difficult no matter what the situation. Despite knowing the potential risks associated with the military service of their family member, the burden can be even more difficult when it occurs suddenly such as when our men and women are killed on the field of battle. Families need time to grieve for their loved ones and that need is particularly acute when the spouse or parent of one of our fallen heroes must tell dependent children of the loss. Unfortunately the process for providing notice to the media about military personnel killed allows for that critical time to grieve.

The current process for notifying next of kin about the loss of their cherished family member falls to the individual services. Once the casualty assistance officer of the respective service notifies the family members, the officer then forwards notice of the visit to the Office of Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, who in turn promptly issues a release to the media identifying the individual. Although this is done with an eye towards providing full and open access to information about military operations as practical, we have heard from family members that this notification has actually resulted in swarms of media harassing family members trying to get a story. One spouse commented that she had had little time to grieve because her entire energies were being spent trying to fend off aggressive press inquiries. The need for open access to information aside, that is no way to respect a family who has just learned that their spouse, son, or daughter was killed while defending our country.

It is true the Department of Defense does not and cannot control the conduct of members of the media, but actions can be taken to help these grieving families. One specific step that can be taken is to implement a minimum 24-hour delay from the time a casualty assistance officer notifies the next of kin about their loss until the time that name is released to the media and the public. A 24-hour delay would not unreasonably impair the public's access to information about military activities, but could provide an immeasurable amount of relief to those who have endured the loss. That is what this bill seeks to do.

Mr. Speaker, these families have already paid the ultimate sacrifice for our country's freedom. A 24-hour waiting period prior to public notification is not too much for the families of our fallen heroes to ask of us.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
SHEET METAL WORKERS' INTER-
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION LOCAL
UNION NO. 104**HON. GEORGE MILLER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 7, 2003

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I know that all Members of the House of Representatives will want to join me in saluting the Sheet Metal Workers' International Association, Local Union No. 104 on the 100th anniversary of its founding. Sheet Metal Workers' Local Union No. 104, through its many members over the last 100 years, has long played a vital role in protecting and organizing workers throughout Northern California.

The Sheet Metal Workers' International Association was first formed on January 25, 1888, in Toledo, Ohio. Since that day, local unions throughout the country have fought to protect the rights of workers in a wide variety of trades and job types; encompassing workers from tinsmiths to high tech specialists.

Sheet Metal Workers' Local Union No. 104 was formed on May 7, 1903, and is dedicated to the mission " * * * to establish and maintain desirable working conditions and thus provide for themselves and their families that measure of comfort, happiness, and security to which every citizen is entitled in return for his labor, from a deep sense of pride in our trade, to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay."

Sheet Metal Workers' Local Union No. 104 membership includes individuals from the geographic regions of: Alameda, Contra Costa, Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Monterey, Napa, Santa Clara, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Solano, Sonoma and Trinity Counties. Furthermore, Sheet Metal Workers' Local Union No. 104 currently represents more than 8,000 members local-wide, and is accredited with one of the most successful Organizing Programs in the country. The Union has organized approximately 50 new shops in that past two and a half years alone.

Sheet Metal Workers' Local Union No. 104's members are highly skilled craftspeople specializing in areas such as heating, air conditioning and ventilation, and architectural sheet metal. These members' work is attributed with achieving higher quality of air in homes, office buildings, medical facilities, schools and other official buildings, in addition to contributions to various architectural features such as copper roofs, stainless casing and bronze architecture which can be seen throughout many cities; an example of this work is the copper dome on San Francisco's City Hall.

Sheet Metal Workers' Local Union No. 104's efforts to raise the standard of living and protect individual rights for its membership, as well as other workers throughout the region, are deserving of our attention and admiration.

Mr. Speaker, I join Sheet Metal Workers' Local Union No. 104's officers and members in celebrating the 100th Anniversary of their founding, and I salute the work of the Sheet Metal Workers' International Association, Local Union No. 104. I encourage my colleagues to similarly respect the positive impacts the Sheet Metal Workers' International Association has had within their home districts and States,

and I encourage them to express their support of this historic anniversary for the Sheet Metal Workers' Local Union No. 104.

TAKING STOCK IN ROMANIA

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 7, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the consolidation of democracy in Romania. As Co-Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe—the Helsinki Commission—I have followed events in Romania for many years. The Romanian people have survived the repression of a brutal communist dictatorship and, in the years since the fall of that regime, have made great strides in building democratic institutions and the rule of law. However, much remains to be done to overcome the legacy of the past.

Romania is a good friend and strong ally of the United States. I appreciate and thank the Government of Romania for its steadfast support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, where a battalion serves on the ground, and for its support of the U.S.-led military action in Iraq. Romania has been offered the much sought after admission to NATO, and today the Senate began debate on the Protocols of Accession. Romania is also an accession candidate to the EU.

It is in the spirit of friendship that I continue to follow the human rights issues there, based on a belief that Romania will be a stronger democracy, and therefore a stronger partner, when respect for human rights is strengthened. Frankly, I am concerned that, following Romania's invitation to join NATO, the reform momentum in Bucharest may have dissipated.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is no greater barometer of democracy than free speech and freedom of the press. While there is no doubt that the Romanian people have access to a broad range of print and electronic media, 13 years after the fall of Ceausescu, Romanian law still includes communist-era criminal defamation provisions which impose prison terms for offenses such as "insult" or "offense against authority." These laws cause a chilling effect on independent and investigative journalism and should be repealed.

Today, I received a letter from Foreign Minister Geoana, informing me that a new draft Penal Code would do exactly that. This is encouraging news, and I will follow this process closely with the hope that articles 205, 206, 236, 236(1), 238, and 239 of the Romanian Penal Code will actually be repealed and not just modified.

Mr. Speaker, there is no international requirement that countries must make property restitution or provide compensation for confiscated properties. However, if a legal process for property restitution or compensation is established, international law requires that it be nondiscriminatory and be implemented under the rule of law. Property restitution in Romania since the fall of communism has been slow and ineffective, and the laws—which the government has enacted to address the problem—lack transparency, are complex, and have not been effectively implemented.

Restitution of communal property—for example churches or synagogues—is especially