

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

difficult. In 1948, Romania's communist government banned the Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church and ordered the incorporation of the Greek Catholic Church into the Orthodox Church. More than 2,500 churches and other buildings seized from the Uniates were given to Orthodox parishes. The government decree that dismantled the Greek Catholic Church was abrogated in 1989, however, of the thousands of properties confiscated from Greek Catholics, fewer than 200 have been returned nearly 15 years later. The status of thousands of properties belonging to the historic Hungarian faiths (Roman Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran and Unitarian), and the Jewish community, as well as other non-traditional religions has not been resolved, despite the enactment of a communal property restitution law in July of 2002.

The restitution of private property in Romania is equally as murky. In February 2001, the Romanian Parliament enacted Law 10/2001, the express purpose of which, according to Article 1 (1) of the Law, is to make restitution in-kind of nationalized real property and, whenever such in-kind restitution is not possible, to make restitution in an equivalent consisting of cash for residential properties and vouchers to be used in exchange for shares of state-owned companies or services. This clearly stated principle has been undermined by so many exceptions that it becomes virtually meaningless. Those claimants who have overcome the numerous exceptions contained in the law have then been stymied by government recalcitrance when they have attempted to obtain the necessary documentation to support their claims. Many title deeds were purposely destroyed by the former communist regime. State archives, having been deluged with a significant volume of requests, complicate the process with chronic bureaucratic delays in processing property records, and seeming indifference to the urgency of those requests. The Government of Romania cannot expect claimants to file within prescribed deadlines, and then not provide them with the means to obtain the proof of their claims from the government's own records.

Further, I am disappointed by the ineffective and inadequate attempts of the Romanian Government to register the Jehovah's Witnesses as an official religion. The inability of the government to make this happen is a seri-

ous concern, as it is more than an issue of legal personality, but also of rule of law, religious freedom and discrimination. In October 2001, I received personal assurances from Foreign Minister Geoana that this longstanding matter would be resolved; it has not despite a ruling by Romania's highest court dating back to 2000. The Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs seemed to provide a fix in October of last year, but it proved faulty and failed to bring closure to this matter. Mr. Speaker, I urge the competent Romanian authorities to remove this issue from the agenda by facilitating the recognition of the Jehovah's Witnesses as an official religion without further delay.

Another matter which I hope the Government of Romania will bring to closure is the rehabilitation and honoring of World War II dictator, Marshall Ion Antonescu, Hitler ally and war criminal condemned for the mass murder of Jews. Last year government officials publicly condemned efforts to honor Antonescu and removed from public land three statues that had been erected in his honor. One statue remains on public land in Jilava, the site of Antonescu's execution, and important streets in the cities of Timisoara and Oradea continue to be named after him. I urge the Government of Romania to remove these remaining vestiges honoring the former dictator.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to express my continuing concern about the Romani minority in Romania. I appreciate that Romania was the first country in Central Europe to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. This was an extremely important and positive step. But there appears to be a rising tide of intolerance against Roma, manifested by scapegoating of Roma in the media and in the statements of some public officials. In all likelihood, this climate contributed to the tragic events in Buhusi last December, when a number of Roma were shot during a police raid, including a 14-year-old boy who was reportedly shot in the back. I hope the Romanian Government will play a leadership role in countering prejudice against Roma and will continue to implement programs to address discrimination against them.

Protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms and human rights, as well as commitment to the Helsinki Final Act and respect for Organization for Security and Cooperation

in Europe norms and principles, are requirements for NATO membership. As a participating State of the OSCE, and as a candidate for admission to NATO, Romania has made that commitment. It is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Government of Romania will use this opportunity to strengthen its democracy, not retreat from it.

HONORING DORIS GREGORY

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 7, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Doris Gregory for her contributions to the Ouray community. For the last twenty-five years Doris has been one of Ouray's most prolific historians, writing more than a dozen books about the community, its buildings and families. Today I would like to acknowledge her accomplishments before this body of Congress and this nation.

Doris was not always a historian. After she graduated from the University of Washington, Doris moved to Alaska with her new husband and ran a small newspaper. Later she earned a doctorate in education and embarked on a thirty-year career in teaching and administration in three different states, authoring textbooks and spending summer vacations in Ouray. By the time Doris retired in 1978, she and her husband owned a home in Ouray, and Doris began spending a lot of time in the county archives. Among her books, Doris has authored a two-volume comprehensive history of Ouray. As an important local authority, Doris has also volunteered countless hours at the Ouray County Historical Museum and given lectures.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to recognize Doris Gregory for her hard work and dedication to documenting the history of an important region of Colorado. Doris has almost single-handedly preserved the history of Ouray County for future generations, and I thank her for her efforts.