

May God bless you, Mr. Larson and his wife. He is a true American hero and many Americans owe him a debt of gratitude.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MENENDEZ addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### BHOPAL TRAGEDY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to discuss the tragedy of the Bhopal disaster in India. This is an event that the Congress and the world remember vividly. Unfortunately, we have forgotten that many of the victims and their families that remain in Bhopal still remain without much reparation.

On that horrible December day in 1984 when a Union Carbide plant leaked 40 tons of lethal gas in Bhopal, India, about 4,000 people died within hours, more than 20,000 were injured. And since then the death count has risen to over 14,000 as a result of exposure to the gas. According to victims rights groups, over 150,000 people are suffering from the after-effects such as reproduction complications, loss of ability to perform physical labor, rare cancers, severe respiratory problems, and the list goes on.

Not only are there countless trials and tribulations regarding health status, but in addition there are tremendous environmental injustices such as polluted groundwater, toxic waste, and contaminated soil that have largely remained unaddressed.

Mr. Speaker, Union Carbide is the company responsible for the Bhopal disaster. But when Union Carbide and Dow Chemical merged in 2001, there was no doubt that Dow Chemical as a successor company was also responsible for the disaster. Dow Chemical has the resources to deal with the health problems and to provide reparations for the people of Bhopal that were devastated by the tragedy.

To date, Mr. Speaker, there are four basic outstanding demands that the victims and their advocates are tirelessly working toward. Dow Chemical has the responsibility to meet each of these demands, and I would like to express my commitment to seeing that these basic demands of justice come to fruition.

First, Mr. Speaker, there must be acknowledgment that Dow inherited criminal liabilities and accordingly should face a criminal trial for poisoning people, animals, and the environment. At the time, Union Carbide blamed the disaster on a disgruntled worker. But whatever happened to him?

At the time, Warren Anderson was the CEO of Union Carbide. Whatever happened to him? And more importantly, where is he now?

Second, Mr. Speaker, the health of survivors must be monitored and medical care must be provided to them as well as the second and third generations that have already and undoubtedly will continue to inherit health complications due to their family members' exposure to gas in 1984.

Third, there must be adequate funding and some type of safe, workable design and infrastructure for removing 5,000 tons of waste and chemicals in the soil and water. There are over 20,000 people drinking contaminated water thoroughly diffused with mercury. And this example of endless environmental atrocities is simply unacceptable.

Fourth, Mr. Speaker, compensation for injuries must be addressed. Any victim reparations thus far have been woefully insufficient; and in fact, over half the death claims have been rejected. People have no choice but to rely on financial retribution and that is because there have been minimal numbers of jobs since the disaster, and those sickened from exposure have lost the ability to perform simple tasks. In addition, care for the overwhelming number of orphans is necessary.

Mr. Speaker, the struggle of the people of Bhopal has been long and has reduced most to living without dignity. Americans deal with environmental injustices as well. However, we have public health laws that protect our citizens' Federal right-to-know legislation that, in fact, came about in the aftermath of Bhopal.

In an effort to restore basic human rights to the people of Bhopal, my colleague, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH), and I are circulating a letter to the CEO of Dow Chemical asking that Dow take responsibility for the disaster inherited in 1984 and that it cooperate in meeting the demands of its victims. I encourage all of my colleagues to sign on to this important letter.

In addition, I plan on circulating an amicus brief on behalf of the Bhopal victims who have year after year tried their cases in the U.S. court system and who have been subjected to unfair treatment due to corporate favoritism.

At that time, I will also ask my colleagues to join me in sending a message that the injustice cannot continue and that there is support in Congress for holding accountable those that are liable for this horrific tragedy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WOLF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### AMERICANS NEED THE TRUTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, 160-or-so years ago, Congress passed a rule prohibiting Members of Congress from debating the issue of slavery. The issue of slavery, the greatest blemish on our Nation's history, was actually not debated in Congress for many years because conservative leaders of this body simply said it could not be, and passed a rule prohibiting it.

John Quincy Adams, former President and later Member of Congress in the 1830s and 1840s came to this Chamber of the House of Representatives and collected letters from his constituents. He called them petitions from mostly women's group in Massachusetts. Women in those days were not allowed to vote, as most of us know. He brought these petitions from women who were opposed to slavery and read them on the House floor.

While the rules said he could not debate slavery, he was simply a mouthpiece, a conduit, was a megaphone for the concerns of the people in his district about a great national problem.

Fast forward the clock to 2003. We now have a legislative leadership which is again saying no to debating issues of what really happened with the Bush administration's distortion of evidence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program. While the President may have made, perhaps we are not really sure quite what happened, but we want to investigate. We want to know more. There has been no avenue to do that in this body.

So as a result a group called Moveon.org has gathered online hundreds of thousands of petitions and tens of thousands of American citizens including dozens, dozens, dozens in my district, thousands in the State of Ohio, tens of thousands around the country, speaking out about what they think.

So I am going to share in the next 3½ minutes or so, Mr. Speaker, what people in my district are saying when they sign this petition saying that Congress should support an independent commission to investigate the Bush administration's distortion of evidence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program.

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John Ciraldo of Akron, Ohio, in my District, "It seems to me that the evidence of deceit led by the Bush administration is becoming more and more prevalent."

"I feel that it is becoming more of an issue to the American people. As part of a democracy, we believe that we have a right to know."

"Please take a stand," Mr. Ciraldo writes, "for what I believe you know to be right. Be fair to our Nation and show a true patriotism, investigate. All of America has the right to know." Mr. Ciraldo from Akron.

Thomas Spalding, also from Akron, Ohio, shorter letter, "Please pursue an