

have proven very successful in achieving that goal. From January 2000 to July 2001, a Chicago program known as Transitional Community Service Jobs placed over 75 percent of its participants in unsubsidized jobs, more than one-third of which paid over \$8.00 an hour.

Many cities and communities across the country have implemented transitional jobs programs because they understand the importance of helping those facing serious barriers to employment, and they recognize the long-term benefits of investing in a future workforce that is well-trained and able to contribute to the economy. However, because the Welfare-to-Work funds that help support transitional jobs programs are nearly exhausted and because of tight State budgets, many of those successful programs are at risk. This bill would provide a more stable funding source to allow many of these programs to survive, enable the development of new programs, and require a rigorous evaluation of funded programs.

I am proud that this bill would help those who are having a difficult time supporting their children by providing them with resources and skills that will help them immediately, as well as sustain them in the future. I urge my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring the Business Links Act of 2003.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF HOUSE REGARDING COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP OF UNIFIED BUDDHIST CHURCH OF VIETNAM

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 19, 2003

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am here today as a staunch supporter of freedom of religion. While we have made progress in our own country, there are other areas in the world which still persecute unjustly. Buddhism has a 2,000-year tradition in Vietnam and the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) is an heir to this tradition. In 1981, the Government of Vietnam declared the UBCV, one of the largest religious denominations in the country, illegal, confiscated its temples, and persecuted its clergy for refusing to join the state-sponsored Buddhist organizations.

The Government of Vietnam has often imprisoned UBCV clergy and subjected them to other forms of persecution; the Patriarch of the UBCV, the 85-year-old Most Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, has been detained and restrained for more than 2 decades in isolated areas of Vietnam. The Vietnamese Government has held the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, the Executive President of the UBCV and his deputy, the Venerable Thich Tue Sy, in various forms of detention since 1977. In 1978, he was tortured to death in a reeducation camp.

Many other leading UBCV figures have been detained and harassed. Evading tight surveillance, others have fled to Cambodia to escape religious repression and harassment.

Vietnam has acceded to international treaties that prohibit the forced repatriation of UNHCR-recognized refugees and that protect the right to faith, belief, and practice.

Vietnam's constitution protects the right of religious belief, yet on October 8, 2003, Vietnamese authorities initiated a tense standoff following the meeting, where police stopped a vehicle carrying the UBCV's new leadership and subsequently detained the eleven passengers. According to reports by the United States State Department, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, and the European Union, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam systematically limits the right of religious organizations to choose their own clergy.

During the 107th Congress, I along with my colleagues in the House of Representatives, passed H.R. 2833, the Vietnam Human Rights Act, on September 6, 2001, which noted the persecutions faced by various members of the UBCV over the past 25 years. Because of systematic, egregious, and ongoing abuses of religious freedom, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended that the President of the United States designate Vietnam as a "country of particular concern" under the provisions of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

Today, I am pleased to join the House of Representatives in congratulating the new leadership of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and urging the Government of Vietnam to respect the right of all independent religious organizations to meet, worship, operate, and practice their faith in accordance with Vietnam's own constitution and international covenants to which Vietnam is a signatory.

We are joined by our allies in being committed to promoting religious freedom in Vietnam, and, in furtherance of this goal, and urge the implementation of the recommendations of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom.

We ask that the United States Embassy in Vietnam to closely monitor cases of abuse of religious belief and practice, routinely visit detained clergy members, especially those in need of medical care, and report to the Congress on specific measures taken to protect and promote religious freedom in Vietnam.

HONORING SEEDS OF PEACE FOR ITS PROMOTION OF UNDERSTANDING AMONG YOUTH FROM REGIONS OF CONFLICT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 19, 2003

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to honor such a valuable program. Seeds of Peace was founded by John Wallach in 1993. It is a program designed to bring together young people from regions of conflict to study and learn about coexistence and conflict resolution.

The original focus of Seeds of Peace was to bring Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian, and Egyptian youth together, the program has since expanded to involve youths from other regions of conflict, including Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, the Balkans, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

Seeds of Peace provides young people with the opportunity to study, learn and interact at a summer camp in Otisfield, Maine, and also through regional programs at the Jerusalem

Center for Coexistence. Seeds of Peace works to dispel fear, mistrust, and prejudice, which are root causes of violence and conflict, and to build a new generation of leaders who are committed to achieving peace.

Seeds of Peace has been successful at revealing the human face of those whom youth have been taught to hate, by engaging campers in both guided coexistence sessions and ordinary summer camp activities such as living together in cabins, sharing meals, canoeing, swimming, playing sports, and creative exploration through arts and computers.

The Arab-Israeli conflict is currently at a critical juncture, and sustained progress towards peace depends on the emergence of a new generation of leaders who will choose dialogue, friendship, and openness over violence and hatred.

In addition to Seeds of Peace, I am a co-sponsor of Global Family Day, a House Resolution that seeks to raise awareness of children by having a one day holiday every year dedicated to family, community and sharing global traditions.

Similar to Global Family Day, Seeds of Peace provides year-round opportunities for former participants to build on the relationships they have forged at camp, so that the learning processes begun at camp can continue back in the participants' home countries, where they are most needed.

Programs such as these bring us closer to our foreign policy goals of raising our future leaders to think about global issues, and see the neighbors as other children like them, rather than enemies.

Both Global Family Day and Seeds of Peace are strongly supported by participating governments and many world leaders. It is especially important to reaffirm that youth must be involved in long-term, visionary solutions to conflicts perpetuated by cycles of violence. I am glad we have the opportunity to honor Seeds of Peace, for the work it has accomplished thus far, and for the impact it will have for generations.

COMMENDING AFGHAN WOMEN FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN AFGHAN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 19, 2003

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to support H. Res. 393, commending Afghan women for their participation in Afghan government and civil society, encouraging the inclusion of Afghan women in the political and economic life of Afghanistan, and advocating the protection of the human rights of all Afghan women in their Constitution.

As we are all aware, the women of Afghanistan suffered horrible tragedies under the Taliban regime. The Afghan people have since rejected the Taliban and are in the process of building a free and democratic republic and repairing the damage. These efforts have improved the daily lives of all Afghan citizens,