

Our men and women in uniform have sacrificed for our security, and their families bear a burden each and every day. The students at Heritage Elementary have made it their mission to give all they can to Operation Stork Support, a program that presents gift baskets to expectant mothers in the Fort Campbell community. These moms-to-be are separated from their loved ones by war, but we can help lessen their burden and show them how much we care. The Heritage Elementary students have raised \$740 in pennies—that's 74,000 pennies—for Operation Stork Support. I thank them for their contribution, their concern, and not least, their love for our military families.

UNDERSTANDING ISLAM AND DEFENDING FREEDOM—LIFT THE DE FACTO GAG ORDER ON NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATE SHIRIN EBADI

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, it was religious freedom that brought the Pilgrims to America's shores. In our beloved Constitution and Bill of Rights, we affirm our steadfast commitment to freedom of expression and freedom of the press as pillars of our democracy. Consequently, it pains and embarrasses me, as an American that the executive branch of our government continues to betray our democratic values and preclude Ms. Shirin Ebadi, the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and other distinguished Muslims from publishing their views for all Americans to read.

Ms. Shirin Ebadi is the first Iranian and the first Muslim woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. She is a distinguished lawyer, scholar, and teacher. President Bush has praised her tireless work as a champion of democracy and human rights. She represents Reformed Islam, and argues for an interpretation of Islamic law which promotes international respect for universal human rights. She is devoted to religious freedom, even to the extent of risking her own life, for example, to defend the rights of other faiths inside Iran. In short, she personifies precisely the type of Islamic voice of faith and scholarship with whom our nation should be in dialogue.

Why then is our government, through self-defeating U.S. Treasury Department Regulations, imposing a gag order on Ms. Ebadi? Why are Americans who attempt to help Ms. Ebadi publish her writings now being threatened with severe fines and lengthy prison sentences?

The current over-reaching Treasury Department regulations are demonstrably short-sighted, counterproductive, and unrepresentative of American ideals. That is why I have written to President Bush urging him to reverse to reverse this policy and demonstrate anew America's commitment to freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the free flow of ideas. I ask unanimous consent that my self-explanatory letter be reprinted in its entirety at the conclusion of my statement. The intent of the regulations, I presume, is to prevent giving beneficial trade revenue to governments that support terrorism, but preventing the publication of ideas is a clumsy, foolish way to try to protect Americans.

Ms. Ebadi's views are the antithesis of those of Osama bin Laden. She is in the same tradition as Solzhenitzen, Sakharov, Sharansky, Walesa, and Havel—all of whom risked their lives to condemn Soviet repression, thus helping give hope to their oppressed countrymen and women and end the Cold War. America should extend Ms. Ebadi and others like her the same support. That would be in keeping with the democratic values and ideals of the American people that have been championed by Democratic and Republican Presidents alike since from the founding of our republic until recent years.

Instead, unbeknownst to many Americans, the Bush Administration continues to enforce unreasonable regulations that silence Ms. Ebadi's voice in America just as effectively as if the Iranian mullahs imprisoned and silenced her, as they have on numerous occasions in the past.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,

November 24, 2004.

Hon. GEORGE W. BUSH,

President of the United States, The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I am writing to urge you to take immediate corrective action to defend America's commitment to freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the free flow of ideas. Specifically, I ask you to overturn existing trade-related regulations of the U.S. Treasury Department and substitute new regulations that will allow Ms. Shirin Ebadi from Iran to be heard and published as widely as possible in the U.S. and abroad. More generally, the regulations should be changed to allow public speech and communications around the world.

Ms. Ebadi, a distinguished Muslim jurist, lawyer, scholar, and teacher, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003. You have praised her tireless work as a champion of democracy and human rights. She represents Reformed Islam, and argues for an interpretation of Islamic law which promotes international respect for universal human rights. She is devoted to religious freedom, even to the extent of risking her own life, for example, to defend the rights of the Ba'hai community in Iran. In short, she personifies precisely the type of Islamic voice of faith and scholarship with whom our nation should be in dialogue.

Yet, Ms. Ebadi is now prohibited by U.S. Treasury Department regulations from writing and working with American editors to publish her memoirs in the U.S. These regulations are counterproductive for multiple reasons:

They silence Islamic proponents of freedom, democratic reform, tolerance, and universal human rights.

They prohibit Americans from contracting or collaborating with Ms. Ebadi and authors from other restricted countries to create or revise new books for Americans to read, or pay them in advance.

They prohibit American editors, publishers, and agents from working professionally on new or existing books with Ms. Ebadi and other distinguished authors in restricted countries.

Under threat of severe fines and lengthy prison sentences, they prohibit American publishers, editors, and agents from marketing or promoting Ms. Ebadi's writing and those of other pro-democracy authors from restricted countries in the Islamic world and elsewhere.

The practical consequence of these regulations is that American publishers simply cannot do business with Ms. Ebadi and other authors like her and cannot publish their books. Furthermore, Americans who want to

receive more information and learn more about society and culture in Iran, Sudan, and Cuba are limited now to reading what has already been written in such restricted countries. These regulations of the U.S. Government silence Ms. Ebadi's voice in America just as effectively as if the Iranian mullahs imprisoned and silenced her, as they have on numerous occasions in the past.

This policy and the underlying Treasury Department regulations are demonstrably shortsighted, counterproductive, and unrepresentative of American ideals. They urgently need to be replaced by less restrictive and proscriptive regulations that are reflective of American values and democratic traditions and that are consistent with the spirit and letter of the laws enacted by Congress in 1988 and further clarified in 1992 to ensure the free flow of information and ideas in international trade. The revised regulations clearly should enable Americans to contract, pay in advance, and work freely with Ms. Ebadi on revisions of her existing work and the creation of additional writings and to market and promote her writings without constraints.

Mr. President, you have the authority and power to rectify this betrayal of America's commitment to freedom of speech, press and religion. It is also noteworthy that the bipartisan 9/11 Commission has warned that if the U.S. does not act aggressively to define itself in the Islamic world (including the encouragement of more open societies), the Islamic extremists will gladly do the job for us. Accordingly, the 9/11 Commissioners recommend, in relation to the war on terrorism, that the U.S. Government use non-military means in addition to force to define anew what we stand for, and to lead by example in promoting freedom, democracy, and respect for universal human rights.

I can think of no clearer or easier example for America to set than for you to take whatever action is necessary, as a matter of urgency, to enable Ms. Ebadi to publish her writings in America.

Sincerely yours,

RUSH HOLT,
Member of Congress.

DIRECTING CLERK OF THE HOUSE TO MAKE TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS IN ENROLLMENT OF H.R. 4818

SPEECH OF

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 6, 2004

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, yesterday's vote on H. Con. Res. 528 is about much more than just eliminating a provision that Republicans sneaked into the Omnibus Appropriations bill. While that provision would have eroded existing privacy protections of American taxpayers, today's vote also highlights the growing abuse of legislative power and abuse of the public trust by the Republican leadership. It is also about priorities and meeting our nation's needs.

I opposed the massive spending bill when it was considered on the House floor on November 20, 2004, because I was certain that, without carefully examining it, I might be voting for inappropriate, irresponsible, or even embarrassing provisions. Sure enough, that is the case. The provision the Republicans inserted into the spending bill which would allow Members and staff on Congressional committees to

“sneak and peak” at taxpayers’ confidential tax filings, and, which H. Con. Res. 528 corrects, is just one example of the controversial changes and omissions included in the 3,000-page Omnibus package.

The Omnibus Appropriations bill includes another serious threat to taxpayers’ privacy, one that we are not fixing today. Behind closed doors, the Republicans stripped from the massive bill a House-passed amendment which would have prohibited the Internal Revenue Service from using private bounty-hunters to collect back taxes. That provision, which enjoyed strong-bipartisan support, would have prevented 2.6 million tax returns a year from being turned over to private debt collectors with personal financial stakes—receiving 25 cents on every dollar in making people “pay up.” This policy all but openly condones strong-arm collection tactics. Additionally, while IRS employees must respect taxpayer privacy or be liable, the bounty hunters will have no such restrictions. They are free to do as they please, and we have no reason to believe that they will not abuse the power the Republicans want to give them in order to increase their profits at the expense of taxpayer privacy.

Furthermore, 6 million employees are in danger of seeing the 40-hour work week eroded because of another glaring omission from the Omnibus Appropriations bill. In a blow to America’s workers, the Omnibus fails to include the Obey-Miller amendment to the Labor-HHS Appropriations bill that passed the House. That bipartisan provision, which also passed the Senate, would have ensured that the Administration’s new overtime rules do not harm Americans who depend on overtime to make ends meet, instead keeping in place a vital protection and keeping them from having to work longer hours for less pay.

There are also provisions included in—or excluded from—the bill that would undermine a woman’s right to choose, undercut environmental protections, and put workers’ retirement security in jeopardy if their employers chose to convert from defined benefit to cash-balance plans. But, unfortunately, it is not only the policy riders and omissions that are harmful to millions within our country. The funding levels of too many vital programs are shameful and jeopardize our citizens and our future.

For instance, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program, which has helped put thousands of police officers on our streets, is cut by roughly 20-percent. The Small Business Administration’s budget is reduced by 18-percent. There is no funding for the 7(a) loan program, which is the SBA’s flagship program for helping small businesses get access to capital. Although we are bringing home new veterans every day, the funding level for veterans’ health care is at least \$1.3 billion less than what the bipartisan Veterans’ Affairs Committee says is needed just to maintain the current level of services. The President’s own No Child Left Behind Act is underfunded by \$9.6 billion. Many key housing programs are slashed. Housing for the elderly was cut by \$27 million, and housing for people with disabilities was cut by \$9 million. Assistance for the homeless also saw a \$9 million cut. Community Development Block Grants are funded at \$212 million less than current levels. Contrary to Congress’s call in 2002 to double the National Science Foundation’s budget over the next five years, the omnibus

cuts NSF’s funding by \$61 million below Fiscal Year 2004’s level. While those cuts may seem small, they could truly decimate those programs, many which were already severely underfunded. At the same time that millionaires are not being asked to give up one penny of their tax cuts, investments that will make our country stronger are being cut.

Despite its containing controversial changes to the law and gross underfunding of essential government services, facts only known to a handful of powerful Republicans, my colleagues and I were given only a few hours to read the bill which funds 13 government departments, dozens of domestic agencies, and is one of the largest government funding bills to come before Congress. Not even the most accomplished speed-reader could have gotten through the bill in time, which is exactly what its authors were counting on when they rammed the bill through in one day. Such treatment of a bill of such importance is a discredit to the institution of Congress and a serious disservice to our country. One resolution fixing one issue cannot make up for the abuse of power and the abuse of the American taxpayer, employee, student, senior, and family that H.R. 4818 embodies.

DIRECTING CLERK OF THE HOUSE
TO MAKE TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS
IN ENROLLMENT OF H.R.
4818

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT C. SCOTT

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 6, 2004

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I support this provision to fix the misguided insertion in the Omnibus Appropriations bill allowing Congressional staff to view individual tax returns. However, I protest the process through which that insertion, and others, were inserted into a 3,000-plus page spending bill without the knowledge of most members and without an opportunity to correct all of them.

One such additional insertion is a provision which effectively eliminates one of our most effective tools to fight crime—the Federal Prison Industries program. Study after study—some of them covering as much as 16 years of follow-up data—have shown that inmates who participate in the Federal Prison Industries program are more likely to be employed and less likely to commit crimes than those who do not take part. And corrections officials tell us that Federal Prison Industries are critical to their maintaining safety and security in the prisons by giving inmates something productive to do with their time. Crime victims and the inmates’ dependents benefit, as well. Last year alone, inmate workers paid more than \$3 million from their wages in the form of restitution to victims and support payments to dependents.

Inserting provisions in a 3,000-plus page bill with no opportunity to know about them or review them prior to voting on them, not only violates House rules against legislating on an appropriations measure, but violates principles of transparency and regular order in legislating, as well.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Mr. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall no. 543, Technical corrections in the enrollment of the Bill H.R. 4818, I was absent due to a medical family emergency. Had I been present, I would have voted “aye.”

HONORING D.C. UNITED AS THE
MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER CHAMPIONS

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate D.C. United on winning the Major League Soccer Championship Cup on November 14, 2004. D.C. United beat the Kansas City Wizards 3–2 to win its fourth MLS championship in the league’s nine-year existence. Alecko Eskandarian scored United’s first two goals, leading D.C. to the MLS title. D.C. United has been the District’s most successful sports franchise in recent history and has been called the most successful club in MLS history. The team is a metaphor for the extraordinary progress our city itself has made—balanced budgets and surpluses, retaining and attracting homeowners, and a renaissance in economic development throughout the District of Columbia.

The mighty Black and Red recently celebrated their triumph with a victory rally at RFK Stadium, giving more than 1,000 fans an opportunity to get up close and personal with players, pose for pictures and get autographs. During the rally, Mayor Anthony Williams hailed the “dedication, teamwork and vision” of the champs, declaring November 17 “D.C. United Day” in the nation’s capital. Team captain Ryan Nelsen thanked “the 12th man”, the great fans of D.C. United.

In a season dominated by news about the signing of our big catch, 15 year old soccer phenom Freddy Adu, first-year coach Peter Nowak moved the focus off the media hype and with his team-oriented philosophy steered United to capture its first Cup since 1999. Nowak said, “They have real attitude and a winning mentality, they’re always going to come first and they’re always going to be the winners. They shared my vision and they got the cup at the end.”

Giving Adu his “props,” however, Freddy became the youngest player ever to win a championship in a major U.S. professional team sport. The unassuming teenager, though, preferred to focus on the team’s accomplishments rather than his own.

D.C. United also won championships in 1996 and 1997. Unfortunately, after its 1999 MLS Cup, the team missed the playoffs in 2000, 2001 and 2002. But the road back to the top of the league became painted with hard work, patience and a determined eye toward winning the Cup back.

The team is currently conducting its annual United Holiday Toy Drive benefiting Children’s National Medical Center. They invite the public