

nearly 200 attendees. We must act now before another tragedy strikes.

I urge my colleagues to join me and the other co-sponsors of this bill to reduce the risk of polyurethane foam fires. Passage of this responsible measure will make American homes and workplaces safer.

HONORING THE PEOPLE OF  
NAGORNO KARABAKH

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
*Thursday, February 17, 2005*

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the people of Nagorno Karabakh who began their National Freedom Movement seventeen years ago.

On February 20, 1988, the people of Nagorno Karabakh officially petitioned the then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for reunification with Armenia. This region had been placed within the borders of Azerbaijan in 1921 under the rule of Stalin, even though 96 percent of the population of Nagorno Karabakh was ethnically Armenian.

The response from Azerbaijan and the former Soviet Union on this request was violent. Military attacks against Nagorno Karabakh followed, resulting in a brutal campaign of aggression largely ignored by the outside world. This did not cause the people of Nagorno Karabakh to falter, for they continued to defend their freedom.

Since declaring independence in 1991, the Nagorno Karabakh Republic has grown into an active and prosperous democracy. The first plenary sitting of the 10th session of the NKR National Assembly of the 3rd calling took place on February 9, 2005.

The people of Nagorno Karabakh should be commended for their commitment to democracy and achieving sovereignty in the face of strong opposition from neighboring nations. The United States is honored to share such fundamental values with Nagorno Karabakh as democracy, liberty, and a profound respect for human rights.

The people of the United States stand by our friends in Nagorno Karabakh in hoping for a peaceful resolution to their ongoing conflict with the Republic of Azerbaijan. Just as the people of Nagorno Karabakh saw the necessity of a peaceful secession from Azerbaijan seventeen years ago, so too must a peaceful resolution be achieved with this current conflict.

For a people who have suffered so much in pursuit of self-determination, the citizens of Nagorno Karabakh must not abandon hope for a greater future. Through their faultless commitment to democratic values and preservation of human rights, Nagorno Karabakh has made a laudable effort to achieve peace and will soon inspire its Azerbaijani neighbors to return to the peace process.

Like so many who have undergone the pains of oppression, the people of Nagorno Karabakh must rest assured knowing that democracy breeds peace. The United States will continue to promote the cause of our democratic friends in Nagorno Karabakh, not yielding until the goals set forth on February 20, 1988, have been realized in full.

INTRODUCTION OF THE WITNESS  
SECURITY AND PROTECTION ACT  
OF 2005

HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

OF MARYLAND  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
*Thursday, February 17, 2005*

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the countless communities across this Nation that live under a tyranny of fear due to witness intimidation.

For too long some of our bravest citizens who courageously sought to testify in criminal proceedings have been subject to terror at the hands of criminals right here on American soil.

Drug dealers and other criminals have employed a variety of brutal tactics to silence witnesses and intimidate their families, including vandalism, threats, beatings, stabbings, shootings, and even murder.

Witness intimidation is a menacing cancer in our society that, if left untreated, will spread and intensify—undermining the very foundation of our criminal justice system. This cancer is eroding public trust in the government's ability to protect witnesses and demoralizing needed community cooperation to enforce the law.

Our criminal justice system relies on witnesses to provide essential evidence to law enforcement in the administration of justice. We cannot allow street thugs to persecute citizens determined to rescue their communities in the grips of violence and illegal drugs.

In Baltimore City reporting crimes, or testifying in court cases involving drugs or violence, can be extremely dangerous and potentially even deadly. According to Baltimore City's State Attorney Patricia Jessamy, prosecutors throughout Baltimore encounter witnesses or victims on a daily basis who are too terrified to testify.

Specifically, her office estimates "at least 25 percent of non-fatal shooting cases are dismissed due to witness [intimidation] issues and most murder cases are affected on some level." They also report "5 cases where a witness was shot or murdered since September last year."

When cases crumble because of witness intimidation, potentially guilty defendants are free once again to pollute our communities with drugs and victimize the innocent.

Mr. Speaker perhaps nowhere is there an example more clear in illustrating the realities of witness intimidation than in the tragedy that claimed the lives of the Dawson family from my district in East Baltimore City.

In response to Mrs. Dawson's heroic efforts to report intense drug distribution activity in her neighborhood, the Dawson family home was firebombed on October 16, 2002. This insidious act not only took the lives of Mr. Dawson and Mrs. Dawson, but also those of their 5 young children.

Unfortunately, this was not the only serious incident of witness intimidation to surface in Baltimore City.

Baltimore Police Detective Thomas Newman was murdered two years ago due to his testimony in a trial concerning a shooting.

On December 2, 2004, a DVD produced by criminals entitled "Stop Snitching" surfaced in Baltimore. It graphically illustrates the violent drug culture and the code of silence on the streets that can paralyze entire communities

seeking to abide by the law. "Stop Snitching" goes so far as to depict grotesque images of three bullet-ridden, bloody corpses accompanied by the phrase "snitch prevention."

On January 15th 2005, in the North Baltimore community of Harwood, Edna McAber had her home firebombed in apparent retaliation for her work to purge her community of criminal activity.

Regrettably, these aforementioned examples are representative of a growing problem of bold intimidation that send a clear message to the Nation that cannot be overstated—those who would cooperate with police in the pursuit of justice face serious retaliation and possibly execution.

Witness protection programs provide an invaluable resource to law enforcement to combat crime and address witness intimidation. The Witness Security Program (WSP) established in 1970 and administered by the Office of Enforcement Operations at the Department of Justice has successfully carried out its charge. Civilian witnesses testifying in federal cases that deal with organized crime or 3 other serious offenses have been provided with long-term protection and relocation.

The United States Marshals Service (USMS) has done an outstanding job in protecting and relocating witnesses and their families who have been placed in their custody. They can provide them with safety, new identities, housing, employment, medical treatment, and funds to cover the most essential of needs.

While non-federal witnesses can participate in the WSP under certain conditions, the State is asked to reimburse the federal government for the cost of providing such protection.

With record State deficits, local prosecutors are often placed in a challenging position of having to choose between directing their dollars to necessary prosecutorial initiatives such as investigating the illegal distribution of drugs or directing their limited resources into costly, but necessary witness protection programs—or, unfortunately, providing no protection at all.

No one wins when our criminal justice system is forced to choose between these two worthwhile ends.

That is why I rise today to introduce the Witness Security and Protection Act of 2005. I am proud to have the esteemed senior Senator from New York, Senator SCHUMER, reintroduce a companion measure to this bill in the Senate.

This legislation would establish within the USMS a Short-Term State Witness Protection Program tailored to meet the needs of witnesses testifying in State and local criminal trials involving homicide, a serious felony or a serious drug offense.

This measure authorizes \$90 million in competitive grants per year for the next three years so that State and local district attorneys and the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, can provide short-term witness protection to their witnesses. Specifically, prosecutors can use these funds to provide witness protection or pay the cost of protecting their witnesses in the Short-Term Witness Protection Program within the USMS.

We give priority in awarding grants to States with high homicide rates. Given our current fiscal position, it is important to ensure that our dollars are targeted to impact those most in need.