

also be better informed by such centralized statistics.

This legislation directs the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council to set up the hotline. The Council is an existing interagency body established by statute to prescribe uniform principles and standards for financial institutions and to otherwise coordinate regulatory activity among the Federal banking regulators. The Federal Reserve, FDIC, NCUA, OCC, and OTS are all members of the Council.

The legislation also directs the Council to work with State banking regulators to integrate them into the hotline service. And, the Conference of State Bank Supervisors testified that they have already started to implement such a plan. The act also requires the Council to report to Congress 6 months after enactment on the agency's efforts to establish a public interagency Web site, likewise directing and referring consumer complaints and inquiries received on the Internet concerning any financial institution to the appropriate Federal or State financial institution regulatory agency.

I should note that not only the OCC but the Council as a whole has taken some steps in this direction on its own initiative, with an eye to both cutting costs and improving service to consumers. Last summer, the Council formed a working group to study ways in which the separate consumer complaint handling systems of each regulator could be streamlined and leveraged to better and more efficiently serve consumers.

With this legislation, we give consumers a statutory mandate and a timetable to support and guide these efforts, as well as a framework for congressional oversight.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill. I thank the Chair and the ranking member and subcommittee Ranking Member BIGGERT and many others for their help on this legislation. I urge a "yea" vote.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would like to thank the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), the Chair of the Financial Institution Subcommittee, for her hard work on this bill, and I am pleased to be a cosponsor of this bill and urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Speaker, if you are a consumer and you have a complaint or a problem of a financial nature, which regulator are you going to call, the FDIC, the Federal Reserve, the OCC, the CFTC, FTC, OFHEO, HUD, Treasury, OTS, NCUA, the SEC? In these challenging times, consumers should not have to have a Ph.D. in finance to quickly and easily get in touch with the appropriate State and Federal banking regulators.

Given the complexity of our banking system and the various regulators that work in this area, consumers may not

know where to turn when they have a dispute with their institutions. This legislation creates a single hotline that can help steer consumers in the right direction. Federal regulators currently have had an informal system in place to redirect misplaced consumer complaints, and regulators are constantly trying to improve the system. But this bill will ensure that no consumer complaint falls through the cracks. Consumers should not have to make 12 phone calls to find the right regulator.

Again, I am pleased that this bill will ensure that consumer complaints are heard and that regulators are responsive. I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

I yield back the balance of my time. Mrs. MALONEY of New York. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4332.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SENSE OF HOUSE ESTABLISHING NATIONAL WATERMELON MONTH

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the resolution (H. Res. 578) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that there should be established a National Watermelon Month, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 578

Whereas watermelon production constitutes an important sector of the agricultural industry of the United States;

Whereas, according to the January 2006 statistics compiled by the National Agricultural Statistics Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, the United States produces 4,200,000,000 pounds of watermelon annually;

Whereas watermelon is grown in 49 States, is purchased and consumed in all 50 States, and is exported to Canada;

Whereas evidence indicates that eating 2.5 to 5 cups of fruits and vegetables daily as part of a healthy diet will improve health and protect against diseases such as cancer, high blood pressure, stroke, and heart disease;

Whereas proper diet and nutrition are important factors in preventing diseases such as childhood obesity and diabetes;

Whereas watermelon has no fat or cholesterol and is an excellent source of the vitamins A, B6, and C, fiber, and potassium, which are vital to good health and disease prevention;

Whereas watermelon is also an excellent source of lycopene;

Whereas lycopene, an antioxidant found only in a few red plant foods, has been shown to reduce the risk of certain cancers;

Whereas watermelon is a heart-healthy food that has qualified for the heart-check mark from the American Heart Association;

Whereas watermelon has been a nutritious summer favorite from generation to generation;

Whereas it is important to educate citizens of the United States regarding the health benefits of watermelon and other fruits and vegetables; and

Whereas July would be an appropriate month to establish as National Watermelon Month: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that there should be established a National Watermelon Month to recognize the health benefits of watermelon and the importance of watermelon to the agriculture industry of the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) and the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H. Res. 578 that will establish a National Watermelon Month.

Watermelon has been enjoyed over the years as one of our country's favorite foods. As Mark Twain said, "It is chief of this world's luxuries, king by the grace of God over all the fruits of the earth. When one has tasted it, he knows what the angels eat."

According to the United States Agriculture Department statistics, the United States produces 4.2 billion pounds of watermelon annually. This summertime staple ranges in size from 5 pounds to over 40 pounds, and is grown in 49 States. Many towns in the U.S. strive to become the Watermelon Capital of the World; however, Cordele, Georgia has won this title repeatedly by producing the biggest, best, and most abundant watermelons in the country. Watermelon may be eaten in a variety of ways and is also often used to flavor summer drinks, including sweet red wine.

And lest anyone accuse us of dealing with a frivolous subject, let me call attention to a serious matter. In a time where we have all become aware of the benefits of good nutrition, it is fortunate watermelon provides an excellent source of vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin B, and vitamin B1. Additionally, many other beneficial minerals are

contained in watermelon and are shown to help prevent cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, and a host of other serious diseases. Furthermore, the antioxidant lycopene, found only in a few red plant foods, has been shown to reduce the risk of certain cancers. Because watermelon is such a nutritious, heart-healthy food, the American Heart Association has qualified watermelon for the well-known "Heart-Check Mark."

The great joy of eating a slice of watermelon on a hot summer day lives in the memories of almost all Americans. For these nutritious and delicious reasons, I express my support to a National Watermelon Month that will provide the watermelon industry many opportunities to market their product and to educate the public about the health benefits associated with consuming watermelon through various related programs.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her expression of support for the resolution. I am also going to support the resolution. I just want to add one note of observation so that all those who are enjoying watermelons in this country also keep in mind the people who do the work, who pick those watermelons. It is hard work.

Today we have other bills under suspension that will give us a chance to celebrate the work of laborers. I think that it is important that we are grateful for those who pick the watermelons, and we have to recognize in this market where there are increasing restrictions on migrant workers, making it very difficult for farmers to get the kind of labor that they used to get. We are also seeing that many farmers are beginning to turn to prison labor. This should be a concern to us, all of us who want to make sure that all of those people out of jobs right now in this country who would like to work on farms would have the chance to get that work.

There is an article from the Christian Science Monitor that refers to this problem. I would like to include that in the RECORD. There also is an article about a settlement that was reached with workers regarding the attempt by a major agricultural company to circumvent Department of Labor rules and also circumvent the H-2A program that resulted actually in a settlement of a very prominent lawsuit about a month ago. I would like to include that article from the Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid.

[From the Christian Science Monitor, Aug. 22, 2007]

U.S. FARMERS USING PRISON LABOR

With tightening restrictions on migrant workers, some farmers are turning to the incarcerated.

For labor-rights activists, federal immigration reform is the only viable solution to worker shortages.

Marc Grossman, spokesman for the United Farm Workers of America, says inmate labor undermines what unionized farm workers have wanted for years: to be paid based on skill and experience. "It's rather insulting that the state [Arizona] would look so poorly on farm workers that they would attempt to use inmates," Grossman says. There is also the food-safety aspect, he says: Experienced workers understand sanitary harvesting.

"Agriculture does not have a reliable workforce, and the answer does not lie with prison labor," says Paul Simonds of the Western Growers Association, a trade association representing California and Arizona. "This just underscores the need for legislation to be passed to provide a legal, stable workforce." A prison lockdown would be disastrous, he points out, with perishable crops awaiting harvest. Other crops, like asparagus and broccoli, require skilled workers.

Although the ADC is considering innovative solutions—including satellite prisons—to fulfill companies' requests for inmate labor, prison officials agree that, in the end, the demand is too high. "To go into a state where agriculture is worth \$9.2 billion and expect to meet a workforce need is impossible," says Katie Decker, spokeswoman for ADC. At any given time only about 3,300 prisoners statewide (out of a prison population of about 37,000) are cleared to work outside.

ACI provides inmates to nine private agriculture companies in Arizona, ranging from a hydroponics greenhouse tomato plant to a green chile cannery. Unlike other sectors where federal regulations require that inmate workers be paid a prevailing wage and receive worker compensation, agriculture companies can hire state inmates on a contract basis. They must be paid a minimum of \$2 per hour. Thirty percent of their wages go to room and board in prison. The rest goes to court-ordered restitution for victims, any child support, and a mandatory savings account. Private companies are required to pay for transportation from the prison to the worksite and for prison guards.

For Reyna, his work on farms over the past couple of years has added \$9,000 in his savings account and given him a renewed respect for his Mexican father's lifetime of stoop labor.

At Dixon's farm, it's 103 degrees F. The inmate crews, wearing orange jumpsuits, work in a rhythmic line, calling out the number of the watermelons, and alongside the trailer. Just a few yards away, Mexican workers also work in a line. The inmates will quit at 4 p.m., while the immigrant laborers may work 13-hour days. "We go back, they stay out there," Reyna says. "It really isn't the same."

In the farm's office, watermelons line the counter, and photos of migrant workers hang in dusty frames. When asked why he doesn't sell the farm, Dixon says, "the inmates, the migrants, these people are part of the family—that's why I keep this darn place."

Dixon says he supports the idea of a reformed, guest-worker program that would employ migrant workers during the harvest and return them to Mexico in the winter. But until that happens, he's willing to fight for the workers he's shared the land with for most of his life.

"People are crossing the border because they are starving to death," Dixon says, "I don't care what their status is. If they are hungry and thirsty, I am going to feed them.

"I could sell this and quit," he continues, "But I believe in supporting the American farming industry."

[From the Texas RioGrande Legal Aid Press Center, Mar. 26, 2008]

FARMWORKERS REACH SETTLEMENT IN LAWSUIT AGAINST WATERMELON GROWER

EAGLE PASS, TX.—Twenty two Texas farmworkers have reached a settlement with three Rio Grande Valley companies over a lawsuit regarding the importation of more than 400 foreign guestworkers into the United States between 2001 and 2007.

Represented by Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA), the leading provider of legal aid in Texas, the workers claimed that Nowell Borders, L.P., Hargill Harvesting & Packing, Inc., Mata Trucking Company, and Martinez Packing Company, upon advice of counsel, misused the U.S. visa program to hire foreign labor and avoid providing housing, transportation, and meals to workers. The companies applied for guestworker visas using the H-2B program instead of the H-2A program which would have required the recruitment of domestic workers at higher wages.

"This settlement signifies a commitment on behalf of all four companies to engage in fair employment practices and respect the rights of American farmworkers," said TRLA attorney Javier Riojas. The settlement also creates a mechanism for resolving future disputes without resorting to litigation.

John Flanigan, Executive Vice President for Hargill Harvesting and Packing, Inc., states he was pleased with the agreement that was reached and enjoyed working with TRLA to resolve the dispute.

The companies compensated the workers for more than \$60,000 in wages and agreed to modify their employment practices so that U.S. workers are hired first and receive equal pay and benefits compared to foreign workers. The companies also agreed to use the H-2A guestworker program that provides more benefits and protections for workers than the H-2B program.

Originally filed in October 2007, the lawsuit also targeted the Department of Labor (DOL) for its failure to enforce the regulations on the guestworker program. The case against DOL is not part of the settlement and is still ongoing. See Riojas, et al v. Chao, DR-07-CA-058, W.D. Tex., filed Oct. 9, 2007.

"The law guarantees that U.S. workers have certain protections over foreign labor. The Department of Labor looked the other way in this situation and the federal government, of all entities, should be looking out for U.S. workers the most," added TRLA attorney and Equal Justice Works Fellow Jake Wedemeyer.

Established in 1970, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc. (TRLA) is a nonprofit organization that provides free civil legal services to low-income and disadvantaged clients in a 68-country service area. TRLA's mission is to promote the dignity, self-sufficiency, safety and stability of low-income Texas residents by providing high-quality legal assistance and related educational services.

If we keep in mind there are 4.2 billion pounds of watermelons grown in this country annually, we understand that this is a very important business. It is also, as my friend Representative FOXX points out, a matter that relates to nutrition and health; and let's face it, enjoyment. People love watermelon. While enjoying it, we need to keep in mind the people who are doing the work raising this tremendous fruit. Let's remember those workers and make sure that they have basic rights. Let's make sure that they can make a living and support their families. Let's

make sure that they live in conditions that are humane. In that way we can truly celebrate National Watermelon Month, not only for those consuming watermelons, but also those helping to grow and harvest those watermelons.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I want to give thanks to all those who grow and produce watermelons and make it possible for all of us to eat them, those who plant, grow, and pick them and get them to markets where we can enjoy them. I urge Members to support the passage of H. Res. 578.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady and congratulate her on her service in the Congress and say how much I enjoy working with her.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 578, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

NATIONAL FUNERAL DIRECTOR AND MORTICIAN RECOGNITION DAY

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 892) expressing support for designation of March 11, 2008, as "National Funeral Director and Mortician Recognition Day," as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 892

Whereas the death of a family member, friend, or loved one is a devastating emotional event;

Whereas the memorialization and celebration of the decedent's life is the fabric of today's funeral service;

Whereas the family of the decedent has traditionally looked to funeral directors and morticians for consolation, strength, and guidance in the planning and implementation of a funeral ceremony; and

Whereas March 11, 2008, would be an appropriate day to designate as "National Funeral Director and Mortician Recognition Day" to pay tribute to these funeral directors and morticians who, day in and day out, assist our Nation's families in their times of sadness and grief and help families mourn a death and celebrate a life: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives supports the designation of a "National Funeral Director and Mortician Recognition Day".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) and the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, in recognition of the fact that one of our colleagues, Representative WILSON who I am proud to say is from the State of Ohio, has a family-owned business and is a funeral director, I yield him such time as he may consume.

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 892 which I introduced to express the support for the establishment of the National Funeral Director and Mortician Recognition Day.

I introduced this resolution because I know firsthand how funeral directors help families through the grieving process in a most difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, I am a fourth generation funeral director in my family, and I know very well the profound service that funeral directors provide to their communities. Funeral directors are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. When a family calls a funeral director to make arrangements for a recently deceased loved one, the funeral director must put everything else on hold and attend to the family's needs immediately.

We all know that the death of a loved one can be emotionally devastating. Funeral directors play an essential role in giving families the space they need to navigate the grieving process. By taking care of all of the logistical arrangements, funeral directors allow families to celebrate the life of the recently departed and spending time together as a family.

Funeral directors also provide a major public service by participating in planning for pandemic disease and other mass casualty events that could happen within their community. Because of their familiarity with the physical aspects of death, they provide invaluable technical knowledge and assistance to public officials who are responsible for contingency planning.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that funeral homes are also economic anchors of their community. The funeral business is often a family business with multiple generations serving the community as funeral directors. Through good economic times and bad, funeral directors are there to serve their families with caring compassion and certainly with strict integrity.

As a lifelong funeral director, I know how important this service is to grieving families. This is why I think that it is proper that this Congress recognize the hard work and the sacrifice of thousands of funeral directors in this country by passing this bill. I thank Chairman WAXMAN for his support in this measure, and I urge the Congress to support it.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge passage of this resolution expressing support for the designation of a National

Funeral Director and Mortician Recognition Day. Mr. Speaker, I think it is critical that we recognize the service that our Nation's funeral directors and morticians provide at one of the most difficult times in a person's life. Death is something that affects us all. It sees no boundaries, nor does it discriminate among social or economic classes. It hits us all in different ways, but one thing is for certain: the time immediately following the death of a loved one is one of the most trying times for anyone. It is during this critical time that funeral directors and morticians from around the country provide our Nation's citizens with the support and guidance necessary to make the right decisions for their beloved ones.

This allows for those who are grieving to concentrate on what is most important: supporting family and friends. Funeral directors and morticians have the arduous task of carrying out the final wishes of the deceased. They are involved in all details of the process, everything from arranging for pallbearers to making sure that the correct paperwork is completed to file for appropriate certificates with the State.

They are tasked with demonstrating the same compassion with every family they meet, as if that family is the most important family that the funeral director has ever met.

It is also important to recognize that most funeral homes are small, family-owned and operated facilities. These individuals work long, irregular hours and contribute to the economic well-being of communities around our Nation.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, I believe recognizing those in this caring community is long overdue. They are entrusted with the enormous task of making the last hours you will have with the earthly remains of loved ones as peaceful as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in supporting this resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I support this resolution. I am from Cleveland, Ohio, and all of us know in any community we are from, we come into contact with funeral directors and morticians. Funeral directors make it possible for families to be able to find a way to come to grips with a passing. Those transitions in life are very important moments for the survivors because we need help in being able to deal with a situation when we lose a loved one, and funeral directors perform a very valuable service.

I know as someone who represents the people of Cleveland that when I go to pay my respects to someone who has passed, I have the opportunity not only to meet the families that are grieving and comfort them, but also to see the work that is being done by those who are directing the funeral. It is something that is easy to lose sight of when you are moving into territory that is laden with grief. But it is also something that is appropriate for us at this