

This Member, and anyone who is in the Committee on International Relations will testify, for years I have been warning what the results of this administration's policy towards Afghanistan would be. Years, I predicted over and over again that, unless we did something in Afghanistan to change the situation, that we would end up with Afghanistan as a center of, number one, terrorism, a base for terrorism for the Central Asia but also for the world; that it would be repressive and have one of the most repressive and fanatic regimes and anti-Western regimes on the planet; and, number three, it would be the center for the growth of heroin and that it would put all of the resources that, the billions of dollars one receives from the growth of one-third of the world's heroin in the hands of these religious fanatics. That is exactly what has happened.

Yes, it is heroin money in the hands of the Taliban leaders that are fanning this, the flame of discontent and violence in Central Asia that takes advantage of the dictatorships. The dictators should not just focus, however, on trying to wipe out their opponents and wipe out these fundamentalist movements. They should focus on trying to create a democratic alternative so that people in those countries once be attracted to this type of fanaticism.

Even the people of Afghanistan are not attracted to the fanaticism of the Taliban. The Taliban have an iron-fisted control there and have steadily refused to have democratic elections.

It is my sad, sad duty to, again, repeat the charge on the floor of the House of Representatives, as I have on numerous occasions in the Committee on International Relations, that this administration, not only has discarded human rights and democracy as a priority but has a covert police of supporting one of the worst governments and oppressive governments in the world; and I am talking about the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

I have tried to investigate this for years, and I have been repeatedly cut off by the State Department from receiving the documents that would disprove, and I would like to disprove this charge, because it is a shame for any American to think that our government would be supporting this regime.

But I can testify here today that, every time the opposition to the Taliban has had a chance of dislodging the Taliban from power in Afghanistan, this administration has run to their rescue time and time again.

Now, people do not know, even in this body, do not know the details, much less the American people. But those are the facts, and I can verify that over and over again.

We must have a policy that champions human rights and democracy in Afghanistan and Central Asia. This is what will bring peace to the world. Otherwise, there will be conflict, there will be bloodshed, there will be tyranny. It is a result of a lack of commit-

ment here on our part in the United States to the ideals that our Founding Fathers thought we would support.

So today I support H. Con. Res. 397 because it states very clearly that we in Congress believe that the ideals of democracy and human rights should be brought to bear in Central Asia, including Afghanistan, but especially the Central Asian republics, and that that should be the policy of the United States Government.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) for his eloquent statement. I do urge support, again, for H. Con. Res. 397.

As I close my comments, I want to recognize the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BARRETT), who is presiding, who has been presiding over so many sessions and Suspension Calendars over the years. He has given 10 years of distinguished service to this body and to our State. I will have a chance to say more about that later this week. But in the course of doing that, he has presided over many suspensions from the House Committee on International Relations. So we thank him for his patience and his evenhandedness in that capacity and the many hours he has spent in presiding over this body.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 397, a resolution voicing concern about serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in most states of Central Asia, including substantial non-compliance with their Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) commitments on democratization and the holding of free and fair elections.

I would like especially to draw the attention of my colleagues to the section of the resolution dealing with Kazakhstan. This oil rich country is riddled with corruption, and its dictator, President Nursultan Nazarbayev, has become increasingly repressive and appears determined to leave no stone unturned in his quest to silence the press, eliminate the opposition parties, and plunder every dime of profit that the country has earned from its oil and mineral wealth.

Mr. Nazarbayev is reportedly the eighth richest person in the world; yet more than one-third of the population of Kazakhstan are below the poverty line as defined by the World Bank. The German-based organization, Transparency International, recently surveyed corruption in 96 countries and rated Kazakhstan as the 12th most corrupt country in that group. Moreover, the U.S. Department of Justice recently launched an investigation into bribes allegedly paid by U.S. oil companies to President Nazarbayev and his cronies.

But even worse than the corruption is the attempt by Nazarbayev to snuff out every vestige of democracy and freedom of expression in Kazakhstan. In January 1999, he called a snap presidential election and ensured his own re-election by having his main opponent, former Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin, disqualified and driven into exile. Both this election and the parliamentary elections that followed in October 1999 were denounced as unfair by the OSCE. To make sure that these

and other anti-democratic actions are not criticized, the Nazarbayev regime has virtually silenced the independent media by intimidation, arrests and seizure of presses.

In an effort to reverse the repressive trend in Kazakhstan, H. Con. Res. 397 calls upon the government of Kazakhstan and other governments in Central Asia to engage in a serious and comprehensive "national dialogue" with opposition and independent forces, "on an equal footing, on institutionalizing measures to hold free and fair elections," Last December, former Prime Minister Kazhegeldin of Kazakhstan proposed a detailed vision of what a "national dialogue" should entail, and it serves as a model for all of Central Asia.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support H. Con. Res. 397 and urge its adoption. The resolution forthrightly exposes the trends of increasing repression in Central Asia and proposes a solution in the form of a genuine "national dialogue" between the governments of the region and the opposition political parties and independent organizations that speak for the peoples of Central Asia. This is a wonderful message of hope and support for this House to send as it winds up its work in the 106th Congress.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 397, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. 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.

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ACKNOWLEDGING AND SALUTING CONTRIBUTIONS OF COIN COLLECTORS

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 154) to acknowledge and salute the contributions of coin collectors.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. CON. RES. 154

Whereas in 1982, after a period of 28 years, the Congress of the United States resumed the United States commemorative coin programs;

Whereas since 1982, 37 of the Nation's worthy institutions, organizations, foundations, and programs have been commemorated under the coin programs;

Whereas since 1982, the Nation's coin collectors have purchased nearly 49,000,000 commemorative coins that have yielded nearly \$1,800,000,000 in revenue and more than \$407,000,000 in surcharges benefitting a variety of deserving causes;

Whereas the United States Capitol has benefitted from the commemorative coin surcharges that have supported such commendable projects as the restoration of the Statue

of Freedom atop the Capitol dome, the furtherance of the development of the United States Capitol Visitor Center, and the planned National Garden at the United States Botanic Gardens on the Capitol grounds;

Whereas surcharges from the year 2000 coin program commemorating the Library of Congress bicentennial benefit the Library of Congress bicentennial programs, educational outreach activities (including schools and libraries), and other activities of the Library of Congress; and

Whereas the United States Capitol Visitor Center commemorative coin program will commence in January 2001, with the surcharges designated to further benefit the Capitol Visitor Center: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Congress of the United States acknowledges and salutes the ongoing generosity, loyalty, and significant role that coin collectors have played in supporting our Nation's meritorious charitable organizations, foundations, institutions, and programs, including the United States Capitol, the Library of Congress, and the United States Botanic Gardens.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BENTSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS)

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material concerning Senate Concurrent Resolution 154.

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

There was no objection.

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

The resolution before us today, Mr. Speaker, recognizes one of the truly unsung contributions made in this country, that of thousands of coin collectors who buy commemorative coins issued by the United States Mint. Senator LOTT introduced this resolution in the Senate, and it was passed on the Senate floor last week on October 23.

This resolution acknowledges and salutes the ongoing generosity, loyalty, and significant role that coin collectors have played in supporting our Nation's charitable organizations, foundations, institutions, and programs. While coin collecting has been a hobby for many years, collecting commemorative coins is a little different. The coins are issued in a limited quantity, and they have surcharges that make the cost much more than the face value of the coins.

The coin community has been very supportive and generous in buying commemorative coins during the last 20 years, a period of significant change for the commemorative coin program. Since 1982, when Congress resumed the commemorative coin program, which was after a 28-year break, 37 commemorative coins have been authorized.

In addition to the honor given to the recipients and the educational value of these coins, they have also raised more than \$400 million for a variety of charitable organizations and other worthy causes. That is \$407 million to be exact. Our Nation's coin collectors and coin dealers have been essential to the success of these programs. They have purchased nearly 49 million commemorative coins, which has yielded \$1.8 billion in revenue and, as I mentioned, \$407 million in contributions to very deserving causes.

This resolution recognizes the accomplishments and the contributions of the commemorative coin community and gives them the recognition that they deserve.

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

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

(Mr. BENTSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. Con. Res. 154. Over the last few years, Congress has passed bipartisan legislation to mint several commemorative coins, the proceeds of which have gone to a number of important organizations and projects that benefit communities across America.

Commemorative coins, which are available directly from the United States Mint, are generally approved by members of the Citizens Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee. This committee was established by the 102nd Congress for the purpose of recommending, with input from the public and coin collectors, the events, persons or places that are appropriate for commemoration through congressionally mandated coins. Commemorative coins typically celebrate and honor people, places, events, and institutions.

It is fitting for Congress to honor the Nation's coin collectors, because it is largely they who purchase commemorative coins. By doing so, coin collectors ensure our national heritage, as reflected in our coins, is preserved and valued by our citizens. In addition, funds raised from commemorative coin surcharges have funded important projects that are near and dear to every Member that serves and has served in this institution. These include restoration of the Statue of Freedom on top of our Capitol Dome, the Library of Congress's bicentennial programs, the upcoming U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, and many others.

In short, Mr. Speaker, these commemorative coins pay for themselves and, in the process, pay for important projects that would otherwise be funded with taxpayers' money. We therefore thank our Nation's coin collectors through this resolution and honor their devotion to their hobby, one that certainly benefits all Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this resolution and urge its immediate passage.

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

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate concurrent resolution, S. Con. Res. 154.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate concurrent resolution was concurred in.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNITION OF THE BIRMINGHAM PLEDGE

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendments to the joint resolution (House Joint Resolution 102) recognizing that the Birmingham Pledge has made a significant contribution in fostering racial harmony and reconciliation in the United States and around the world, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

Senate amendments:

Strike out all after the resolving clause and insert:

That—

(1) Congress recognizes that the Birmingham Pledge is a significant contribution toward fostering racial harmony and reconciliation in the United States and around the world;

(2) Congress commends the creators, promoters, and signatories of the Birmingham Pledge for the steps they are taking to make the United States and the world a better place for all people; and

(3) it is the sense of Congress that a particular week should be designated as "National Birmingham Pledge Week".

Strike out the preamble and insert:

Whereas Birmingham, Alabama, was the scene of racial strife in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s;

Whereas since the 1960s, the people of Birmingham have made substantial progress toward racial equality, which has improved the quality of life for all its citizens and led to economic prosperity;

Whereas out of the crucible of Birmingham's role in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, a present-day grassroots movement has arisen to continue the effort to eliminate racial and ethnic divisions in the United States and around the world;

Whereas that grassroots movement has found expression in the Birmingham Pledge, which was authored by Birmingham attorney James E. Rotch, is sponsored by the Community Affairs Committee of Operation New Birmingham, and is promoted by a broad cross section of the community of Birmingham;

Whereas the Birmingham Pledge reads as follows:

"I believe that every person has worth as an individual.

"I believe that every person is entitled to dignity and respect, regardless of race or color.

"I believe that every thought and every act of racial prejudice is harmful; if it is in my