

Today it is very difficult for visitors to traverse the site and understand the Battle because of so many changes to the Battleground. Since its original designation as a Park, the Battleground has been partially obscured by buildings and monuments; by disposition of dredging soil; by landscaping; by construction of roads, picnic pads and other structures; and by subsidence ranging from eight to ten feet. Interpretation of the Battle is further complicated by the presence of the Battleship of Texas and its parking and support facilities. The main goals of the San Jacinto Battleground State Historical Park Master Plan is to give primary emphasis to the Battle and its physical setting in order to enhance interpretation and the visitor experience. After all, the site's national significance is due to the 1836 Battle, and to the extent feasible, the Master Plan focuses on returning the Battleground to its 1836 condition of prairie, marshes and trees so that visitors can visualize and understand the terrain and its influence on the tactics and outcome of the Battle.

A hundred years after the Daughters of the Republic of Texas saw fit to lobby the Legislature, forward-thinking individuals with vision and heart who want to preserve historically significant Texas for our children and grandchildren are again springing into action. Great Texans such as the Trustees and officials of the San Jacinto Museum of History, including Paul Gervais Bell, William P. Conner, and J.C. Martin; the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, including Marian Beckham and Jan de Vault; Representatives for the Harris County Delegation, including Rep. Jessica Farrar and Rep. John Davis, and just some of the people who are once again taking up the cause of Texas history and culture. Also, Sam Houston IV, the great-grandson of General Sam Houston will be present along with Andrew Sansom, Executive Director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

As a fifth generation Texan I am especially proud that my family has been actively involved in the preservation of battleground and museum. My grandfather, the late Col. William B. Bates, was one of the five founding Trustees of the San Jacinto Museum of History when it was organized in 1938. He was instrumental in helping to establish and maintain the museum's operations and its historically significant collection of Texana and Western Americana. I maintain many volumes of Texas history from his personal library. That enduring love for preserving history and heritage lives on with my mother, Mary Bates Bentsen, who currently serves as a Trustee of the Museum.

In an area now known for petro-chemical production and the activity associated with one of the world's busiest seaports, one can still look out from the battleground site and see the Lynchburg Ferry which ran at the time of the battle and does so today. In his farewell to his troops delivered May 5, 1836, General Houston said of his forces, "Your valor and heroism have proved unrivaled . . . You have countered the odds of two to one and borne yourselves in the onset and conflict of battle in a manner unknown in the manners of modern warfare. (W)hen liberty is firmly established by your patience and your valor, it will be fame enough to say, 'I was a member of the Army of San Jacinto.'"

Mr. Speaker, we Texans believe the Battle of San Jacinto was a defining moment in our history which must be preserved for generations to come. I congratulate the San Jacinto Museum of History's Trustees, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, and other friends of the Park for continuing the fight to preserve our historical places and culture. All of Harris County, the entire state of Texas, and our future generations are the richer for their noble efforts.

TRAGEDY IN EAST TIMOR

HON. LUIS V. GUTIERREZ

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 29, 1999

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, on September 4, 1999, U.N. officials announced the results of a U.N.-sponsored referendum of voters in East Timor. 78.5 percent of the voters rejected an Indonesian government plan for East Timor to receive a special autonomy arrangement within Indonesia. This result, which effectively called for independence, sparked a rampage of killings and other acts of terror by East Timorese paramilitary groups supported by the Indonesian Army.

One of my constituents, Mr. Michael Rhoades of Chicago, went to East Timor to serve as a United Nations accredited observer of the August 30 referendum. He participated with the International Federation for East Timor (IFET) Observer Project as a photojournalist. I submit a copy of a recent letter from Mr. Rhoades dated September 25, 1999. He was an eyewitness to the horrors that took place in East Timor.

I urge my colleagues to cosponsor H.R. 2809. This bill will impose an immediate suspension of assistance to Indonesia until the results of the August 30, 1999, vote in East Timor have been implemented.

I send this letter out of desperation, writing from Australia where I've been for a few weeks courtesy of an Australian Air Force evacuation flight from Dili, East Timor. Two weeks ago I flew from Darwin (our evac destination) to Sydney, sitting frustrated and sad now as I wait to fly back into Timor. It is difficult to write this because there is so much to say, because these have been some of the most heartbreaking weeks of my life, feeling absolutely powerless as politicians bow and curtsy through shallow condemnations of the Indonesian massacre in East Timor.

I was in East Timor as an election/human rights observer with the International Federation for East Timor's observer project (IFET-OP). We were (I add proudly) the largest observer group in Timor, at one time numbering almost 150 participants with small teams dispersed in villages and cities throughout the country. Our mandate was to document human rights abuses and election rule violations during the August 30 popular consultation, as well as the periods immediately preceding and following.

During my stay in Timor I saw time and again the blurring between ranks of military, police, and militia personnel. I heard stories from refugees sheltering in churches who'd been told that if the vote was for independence their village would be slaughtered.

I heard soldiers scream to a family cowering behind the front wall of their home that they'd be back to kill them in the night. I helped try to save a young man (younger than me) dying from machete wounds, ghost-walking bleeding from his shoulder, arms, and gut—bone and intestines pressing through split flesh.

I saw this younger-than-me man wrapped in soaked-through bloody sheets as we helped him into our truck. He remained absolutely silent while his sister and father screamed his pain and part of our team sped him off to the only medical clinic still functioning in Dili. I saw him (in-head) as we dodged military and militia patrols trying to get (quick and nonchalant) back home. I see him as I write this letter. I see him as I remember hearing that he was dead.

I see this younger-than-me man as Indonesia stalls for time and our leaders huff and sigh for the cameras and their respective constituencies. I see this dead boy, and my friends left behind in East Timor.

I fear (am terrified) for the life of Gaspar da Costa whose house we rented in the mountain village of Maubisse, and who went behind that house to quietly cry while we went inside to hurriedly pack after telling him we were evacuating, leaving his town for the "safety" of Dili; "and what happens to my family?" he asked as we swapped our integrity for our skins. And I snapped pictures of Gaspar and his brothers and wife and daughters to document in advance the barbarism of the Indonesian government, preferring to photograph the da Costas while still alive, hugging Gaspar with everything in me when we left, feeling (though not wanting to believe) that I was hugging a dead man.

And through the cacophony of U.N. sabre rattling I hear Father Mateus, the priest of Maubisse, who assured me that he was not a hero but who absolutely was. And though the East Timorese soil is wet with the blood of thousands far braver than me, I am particularly in awe of Father Mateus who sheltered refugees in his church and who stood up to the local police and militia heads, saying boldly that he did not trust them because he had been shown time after time that he could not trust them. The last I heard of Father Mateus, his name was at the top of the local militia deathlist. Selfless to the point of bullheadedness Father Mateus declared that there had not yet been a priest martyred for East Timor (because at the time there had not been) and he was prepared to be the first.

I remember the horror in the Maubisse polling center the afternoon of the vote when certain militia members and military officers had whispered to the local Timorese polling staff that they'd kill them all in their homes that night. I remember that they slept in the polling center (Maubisse's schoolhouse) on the floor with no blankets, using deconstructed cardboard voting booths as mats. I remember leaving them there when we went home to dinner and a bed at Gaspar's because we were forbidden by our mandate to stay with them through the night. I remember walking up to the school at sunrise the next morning as we'd promised, to see if all was ok, and finding everyone across the road in the church for morning mass. I remember the terror still sharp in their faces as mass finished and they dragged along on tired-of-it feet back to their refuge in the school. And there were the folks who wound their way round to us between the mass and their refuge and shook our hands because they mistakenly thought that we had made the vote possible when it

was them—the East Timorese—coming out to vote in mind-blowing numbers that made the vote. And there was the old woman who came up to us and shook our hands and kissed them and said, “friend.”

I remember my friend Meta who shouted my name and came up to hug me when our team walked through the gates of IFET's Dili HQ after we'd evacuated Maubisse. Meta who was so proud to introduce me to his father. Meta my friend, who is running; who went to hide in the hills. Who I hope with every part of me is still alive, as I do Gaspar and his family and Father Mateus and the brothers and refugees in his church . . . and here I feel like I'm being selective and truly I wish that no Timorese were being slaughtered. But that now is an impossibility, estimates put the death toll in the high thousands or tens of thousands and the longer that we U.N. member states stall, the greater the number of East Timorese being massacred or forcibly “relocated” and the greater our collective shame.

When I originally drafted this letter for a few small U.S. newsweeklies, Indonesia had just conceded to allow a U.N. peacekeeping force into East Timor. I, among others, did not trust them. They would stall for time. And in that time there would be more slaughter. It is a week later now and much of this U.N. force is in the region, working with an Indonesian military which continues to be uncooperative and brutal. Airdropped food is providing a minimum of sustenance for hundreds of thousands of refugees slowly starving in the Timorese hills, but the Jakarta-driven massacre continues as stories of mass-killings during the past few weeks come forward through eye-witness testimonials, as refugees forced into West Timorese camps are terrorized and murdered, and as the militia masses its Indonesian-military-backed forces along the western side of the Indonesia-East Timor border (as it now can be called). The Australian media reported that Interfet peacekeepers chased three TNI trucks (TNI being the acronym of the Indonesian military) through the streets of Dili Thursday, TNI trucks which were loaded with troops who fired three bursts from automatic rifles, trying hard to shatter any remnants of the peace which they were tasked with restoring.

Originally this letter was a call to action. Now, I hope, it acts as a call to continue that action. Unflinching vigilance and continued humanitarian action will be absolute necessities in the coming months, not only in East Timor but also for the hundreds of thousands of refugees forced into military convoys or onto boats headed to West Timor and other Indonesian islands. (Recent reports speak of a near total absence of males between the ages of 16 and 50 in the refugee camps and convoys.) And at home in the United States there are bills in both the House and the Senate (HR. 2809 and S. 1568) which would ‘lock-in’ the temporary bans on military and financial assistance to Indonesia. These bills also set conditions (including a safe and secure environment in East Timor, full humanitarian assistance, and the return of all refugees), which Indonesia must meet before this assistance can resume. I write this letter in the hopes that you will read it and be incensed, that you will read it and want to pressure our government to act, to continue to act. The United States government carries much of the blame for this slaughter in East Timor, as they have sat by for twenty-four years while Indonesia—third largest global market for U.S. weapons and consumer goods; home to a bargain-priced,

easily-exploitable labor force; and our viciously anti-Communist Cold War ally—carried out its sadistic policies against the East Timorese population, as they (the U.S. government—and we citizens by extension) turned a blind-eye and an approving nod to the invasion. I write this letter as a plea, an agonized cry from across the Pacific, to ask that you pressure our representatives in Washington to act. Please pressure them to act.

OPPOSITION TO CONFERENCE
AGREEMENT ON H.R. 2488

HON. MAX SANDLIN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 29, 1999

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I have heard my friends on the Republican side talk about how their budget sets aside \$2 trillion of the \$3 trillion projected surplus for debt reduction. While this certainly sounds appealing to those of us who have been talking about the importance of paying off the national debt, the facts just don't match the rhetoric.

My Republican friends neglect to point out that they are double-counting the Social Security surplus in order to claim that they are reducing the debt. This body has overwhelmingly voted to exclude Social Security surpluses from budget calculations. These surpluses are essential to meet future obligations to Social Security. Every Member of this body, Republican and Democrat alike, have said that Social Security surpluses should only be used for Social Security, and should not be counted for any other purposes. But despite all of the rhetoric about Social Security lockboxes and taking Social Security off-budget, some folks on the other side of the aisle keep counting the Social Security surpluses when it suits their purposes.

Using the Social Security surplus to reduce debt held by the public simply offsets the increased debt held by the Social Security trust fund. If all we do is save the Social Security surplus, we won't reduce the total national debt by one dime, and we will have done nothing to reduce the burden we leave to our children and grandchildren. In fact, despite all of the rhetoric from the other side of the aisle about saving money for debt reduction, the total national debt will increase by \$200 billion over the next five years under the Republican budget.

The truth is, they don't want the American people to know the consequences of their massive tax cuts. They don't want them to find out that, if we want to be fiscally responsible and stay within the spending caps we agreed to in the 1997 budget, passing their tax cut bill will require a 38% reduction in spending on important programs—programs like FEMA, class size reduction, and law enforcement. Both parties agree that defense spending needs to increase if we want to preserve military readiness, but if the Republicans pass their tax cuts, our military will suffer as well. While these important programs that benefit all Americans will have to be cut, two-thirds of the tax cut will benefit only those people who fall in the top income tax bracket.

The fiscal irresponsibility does not stop there. The new trick in Republican accounting books is the “emergency” spending designation being used to bypass the spending caps. They have even resorted to calling the 2000 census an “emergency”—an outrageous claim considering that the Constitution requires a census every ten years! This “emergency” spending comes straight out of the “projected” surplus Republicans want to use to finance their tax cut.

This creative accounting is unacceptable. I am a strong advocate of a sound budget and fiscally responsible tax cuts, but the best tax cut we can give the American people is a promise we will first pay down the national debt by setting aside some of the true surplus—the non-Social Security surplus. The Blue Dogs have put forward a proposal that would lock up half of the true budget surplus to pay down the national debt. This approach will truly reduce the burden on future generations.

I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of this legislation. The Blue Dog's Debt Reduction Lockbox bill would save 100% of the Social Security surplus by requiring that the budget be balanced excluding the Social Security surplus. It also helps ensure a fiscally responsible budget by establishing a point of order against any budget resolution that contains an on-budget deficit or any legislation that would result in an on-budget deficit and would prohibit OMB, CBO and other federal government entities from including the Social Security trust fund as part of budget surplus or deficit calculations.

While the Republican tax cut bill's debt reduction provisions are merely a rhetorical gesture at best, the Blue Dog bill delivers on debt reduction. It places 50% of the projected on-budget surplus over the next five years in a Debt Reduction Lockbox, away from those who would squander it on irresponsible tax cuts.

The Blue Dog bill also delivers on our promise to save Social Security and Medicare by reserving the Debt Reduction Dividend—the savings from lower interest payments on the debt resulting from its reduction—for these two programs. Seventy-five percent of these savings would be reserved for Social Security reform and 25% for Medicare reform.

Mr. Speaker, the fundamental tenet of the Blue Dog proposal—debt reduction—has been recklessly omitted from the Republican bill. Our primary goal as we debate how to divide the projected budget surplus should be to maintain the strong and growing economy that has benefitted millions of Americans. Irresponsible tax cuts, however, are not the means to achieving this end. Using that simple objective as our guide, it is clear that the best course of action this body could take is to use the budget surpluses to start paying off the \$5.6 trillion national debt. Reducing the national debt is clearly the best long-term strategy for the U.S. economy.

Economists from across the political spectrum agree that using the surplus to reduce the debt will stimulate economic growth by increasing national savings and boosting domestic investment. Paying down our debt will reduce the tremendous drain that the federal government has placed on the economy by