

THE CHERNOBYL DISASTER

HON. LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 25, 1996

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, this weekend Ukrainian-Americans across the country will commemorate the ten year anniversary of the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

It is hard to believe that 10 years have passed since the devastating news of the explosion at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine. While the official death count remains at 33, we all know that the number of lives affected by this tragedy reaches well into the thousands. Besides those who have died because of the exposure, others have lost their health, their economic well-being, their environment, and their spiritual outlook on life.

We have been, however, successful in providing some of the most needed assistance to those who have suffered. The work of so many dedicated relief organizations has paved the way for aid, medical care, and government programs which have provided invaluable care for the victims of the Chernobyl calamity. Unfortunately, it is not likely we have experienced the full consequences of the disaster. Nor have we provided all the resources needed to help those living through this nightmare. As we remember this event this weekend, we must renew our pledge to continue our help in the future.

I am proud to represent a large and energetic Ukrainian community—an active and spirited community which has dedicated itself to helping the people of Ukraine. As we all work together to support Ukraine's flowering democracy and strong economic growth, we continue to hold a special place in our hearts for those affected by the Chernobyl disaster. We will remember Chernobyl.

REMEMBERING THE GENOCIDE OF THE ARMENIANS

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN J. LaFALCE

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 24, 1996

Mr. LaFALCE. Mr. Speaker, today is the day we have set aside to commemorate a painful time in world history—the 81st anniversary of the deaths of more than 1½ million Armenians. While the magnitude of the loss and the depth of the sorrow do not dim with time for the descendants of those who died, I join my colleagues in this observance today in the hope that a day of remembrance can bring a measure of healing.

This is what good and caring people do the world over when a tragedy occurs—grieve, console, reminisce. The first anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing was recently the occasion of such a day of thought and remembrance. The shocking jolt that the bombing last year wreaked on the security that Americans have long enjoyed in this country will never be forgotten and will join the all-too-long list of events that, through their sheer awfulness, forever alter a country or a people. Indeed, we are even now watching with empa-

thy the victims of the war in Bosnia, who, even as they struggle to get their footing as they emerge from their national nightmare, learn of atrocities such as mass graves and, as incredible as it may be that this could be happening again, watch as individuals—so-called leaders—are being turned over to the appropriate authorities for serious war crimes.

As much as this day of remembrance brings home the moral frailty and potential for cruelty, however, it is, more important, also proof that the majority of us firmly denounce the hateful actions of a few. For us, there is no political jargon, ancestral enmity, or religious fervor that could ever justify the deeds perpetrated in Armenia that we commemorate today, the slaughter that we revisited last week in Oklahoma, or any similar actions anyplace, anytime.

As a member of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, I affirm my strong support for a strong and vibrant relationship between Armenia and the United States. I will work to do my part to ensure that the legacy of future generations of Armenians is not marked by persecution, but rather by personal and national security, democracy, freedom, and prosperity.

THE FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION PERFORMANCE AND PERSONNEL ENFORCEMENT ACT

HON. SUSAN MOLINARI

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 25, 1996

Ms. MOLINARI. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing H.R.—, the Federal Railroad Administration Performance and Personnel Enforcement Act. The bill will provide for institutional reforms at the Federal Railroad Administration and other improvements to the rail safety statutes aimed at promoting a safer, more secure rail safety network. I would like to emphasize that the railroad system is essentially safe today, thanks to the substantial gains in safety that have been achieved since the late 1970s. In 1978, the train accident rate was nearly 15 accidents per million trainmiles, or 3.9 times what it was in 1995. Railroads are safe when compared to other modes of transportation as well. About 40,000 people are killed each year on the Nation's highways, compared to about 600 fatalities that are attributed to railroad operations.

Yet rail travel is becoming increasingly complex and we must ensure that our safety requirements keep up with today's operational realities. Traffic on the mainlines continues to grow and the increased use of freight, intercity passenger and commuter traffic on the same corridors poses new challenges for ensuring safety. Unfortunately, after the 2 best years in rail safety history, rail accidents appear to be on the rise. In January and February alone rail freight and passenger accidents resulted in 19 fatalities, 230 injuries, and \$64 million in property damage.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Railroads, I sponsored three hearings on the issue of rail safety during the month of March. These hearings focussed on the issues of human factors and grade crossing safety, equipment and technology in rail safety, and advanced train control technology. This last

hearing was held jointly with the Technology Subcommittee of the Science Committee.

One thing is clear from these hearings: the Federal Railroad Administration needs to be reformed. In three significant areas where rulemakings are pending (power brake safety, two-way end of train devices and track safety standards), the Federal Railroad Administration has missed the statutory deadlines for completing the rulemakings by as much as 2 years. In the wake of the Burlington Northern Sante Fe accident at Cajon Pass, CA, the Federal Railroad Administrator issued an emergency order requiring use of the two-way end of train device for operations in the area. Sadly, the emergency order would not have been needed had the FRA met its statutory deadline for the rulemaking.

And in another area of concern, the Hours of Service Act, the FRA and rail labor and management have all been guilty of foot dragging in establishing pilot projects that were supposed to form the basis for changes to the act during the next authorization cycle. A report on the subject is due at the end of the year, and to date not a single pilot project has been implemented. This is unacceptable and I believe that my bill, through a combination of institutional reforms that will force FRA to be more accountable in carrying out congressional mandates, and improvements to the rail safety statutes will help ensure safety on the Nations' railroads.

HONORING THE WESTMORELAND VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 25, 1996

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I am taking this opportunity to applaud the invaluable services provided by the Westmoreland Volunteer Fire Department. These brave, civic minded people give freely of their time so that we may all feel safer at night.

Few realize the depth of training and hard work that goes into being a volunteer firefighter. To quote one of my local volunteers, "There fireman must have an overwhelming desire to do for others while expecting nothing in return."

Preparation includes twice-monthly training programs in which they have live drills, study the latest videos featuring the latest in firefighting tactics, as well as attend seminars where they can obtain the knowledge they need to save lives. Within a year of becoming a volunteer firefighter, most attend the Tennessee Fire Training School in Murfreesboro where they undergo further, intensified training.

When the residents of my district go to bed at night, they know that should disaster strike and their home catch fire, well-trained and qualified volunteer fire departments are ready and willing to give so graciously and generously of themselves. This peace of mind should not be taken for granted.

By selflessly giving of themselves, they ensure a safer future for us all. We owe these volunteer fire departments a debt of gratitude for their service and sacrifice.