

on the occasion of this day and to call to the attention of the Members of the House the great progress which the region as a whole has made toward peace, stability, and democracy.

The historic signing of the Guatemala Peace Accords last December 29 ushered in a period in which for the first time in almost 40 years, the entire Central American region is at peace. Even more significant is the fact that democracy is taking hold as evidenced by the fact that every current government in the region has been elected in what have been determined to be free and fair elections by both domestic and international observers. The economies of these nations seem to be making solid progress as growth, albeit slow, is being achieved through a combination of liberalization, modernization, and privatization. Further, it would appear that in general, an awareness and respect for human rights is on the increase and that the militaries of several of these nations are accepting their new roles under civilian leadership.

Nowhere are these last two issues more evident than in Guatemala. A recent subcommittee staff visit there found very encouraging signs that the peace process is taking hold thanks to the total commitment of President Arzu and the representatives of the URNG. And, the Guatemalan Congress is about to begin a historic debate on amending their Constitution to accommodate the political and economic reforms mandated by the accords. In the 9 months since the peace accords were signed, more than 3,000 former URNG combatants have been reintegrated into Guatemalan society. A Historical Clarification Commission has begun looking into 36 years of human rights abuses and atrocities committed against the general populace during the conflict years. And, the U.N. Verification Mission, MINUGUA, has stepped up its work in helping to strengthen organizations dealing with human rights issues. The significant U.S. financial commitment to this process as well as to programs we are funding in Nicaragua and El Salvador are clearly helping make these efforts successful.

This is not to say that there are not problems. Drug use and crime seem to be on the increase everywhere and nagging problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and infant mortality persist. But on the whole, Central America has moved beyond the crisis period of the past 15 years and has given us great cause for optimism.

So, Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of the celebration of the independence of these nations, I want to congratulate each of these nations for the progress they are making and to express my hope that they continue on this impressive path.

TAX RELIEF FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

HON. RON PACKARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 11, 1997

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, no one ever said that running a business was supposed to be easy. But Washington seems to want to make it more difficult. Small businesses need a break. And for the first time in 16 years, they

will get this long-awaited and much-deserved relief—a serious tax cut. The Taxpayer Relief Act is looking out for small businesses across the Nation.

Higher taxes and burdensome regulations are hurting America's small business community. Our Taxpayer Relief Act will relieve the tax burden on working Americans while simplifying the small business tax code. By offering estate tax relief as well as capital gains tax relief, we will ensure that businesses grow and prosper, while providing jobs and opportunities to many.

Mr. Speaker, not only do small businesses need a real break, they deserve one. They employ 53 percent of the private work force, contribute 47 percent of all sales in the country, and create millions of jobs each year. But yet Washington tax-and-spend values have led to the demise of many small businesses across the Nation. It doesn't have to be this way. Our plan ensure that this will not be the case in the future.

We want to see as many small businesses succeed as possible. They are critical to our economy. The Taxpayer Relief Act is good for small businesses and self-employed entrepreneurs. Under our plan, businesses will not only succeed, but will thrive and prosper for many years to come. Hard-working, tax-paying citizens have finally won a major victory. Relief is becoming a reality because the American people have spoken loudly and we have listened.

CONGRATULATING MICAH MORGAN, PACIFIC AREAS WINNER, VFW VOICE OF DEMOCRACY BROADCAST SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 11, 1997

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, each year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its ladies auxiliary conduct the Voice of Democracy broadcast scriptwriting contest. Entries for this year's theme, "Democracy—Above and Beyond," were received from more than 109,000 secondary school students. Fifty-four national scholarships were distributed among the 54 national winners.

Mr. Micah Morgan is this year's Pacific areas winner. He is the recipient of a \$1,000 USS Battleship Maine Memorial Scholarship Award. Micah is a senior at Morrison Academy in Taichung, Taiwan. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Keith Morgan and he plans a career in architecture.

As I congratulate Micah for being this year's Pacific areas winner, I would like to submit his speech for the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

"DEMOCRACY-ABOVE AND BEYOND"

Deep in the jungle, a soldier fights. But he is not the first. He is the newest warrior in a battle that men have been fighting for centuries. Just as those soldiers did long ago, he fights against tyranny and oppression backed by brothers in his own country, as well as sympathizers around the world. He is not fighting in their name, however, nor is he fighting for any kingdom or revered leader, nor even his own comrades in arms. He is fighting for himself. He is fighting for the opportunity to provide for his family. He is

fighting so his children won't have to grow up in fear. He is fighting so that he and his wife will be able to express their opinions openly. He is fighting so that he can have a voice in who governs him. He is fighting for his right to be a man. He is fighting for an idea which began centuries ago, but one which has survived while so many other great ideas have passed away. He is fighting for Democracy. The only government in the world that will give him and his family the hope to keep going, the freedom to express their opinions and the opportunities to do something about it.

Democracy gives people hope because it listens to them and helps them and allows them to succeed. Hope: something that everyone wants and needs to keep going. It can come through a baby's smile, an encouraging word from a friend, or even just a beautiful day. Not much to ask, really, but still people in many countries don't even have hope. Millions of immigrants fled to America during the 1820's and 1830's because it gave them this hope. In their own countries, no matter how hard they worked, they could never overcome the lot that they have been dealt in life. But, in America, their work would be rewarded and they could see that their children started off better in life than they had. The hope of a brighter future is one factor which makes democracy a step ahead of the rest.

Freedom, something which many take for granted, but something for which many people are willing to give their lives. Hope is a wonderful thing but is a short-lived thing if there is no freedom in which to enjoy it. People can experience life more when they have freedom because they can develop their own thoughts, express their own opinions, and pick their own direction in life without worrying about somebody looking over their shoulder. Freedom is something people respond well to, but most governments in the world haven't realized this. They don't realize that allowing people to make their own choices can only aid the government, because people work better when they know that they are doing it for themselves. Democracy, on the other hand, gives people freedom and it takes advantage of the work that people are doing for their own sakes. Freedom unlocks spirit and, by giving its people freedom, Democracy takes one more giant leap ahead of the rest.

Opportunities are essential to a good government. Hope and freedom are wonderful but they only breed discontentment if the people are not given the opportunities to do something about it. Giving people hope and freedom without opportunities is like grooming, encouraging, and aiding a pitcher to become amazing, but then never putting him into a game. People with hope and freedom will exercise their opportunities to improve government, technology, society, and countless other things. No other form of government is willing, however, to give up the little bit of power that it takes to give people opportunities, in order to gain the great advancements that they will bring to the nation.

BLACK LUNG COMPENSATION

HON. ANNE M. NORTHUP

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 11, 1997

Mrs. NORTHUP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my opposition to regulations proposed by the Department of Labor regarding black lung compensation.