EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

H.R. 1658: THE BURLEY BUYOUT ACT OF 2001

HON. BARON P. HILL

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 3, 2001

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to introduce H.R. 1658, the ''Burley Buyout Act of 2001,'' a bill to buy out Burley tobacco farmers and end the Burley tobacco price support program and quota system. H.R. 1658 has been endorsed by the Indiana Tobacco Growers Association, which represents southern Indiana's 2,000 Burley tobacco farmers.

Burley tobacco has been growing in southern Indiana for almost two centuries. As farmers migrated westward from Virginia to Kentucky and southern Indiana in the early 1800s, they brought with them their native state's most important crop. A typical example of an early Indiana tobacco farmer was Thomas Lincoln, the father of Abraham Lincoln, who moved from Kentucky to Spencer County, Indiana, in 1816 and raised a small plot of tobacco on his farm.

Over the years, tobacco has continued to be an important part of the economy in our rural communities, and today there are 2,000 Burley tobacco farmers and 8,000 owners of tobacco quota in southern Indiana.

These farmers and quota owners are very familiar with the tobacco price support program, which the federal government created in the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 to protect tobacco farmers from price volatility. The program guarantees a minimum price for the tobacco that farmers grow, so long as farmers agree to limit their tobacco production.

The tobacco price support program worked well for many years, but now the program is no longer protecting farmers' incomes. Since the mid-1990s, Burley tobacco quotas have been cut in half. In 1997, the tobacco quota was 705 million pounds. This year, the quota is 332 million pounds. In other words, tobacco farmers can only grow 47% of the amount they could produce five years ago. The result is that their farm incomes have been cut in half over the last five years.

To make matters worse, both U.S. and foreign tobacco companies are buying an increasing amount of their tobacco from foreign producers that are not subject to the U.S. quota and price support system. The percentage of imported Burley tobacco used in U.S. tobacco products has risen from around 20% in the early 1980s to almost 40% today. At the same time, the U.S. share of world burley tobacco exports is steadily declining.

In addition, because so much of the tobacco quota is now owned by non-growers, tobacco farmers have to include significant quota rental expenses into their production costs. The University of Kentucky's Will Snell estimates that quota rental rates averaged around 40 cents a pound in the 1990s, which means that quota rental payments make up about 20–25% of a tobacco farmer's production costs.

A consequence of declining quotas and high tobacco production costs has been that the government has directly subsidized tobacco growers over the past several years. For many years, the tobacco industry proudly insisted that the government tobacco program operated at ''no cost'' to taxpayers, since the tobacco stabilization cooperatives always repaid the money borrowed from the CCC with interest. In 1999 and 2000, however, the federal government distributed almost $700 million in Tobacco Loss Assistance Payments (TLAP). In addition, in the year 2000, Congress forgave $500 million in loans that cooperatives owed the CCC and assigned 220 million pounds of the Burley pool stocks to the CCC.

The tobacco price support program is no longer offering tobacco growers the economic stability they used to enjoy. The statistics clearly show that the price support system is no longer guaranteeing farmers a good living. Furthermore, the tobacco program can do little or nothing to counter the long-term economic forces that are challenging tobacco growers.

For this reason, I am proposing that the federal government buy Burley tobacco farmers and quota holders out of the price support program. Ending the tobacco program gets the government out of a costly agricultural production control program that is no longer working and allows farmers who want to stay in the tobacco business to be more competitive in the world market.

My bill, H.R. 1658, the Burley Buyout Act of 2001, immediately terminates the tobacco program and:

(1) Compensates all quota holders with the fair market value of the property right their quota represents. It would pay all quota owners a one-time payment of $8 per pound for the average number of quota pounds they have owned over the last ten years.

(2) Provides transition payments of $1.50 per pound for the next five years to active tobacco producers to help them move from the price support program to other activities, including growing tobacco in the open market. These payments will be based on the average number of quota pounds tobacco farmers have grown over the last three years.

(3) Provides $50 million each year in grants for the next five years to help communities that are heavily dependent on tobacco to adjust to the economic changes that might be caused by ending the price support program.

As Congress prepares to write the next Farm Bill, my colleagues on the House Committee on Agriculture and I have an opportunity to review the laws and programs that affect most farmers. This opportunity only comes around about once every five years. For this reason, I believe it's appropriate for us to review the tobacco price support program too, and I feel strongly that it is time to make significant changes and end the program.

I urge my colleagues to support and adopt H.R. 1658, the Burley Buyout Act of 2001.

AUTOCRATIC LEADERS IN CENTRAL ASIA

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 3, 2001

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit this recent Washington Post editorial regarding autocratic leaders in Central Asia. The editorial draws particular attention to President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and his intolerance of free speech and rigid control of independent expression. For those Members of Congress who are interested in the true nature of Nazarbayev regime, I highly commend this editorial.

[From the Washington Post, May 1, 2001]

A CHOICE FOR DEMOCRACY

Russian President Vladimir Putin is not alone in the post-Soviet world in his assault on a free press, environmental organizations and other independent voices. In the five republics of Central Asia, autocratic leaders also are cracking down. Because their countries did not benefit from the years of relative freedom that Russia enjoyed under former president Boris Yeltsin, Central Asia's potentates tend to meet with less resistance, though everywhere some brave people resist. A case in point, both sad and inspiring, is Kazakhstan, after Russia the largest republic of the former Soviet Union.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who made an effortless transition from Communist boss, was seen in the early years of independence as a potential moderate. Over the years, though, he has grown less tolerant of dissent or pluralism, even as stories of corruption at the highest levels multiply in his oil-rich republic. His decade in power has been marked ''by rigid control of independent expression,'' the nonprofit Committee to Protect Journalists noted recently. Prosecutors routinely harass and investigate newspapers that dare a smidgen of independent reporting. ''Infringement of the honor and dignity of the president'' is a crime. Only the biggest television stations are not bothered, but this is small comfort because, as the Committee to Protect Journalists noted, ''the most influential stations are under the direct or indirect control of the president's family.''

This spring the official crackdown has extended to many nongovernmental organizations in addition to the press. These groups helped organize opposition to a new law on the media that will further tighten government control over Internet sites and small broadcast outlets. Grass-roots opposition managed to delay, though not prevent, adoption of the law, mustering an impressive number of petitions and public meetings. In retribution, prosecutors and tax police have raided groups, forced them to shut down and seized documents and equipment, according to Eric Kessler, a staffer with the U.S.-based National Democratic Institute.

The institute, like other pro-democracy organizations, has helped Kazakhstan's small civic groups, often with small grants from the U.S. government. Resistance to the media law shows that their work is not in vain. But overall the fight for democracy is

not succeeding, and America's split personality on the subject may be one reason. While backing democracy in a small way, the Clinton administration was more than willing to welcome and forgive Mr. Nazarbayev, because he controls substantial oil and gas wealth, and because his country's independence is seen as a check to potential Russian expansionism from the north or Chinese pushiness from the east.

Mr. Nazarbayev may expect the Bush administration, with its concern for expanding sources of oil and gas, to be even friendlier. But President Bush and his team also have stressed the importance of values in foreign policy, particularly the values of freedom and free markets—neither of which is embraced in Kazakhstan. Mr. Nazarbayev's strategy of hoarding power and oil wealth for a small elite is not a recipe for long-term stability. The Bush administration ought to help those inside Kazakhstan who continue to struggle for a different kind of future.

AN INCOMPLETE INVESTIGATION

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 3, 2001

Mr. FRANK. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday of this week I expressed my strong disapproval of the Navy policy of scheduling potentially dangerous military events solely for edification of those civilians that the Navy is seeking to turn into lobbyists for the budget, and I also expressed my disappointment at the failure of the House so far to hold the Navy—and the rest of the Pentagon—to a reasonable standard of behavior in this regard. Subsequent to my statement I came across the accompanying editorial from the New York Times, appropriately entitled An Incomplete Investigation. In the editorial the Times notes ''testimony indicated that the only reason the ship went to sea that day was to entertain sixteen civilian guests as part of a Navy program aimed at cultivating good will. One of the shortcomings of the Navy's public court of inquiry was that none of these civilians was summoned to testify . . . the civilians might well be asked to appear at any court martial, and their testimony in turn could discredit the civilian visitor program.'' The Navy has refused to deal honestly with the role of these civilians in this terrible tragedy, and has announced that it intends to continue this program without any correction. We in the House have a responsibility not to allow this to happen. And I ask that the very thoughtful editorial from the New York Times on this subject be printed here.

AN INCOMPLETE INVESTIGATION

Unless Adm. Thomas Fargo decides otherwise, the Navy's investigation into the collision of an American submarine with a Japanese vessel near Honolulu in February is likely to end on a premature and unsatisfactory note. A report by Elaine Sciolino in Sunday's Times quoted senior Pentagon officials as saying that the public court of inquiry into the incident had recommended that the submarine's skipper, Cmdr. Scott Waddle, not be tried by a court-martial. Instead the commander would receive some lesser punishment, like a reprimand, that would effectively end his career but spare him the military equivalent of a criminal trial.

The final decision rests with Admiral Fargo. The officials cited in the Times report said that he was unlikely to act against the panel's recommendations. Nevertheless, we urge him to consider a court-martial. We have no wish to prejudge the outcome. A court-martial affords defendants a chance to explain their behavior and to present mitigating evidence. In this instance, a court-martial is also justified by the nature of the case.

Nine people were killed in the accident, which triggered widespread resentment in Japan that could well flare up again. According to testimony presented to the court of inquiry, the operations of the submarine, the Greeneville, were riddled with mistakes and violations of safety rules. Commander Waddle himself testified that he had cut short or omitted several safety precautions, failed to reassign duties to compensate for the absence of a third of his normal crew and rushed the periscope search conducted just before the surfacing drill that caused the accident. The testimony also identified serious mistakes by a petty officer who failed to notify the commander that the Greeneville was dangerously close to the Japanese ship.

The testimony indicated that the only reason the ship went to sea that day was to entertain 16 civilian guests as part of a Navy program aimed at cultivating public good will. One of the shortcomings of the Navy's public court of inquiry was that none of these civilians were summoned to testify, though they could have been. The civilians might well be asked to appear in any court-martial, and their testimony in turn could discredit the civilian visitor program. Three of the civilians were seated at controls on the submarine at the time of the collision.

This has not been an easy time for the Navy, and it has been a grievously difficult time for Commander Waddle. But the fundamental issue here is accountability—the commander's, his crew's and the Navy's. A truncated inquiry cannot inspire the public confidence that would come with a full court-martial proceeding.

HONORING ANNA M.H. VERHESEN

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 3, 2001

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize an outstanding woman of my district, Anna M.H. Verhesen. Ann was awarded the Key to the Golden Door Award by Toledo's International Institute on March 31, 2001. This award is given to a naturalized citizen who has made a significant contribution to the betterment of people. I join with people from throughout my community in congratulating Ann on her receipt of this award.

A dedicated and tireless advocate for the poor, unrecognized, and underserved, Ann's passion was grown in her while a very young child as she and her family protected many people fleeing Nazi persecution in Holland. Born to Hendrikus and Henrika (Kluesssjen) Verhesen in 1932, Ann began her career in service while still in the Netherlands and employed as a child care and social worker until emigrating to Canada with her family in 1959. While in Canada, Ann took her vows as a Grey Nun. In 1968, she came to the United States, serving in child care at the St. Lawrence Home in Massachusetts. A 1970 fire burned her very badly, and that accident brought her to Toledo, to the St. Vincent Hospital Burn Unit for healing. After her release, she was a counselor for substance abuse and mental health patients, and she created the Tennyson Center, the hospital's substance abuse detoxification and treatment unit. She subsequently returned to Massachusetts continuing her social work, and serving as vocation director for the Grey Nuns until 1979. She returned to St. Vincent's in 1981 and was the coordinator of community services for the next decade. During her tenure she established the Open Door, a men's half-way house for alcoholics and its counterpart for women, Harbor House, and David's House for people with AIDS. She became a vocal advocate for the homeless among us. Even while actively engaged in this work Ann pursued her studies, receiving her undergraduate degree in 1981 and her Master's in 1992. She left the Grey Nuns in the latter 1990s and now counsels in private practice. She was sworn in as a United States citizen in 1994.

Even before Pope Paul VI voiced, ''If you want peace, work for justice'' Ann Verhesen lived this creed. The International Institute perfectly explains her avocation in awarding the honor, ''A model of gentle yet persistent advocacy for the outcast, Ann has reached out to those whom society has no time or interest in assisting. She has challenged hospitals to address their services to those who are addicted, while simultaneously challenging those who are addicted to change their lives. Ann is often the silent force behind change.'' This is a truly fitting tribute to a most remarkable yet humblest of women.

OUR VETERANS DESERVE BETTER ACCESS TO PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 3, 2001

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to permit veterans to obtain prescription medications from Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals by using prescriptions written by their family doctor.

Our nation's veterans are entitled to seek care at VA facilities for illnesses incurred not only during their active duty service but also for post-service conditions. Because the VA recognizes that some veterans have more acute illnesses or injuries, all veterans seeking care are placed in one of seven priority categories, with veterans suffering from severe service-connected disabilities receiving higher priority and immediate attention, and those veterans in generally good health and with income exceeding a certain threshold receiving a lower priority for scheduling of care.

Presently, veterans without severe service-connected disabilities and whose income is above the level that makes them eligible for free care may obtain needed medications at VA facilities for the very reasonable cost of $2 per prescription per 30-day supply. However, VA facilities only dispense prescription medications to veterans who have received prescriptions from VA physicians after an outpatient visit. While I have heard from many veterans who would like to take advantage of reduced-cost prescription medications, those who are not severely disabled, poor, or suffering from service-connected ailments are