

unemployment rate of about 60% and an illiteracy rate of only 45%. Only 40% of all Haitians have access to potable water. Tuberculosis cases in Haiti are ten times as high as those in other Latin American countries, and 90% of all HIV infections in the Caribbean are in Haiti.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is denying Haiti any access to loans for development assistance. Haiti has already had \$145.9 million in development loans approved by the IDB. These loans include \$50 million for rural road development, \$22.5 million for reorganization of the health sector, \$54 million for potable water and sanitation and \$19.4 million for basic education programs. Haiti could also qualify for an additional \$317 million in new loans for development projects, as well as a \$50 million investment sector loan. However, the IDB is refusing to consider Haiti for any additional loans and has not even disbursed the loans that have been approved.

The IDB is effectively denying Haiti access to critical development assistance. Furthermore, Haiti is deeply in debt and has also been denied the opportunity to receive any debt relief for its existing debts.

The reasons provided by the IDB and the U.S. government concerning the suspension of lending and assistance to Haiti shift from day to day. None of the purported explanations provide any justification for withholding this vitally needed aid. While the IDB and the Administration dither, the people of Haiti suffer and continue to live in poverty.

On March 5, 2003, I introduced H.R. 1108, the Access to Capital for Haiti's Development Act. This bill would require the United States to use its voice, vote and influence to urge the Inter-American Development Bank to immediately resume lending to Haiti, disperse all previously approved loans, assist Haiti with the payment of its existing debts and consider providing Haiti debt relief. The Access to Capital for Haiti's Development Act would allow Haiti to build roads and infrastructure and provide basic education and health care services to the Haitian people. This bill currently has 24 cosponsors.

The United States is now spending billions of dollars to rebuild Iraq. Earlier this month, this Congress passed a Supplemental Appropriations Act that contained \$1.7 billion to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure. That bill included funds for health care services for 13 million Iraqis and financed the repair or reconstruction of 25,000 schools, 20,000 houses and 3,000 miles of roads in Iraq. The bill also contained assistance for Colombia, Afghanistan, Israel, Jordan, Turkey, and the Eastern European countries of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia and Bulgaria.

Debt relief for Iraq is being discussed by officials of the Paris Club of creditor countries. Some Members of Congress have even suggested that France, Germany, and Russia can best contribute to the reconstruction of Iraq by the forgiveness of Iraq's debts.

Haiti is a deeply impoverished country on an island just off our shores. We cannot provide assistance to countries all over the world while ignoring the needs of people so close to our border. It is time for the United States and the Inter-American Development Bank to resume lending to Haiti and provide debt relief and development assistance to this impoverished country.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, today, like many members of the Congressional Black Caucus, I am moved to speak about the humanitarian and economic situation of the people of Haiti. It is no secret that the people there are suffering greatly. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere with roughly 70 percent of its 7 million population unemployed and 80 percent living in poverty. HIV/AIDS is devastating the country, with roughly 1 in 12 Haitians infected with HIV and the Center for Disease Control predicting 44,000 new HIV/AIDS cases this year. Additionally, AIDS has orphaned over 200,000 children, and that number is expected to increase to 350,000 over the next ten years.

While there are many explanations for the current situation in Haiti, it is clear that the Haitian government and international community disagree as to the cause and the solution. Regardless of who is to blame, the people of Haiti continue to suffer and I believe that it is time for their suffering to end. We must provide assistance to provide jobs and hope for the people of Haiti.

It is for this reason that I, in conjunction with Congressman JOHN CONYERS, JR., introduced the Haitian Economic Recovery (HERO) Act, which would help in moving Haiti towards economic stability by providing labor and trade opportunities through investment in the apparel and other assembly industries. For similar reasons, I cosponsored the Haiti Aid in Transition Initiative and Access to Capitol for Haiti bills offered by my colleagues Congresswomen BARBARA LEE and MAXINE WATERS. Both of these bills urge that previously approved loans, totaling \$146 million dollars in humanitarian assistance, be released to Haiti.

I sincerely believe that the opportunity for change is ripe in Haiti and that an opportunity still exists to overcome the obstacles that have blocked the economic assistance so desperately needed by Haiti to relieve its humanitarian crisis. I know that this requires that the Haitian government resolve the alienation of the international community by further demonstrating that it is on the road to resolving its political and human rights concerns. I believe that it is still possible for both the U.S. and Haitian governments to work together to meet these goals. I will continue to do what I can to support the delivery of food, medicines, and other essentials to the people of Haiti that I know are desperately needed.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in solidarity with my colleagues on the Congressional Black Caucus, to speak against the United States' unfair treatment of the people of Haiti.

Haiti is one of the most impoverished countries in the western hemisphere and the fourth poorest country in the world. There are 8.3 million people residing in Haiti.

The people of Haiti are also facing a severe medical crisis as a result of their poverty. Haiti is the home of 90% of all HIV/AIDS patients in the Caribbean. Over 200,000 Haitian children will be orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Child mortality rates in Haiti are also excessively high. For every 1,000 births in Haiti, 74 infant deaths will occur.

The social conditions in Haiti are as deplorable as the medical condition. Of the millions of Haitian residents, only 46% have access to clean drinking water. Furthermore, 53% of all Haitian residents are malnourished.

Despite our close proximity to Haiti, and the widespread publication of the social and med-

ical plight of Haitian residents, the U.S. government has insisted on blocking humanitarian aid. The U.S. government is attempting to shape the political landscape in Haiti to the severe detriment of the innocent people of Haiti.

The United States government owes Haiti substantial funds in foreign aid. Substantial loans have been negotiated for the people of Haiti. Some estimates have the loans valued at as much as \$146 million dollars. The United States government is delaying the disbursement of these funds to advance their political aims. While the U.S. government stubbornly maintains these restrictive policies the people of Haiti are suffering and dying.

The U.S. government has promised Iraq \$80 billion in aid to rebuild their war torn country. The people of Haiti have suffered as well. But instead of providing much needed aid, the U.S. government blocks humanitarian efforts and refuses to honor outstanding loans.

Mr. Speaker, it is a disgrace that our Congress stands by while the people of Haiti suffer and die. I join my colleagues on the Congressional Black Caucus in imploring the U.S. government to let Haiti live.

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. KINGSTON (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of attending a memorial service for 34 members of the Third Infantry Division based at Fort Stewart, Georgia, who were killed in Operation Enduring Freedom.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

The following Members (at the request of Mr. VAN HOLLEN) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. HINCHEY, for 5 minutes, today.

The following Members (at the request of Mr. JONES of North Carolina) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. OSBORNE, for 5 minutes, today.

The following Members (at their own request) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:

Mrs. JONES of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CASE, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A concurrent resolution of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows: