

make two things clear: The people of Hong Kong overwhelmingly support the pro-democracy movement, and the Chinese government has created an electoral system intended to ensure that that support cannot be translated into political control.

In the months leading up to the election, the Chinese government engaged in a systematic crackdown to deny the people of Hong Kong the right to choose their own leaders and to suppress freedom of expression. In April, Beijing issued a new "interpretation" of Hong Kong's Basic Law, which serves as the territory's constitution, to prevent direct elections of Hong Kong's next leader in 2007 and for all lawmakers in 2008. As H. Res. 667 concludes, that result is inconsistent with international agreement, and the United States should take a strong position in favor of true democracy in Hong Kong.

The United States-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 codified the understanding of the United States that Hong Kong would have a degree of autonomy from the People's Republic of China. After reversion, it was expected that this autonomy would be a catalyst for the development in Hong Kong of political institutions and procedures that would reflect the will of the people of Hong Kong, regardless of whether they were consistent with the views of government leaders in Beijing. The PRC, however, has thwarted these efforts at every turn.

Beijing has created a climate of political fear in Hong Kong through well-documented intimidation of the media and efforts to challenge the patriotism of pro-democracy supporters. In March, three of Hong Kong's leading broadcasters had to resign their positions after receiving death threats and having their businesses vandalized because of their criticism of the Chinese government. Throughout the year, pro-democracy lawmakers and activists have also suffered threats and vandalism. Hong Kong's delegate to Beijing stepped down from his position saying he was powerless to effect change.

The Chinese government's campaign to crack down on freedom in Hong Kong will only succeed in shining a spotlight on the courage and leadership of Hong Kong's democratic movement. The United States must stand solidly with the people of Hong Kong and their desire for democracy.

Reminding Beijing of its obligations under previously-signed agreements must be our constant message. Tepid remarks by Bush Administration officials are not a sufficient response to protect the nascent democracy in Hong Kong. President Bush should not hesitate to define the U.S.-China relationship in terms of the willingness of the Chinese government to discharge the commitments contained in those agreements.

U.S. policy toward Hong Kong should be consistent with the provisions of the U.S.-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 that require autonomy and empower the President to halt existing agreements with Hong Kong or take other steps if he determines that Beijing is interfering unduly in Hong Kong's affairs.

H. Res. 667 conveys that message in a clear and forceful manner, and deserves the support of this House.

HONORING THE WORK OF DEBRA BARRON

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the work of one of my constituents, Debra Barron, who suffers from a debilitating disease called scleroderma. Debra and her family have been tireless advocates in drawing public attention to this painful condition. Her work demonstrates her strength and resolve, and I ask that her remarks from the March 20, 2004 Scleroderma Foundation Wine Auction & Dinner in Broward County be entered into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Imagine for a moment you're a 26-year-old newlywed . . . young, healthy, athletic, and pursuing a serious career. That was me in September 1981, when, one afternoon as I'm washing my hands the color in them suddenly changed from pink to stark white. There was no warning, no pain or discomfort. Two weeks later, after a battery of tests requiring copious amounts of my blood, a doctor at the George Washington Hospital Center in D.C. informs me I have a "condition" known as Raynauds, which is basically a loss of circulation to the extremities. Raynauds is easily manageable with medication and isn't a problem except when the circulation returns; some will experience a minor sensation such as tingling while others endure severe pain as the blood vessels return to normal and the color returns. So there I am, I'm 26, having never been seriously sick a day in my life, and I think to myself . . . "This is nothing. Go home and don't worry."

My husband, Gary, and I moved to San Francisco in 1982. My doctor in DC suggested I seek out a physician to monitor my condition in the event. I needed follow-up care. Since I needed a physician anyway I'm not too concerned. From 1982 to 1983 the Raynauds become aggressive. The first to go was my left index fingertip which developed a gangrene-type sore, and had to be removed by a doctor, also losing my fingernail and some bone matter. No problem . . . I still had nine good fingers but, as time elapsed, more fingers became infected and each episode brought new horrors, as well as physical pain, as I watched my fingers literally die. Needless to say there went my regular manicure appointments.

By the spring of 1983, my condition had become more aggressive. Chewing and swallowing food was now something I actually had to think about because food would get stuck or caught in my esophagus. My doctors were supportive and encouraging, but they were running out of options and I wasn't responding to experimentation with medication. Basically, I was still taking medication for a "condition" that was supposed to be manageable.

The pain was also getting worse. Many scleroderma patients experience severe pain and it becomes a way of life, day in, day out, sometimes for months on end.

The sores don't heal quickly because the blood vessels clamp down, which suppresses the flow of oxygen to the blood and thereby causes poor circulation. Chronic pain gets old very quickly and it affects everything in your life: I no longer felt young, I certainly didn't feel healthy, I was suffering from fatigue, my career was suffering, and the biggest insult of all was the total loss of my sexuality and how I felt about myself as a woman. I was broken in all the ways that matter to any human being. It didn't help

that my family was on the other side of the country, my husband was traveling, and the only thing my doctors could do was offer encouragement. It was at that point I made a conscious decision to do something and as I drove over the Golden Gate Bridge one afternoon, crying from pain, I intended to end my life.

San Francisco police don't like speeders on the Golden Gate Bridge and I got pulled over. I knew I was about to receive a whopper of a ticket when the officer realized how hard I had been crying. I explained about the pain and told him I was in a hurry to get home to take my pain medication. He offered to escort me home, which he did, took me upstairs to my apartment, waited while I took my medication and stayed with me. He never spoke of God or having faith, nor did he try to offer encouragement. He just sat there with me and let me do the thinking.

Realizing the consequences of what I tried to do to myself hit me hard. The state of my health was no longer something I could deny and from that point on I chose to become more aggressive regarding my condition. I was basically being monitored, not treated, for a disease no one understood and it still took another 12 years before a doctor finally recognized my symptoms as Scleroderma.

I still get sores and have to deal with pain but life is good again. I'm in remission now thanks to my scleroderma doctor, Frederick Wigley, at Johns Hopkins plus the myriad physicians that oversee my healthcare.

I'm very fortunate to have a loving and supportive family, both my immediate family and Gary's family. But, most importantly, the two people I live with have been tremendously supportive.

TRIBUTE TO LOUISE "BEBE" CANTER, CPCU, ARM, ON COMPLETION OF HER TERM AS PRESIDENT OF THE INDEPENDENT INSURANCE AGENTS & BROKERS OF AMERICA

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend Louise "BeBe" Canter, CPCU, ARM, who is completing her term as president of the Nation's largest insurance association—the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America (IIABA)—this October in Orlando.

Louise was elected to IIABA's Executive Committee in October 1998 and was installed as this great organization's president last September. She is executive vice president of Patterson/Smith Associates of Falls Church, VA and resides in Bethesda, MD with her husband, Bob, and their two sons, Christopher and Matthew.

Louise has enjoyed a distinguished career as an independent insurance agent that has been highlighted by her tireless service and dedication to her clients, community, IIABA, the Metropolitan Washington Association of Independent Insurance Agents (MWAIIA) and her colleagues across the country.

Louise's service to her peers began with her involvement with the Metropolitan Washington Association. She served as MWAIIA's president and as the organization's representative to IIABA's National Board of Directors. In recognition of her outstanding service, MWAIIA named her its 1991 Agent of the Year.

Louise also served as chairman of the Southern Agents Conference, an annual conference of agents from several States, including Maryland.

In addition to her position on the IIABA Executive Committee, Louise also serves as a member of the Association's Large Agents & Brokers Roundtable.

Her other industry volunteer work includes service as a member of the D.C. Society of Chartered Property Casualty Underwriters' Board of Directors and the Standard & Poor's Agent Advisory Council, and chair of the CNA Branch PACER Agent Panel and the Southern Agents Conference.

A highlight in Louise's community involvement is her service as a member of Howard University's Scholarship Committee.

I applaud Louise for her tireless leadership of the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America and for the numerous accomplishments achieved for all independent insurance agents and brokers during this past year.

INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to enter into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD the unanimously agreed upon Concluding Document of the Interparliamentary Conference on Human Rights and Religious Freedom, which occurred in Brussels, Belgium in early August of this year. Over 30 different countries from Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa and Latin America sent parliamentarians to participate in the conference to discuss issues of ethnicity, religion and citizenship, responses to anti-Semitism, terrorism and religious freedom, religious registration laws, trafficking in persons, and women's rights. In addition, a number of nongovernmental and religious organizations attended and participated. These kinds of gatherings are vital in building relationships and understanding, and ultimately cooperation and partnership, between peoples of all nations.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, AUGUST 7, 2004, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

The Second Session of the Interparliamentary Conference on Human Rights and Religious Freedom encourages the genuine expression of opinions from representatives of the peoples of the world. There is no greater legitimacy than that expressed by peoples in their choice of representatives.

The great variety of cultures, the different paths to God, the diverse ethnic backgrounds, and the disparity of historic goals often lead to conflict and bloodshed between peoples, but should instead be sources of inspiration in our quest for valid solutions.

Religious freedom is the first human right and should not be confined to the private sphere only.

We live in an era characterized by aspirations towards diversity and tolerance but clouded by tragic failures of mutual respect. True religious freedom is more than mere tolerance. It constitutes an embracing of

universal human dignity as a consequence of one's religious convictions. Every individual has inherent dignity and worth, and the state is constituted to serve society, not vice versa.

The forceful attempts to build homogenous societies in the last century led to horrendous human sufferings, to the carnage of world wars and to genocide.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has become the framework for a global compact with great moral authority and the promise of a more just international order.

Lifestyles and social structures rooted in different religions should be preserved in order to maintain peace and harmony on all levels, from the local community to the world order.

Prejudice and repression based on ethnic, religious and cultural background persist. In some cases these insults to human dignity enjoy the authority of law and the state.

Ethnic and religious intolerance are unacceptable and should not be used as a basis for restricting citizenship. A civic covenant and the rule of law constitute the only rational basis for creating a just society.

Any cultural and spiritual invocation of undetermined historic or divine authority as justification for hatred and rejection of others directly and actively violates universally proclaimed human rights.

The Interparliamentary Conference on Human Rights and Religious Freedom solemnly reaffirms the right to freedom of religion and belief for each person, and rejects any attempt to restrict fundamental rights on the basis of religious, ethnic or cultural identity including restrictions or forcing any religious dress.

Anti-Semitism is a global concern and never a function of Jewish conduct. Reducing the magnitude of Jewish suffering throughout history to politics alienates and distorts our own humanity.

The alarming signs of recurrence of Anti-Semitism, especially in some advanced societies of Western Europe, indicate a deep-rooted prejudice.

The Interparliamentary Conference on Human Rights and Religious Freedom condemns hatred on the basis of religious, ethnic or cultural identity, including restricting or forcing religious dress.

Security has become a global problem. No nation is able to protect its citizens and territorial integrity without international solidarity.

The very concept of great power changes its contour in an environment where fringe groups are able to disrupt and damage the very structure of a society.

Where freedom of religion and belief is protected by governments and valued by citizens, religion-based terrorism will not take root. It may take advantage of a free society, but sustained support will not emerge.

Freedom of religion is an antidote to terrorism—especially religion-based terrorism. It encourages a theological and political awareness of the need to accept pluralism.

Discriminating on the basis of religious beliefs or discrediting religious practices are contrary to respect for fundamental human dignity. They destabilize society by creating a climate of tension, intolerance, opposition and suspicion.

Respect for freedom of religion and belief is an effective means of promoting national and international security and stability.

The gravest danger in the world today comes from fanaticism and extremism that exploits ideals of spiritual and religious movements.

Manipulation of religion and spiritual beliefs for violent and terrorist purposes, including murder and destruction of properties, is unacceptable.

The global pandemic of HIV/AIDs constitutes a terrible assault on human rights and demands effective action and enforcement of international commitments for education, prevention, care and treatment.

Trafficking in persons, in particular women and children, is recognized as a form of enslavement which violates fundamental human rights.

Steps need to be taken to ensure that the offense of trafficking in persons is recognized globally as criminal, and to prevent further trafficking in persons.

It is imperative to strengthen international institutions and to create new instruments that will address and protect the rights of religious and ethnic minorities.

The Interparliamentary Conference on Human Rights and Religious Freedom appreciates the work of the Secretariat and recommends to it that it consult the maximum number of countries in the elaboration of its future programs.

The Interparliamentary Conference on Human Rights and Religious Freedom encourages parliaments and governments to nurture environments of free expression and respect for human dignity.

In this spirit the Interparliamentary Conference on Human Rights and Religious Freedom is grateful to His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco for his generous appreciation of our work:

"It is therefore appropriate that this sort of initiative becomes the foundational undertaking of an international civilization, where complementarity between people is substituted for confrontation and where faith in the paramount necessity of cooperation overcomes the illusion of self-reliance and autarchy."

The Interparliamentary Conference on Human Rights and Religious Freedom accepts the proposal of the delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco to host the Third Session in 2005.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. HAROLD ROGERS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, September 13, I was in Kentucky tending to official business and was not present for rollcall votes Nos. 441, 442 and 443. The votes were on House Concurrent Resolutions 363, and House Resolutions 667 and 760. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on all measures.

IN HONOR OF JAMES SPRIGGS'S RETIREMENT AS PRESIDENT OF THE GREATER IRVING-LAS COLINAS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. James A. Spriggs on the occasion of his retirement as President of the Greater Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Spriggs became President of the Greater Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce in April of 1995, and the organization