

Technical Corrections Act of 2004, which passed the Senate floor by unanimous consent earlier today. This legislation contains a number of duty suspensions for imported products. The duty suspensions help make American industry competitive by allowing companies to reduce costs on needed inputs. An important criterion for duty suspension is that the imported product cannot compete with a domestic product.

I am concerned that duty suspensions were included in the bill for eight pigments that may compete directly with pigments produced in my State. If so, it could directly affect hundreds of workers in my State. The provisions at issue are: Sections 1439, 1440, 1441, 1452, 1453, 1454, 1455, and 1456.

I understand that the Department of Commerce has been contacted about these provisions and is willing to review them to determine whether they are appropriate for inclusion in this bill. Will the Senator work with me to ensure that the Department of Commerce completes its analysis?

Mr. GRASSLEY. I appreciate the Senator raising this issue with me. I am happy to work with the Senator from Kentucky and the Commerce Department to ensure that an appropriate and timely analysis is completed. I recognize that the duty suspensions in question take effect on January 1, 2005. If the results of this analysis demonstrate that the inclusion of these provisions in H.R. 1047 was inappropriate, I will gladly work with him to try and rectify the situation at the earliest possible date.

Mr. BUNNING. I thank my colleague and I pledge to work closely with you to resolve this matter.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who yields time? The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I yield back the remainder of my time and ask unanimous consent that all time be yielded back.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of Rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the conference report to accompany H.R. 1047, a bill to amend the harmonized tariff schedule of the United States to modify temporarily certain rates of duty, to make other technical amendments to the trade laws, and for other purposes.

Bill Frist, Chuck Grassley, George Allen, Craig Thomas, Jon Kyl, Mike Crapo, Robert F. Bennett, John Ensign, Pete Domenici, Lamar Alexander, John E. Sununu, Richard G. Lugar, George Voinovich, Peter Fitzgerald, Trent Lott, Lindsey Graham, Jim Talent.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the conference report to accompany H.R. 1047, a bill to amend the harmonized tariff schedule of the United States to modify temporarily certain rates of duty, to make other technical amendments to the trade laws, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. The following Senators were necessarily absent. The Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI), the Senator from Texas (Mrs. HUTCHISON), and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. LUGAR).

Mr. REID. I announce that the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON), the Senator from Florida (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. JEFFORDS), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CHAFEE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 88, nays 5, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 214 Leg.]

YEAS—88

Akaka	Dole	Mikulski
Alexander	Domenici	Miller
Allard	Dorgan	Murkowski
Allen	Durbin	Murray
Baucus	Edwards	Nelson (FL)
Bayh	Ensign	Nelson (NE)
Bennett	Feinstein	Nickles
Biden	Fitzgerald	Pyror
Bingaman	Frist	Reed
Bond	Graham (SC)	Reid
Boxer	Grassley	Roberts
Breaux	Gregg	Rockefeller
Brownback	Hagel	Santorum
Bunning	Harkin	Santorum
Burns	Hatch	Sarbanes
Campbell	Hollings	Schumer
Cantwell	Inhofe	Sessions
Carper	Inouye	Shelby
Chafee	Johnson	Smith
Chambliss	Kennedy	Snowe
Cochran	Kerry	Specter
Collins	Kyl	Stabenow
Conrad	Landrieu	Stevens
Cornyn	Lautenberg	Sununu
Corzine	Levin	Talent
Craig	Lieberman	Thomas
Crapo	Lincoln	Voinovich
Daschle	Lott	Warner
DeWine	McCain	Wyden
Dodd	McConnell	

NAYS—5

Byrd	Dayton	Kohl
Coleman	Feingold	

NOT VOTING—7

Clinton	Hutchison	Lugar
Enzi	Jeffords	
Graham (FL)	Leahy	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 88, the nays are 5. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for Resolution No. 474 to be brought up for its immediate consideration, and I will allocate time.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Louisiana yield?

Ms. LANDRIEU. I am happy to cooperate. I thought we had worked this out. Perhaps we have not. I understand we are calling up a resolution for its immediate consideration and I will stay in the business that we are in.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I will suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. CRAIG. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I will not object to a quorum call if it is only temporary, and I mean very temporary, so we can work out our differences. This is a very important resolution that deserves to come before the Senate. Tomorrow is National Adoption Day and the Senator from Louisiana and I find this an important priority for all Senators. With that, I will not object, understanding that Senator FEINGOLD offers this only temporarily.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

Ms. LANDRIEU. I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed immediately to the consideration of S. Res. 474, submitted earlier today by myself, Senator CRAIG, Senator BOND, as well as Senator DEWINE, Senator FITZGERALD, Senator LEVIN, Senators SANTORUM and STABENOW—those last names be added as cosponsors to the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 474) to express support for the goals of National Adoption Month by promoting national awareness of adoption, celebrating children and families involved in adoption, and encouraging Americans to secure safety, permanency, and well-being for all children.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I yield to my friend who cosponsored this resolution for his remarks prior to mine.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho is recognized.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, let me thank the Senator from Louisiana for her leadership on this issue and on the introduction of this resolution to recognize what we believe to be a very important month and a very important day for America, for America's children, and especially for the foster care children of America.

Tomorrow, November 20, is National Adoption Day. This month is National Adoption Month. Over the years, as we have worked to bring this to the attention of the American people and to people who would like to form families through adoption, we find this tremendously important. More than 3,100 adoptions of children from foster care will be finalized as a result of National Adoption Day. Of those who are in foster care, some 129,000 children wait for adoption. Senator LANDRIEU and I, over the last good number of years, have worked almost nonstop on this issue, not just for the foster care children of our country but for all children of our country who are seeking a permanent, loving, safe environment.

As a result of that effort, she and I and others on the House side took the old congressional coalition on adoption and created the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. That institute is now one of the sponsors of National Adoption Month and National Adoption Day.

These efforts on the part of all of us, we hope, continue to build the kind of understanding and knowledge that is growing across America—that you can form a family through adoption. Adoption is a phenomenally viable option for couples who may not be able to have children naturally or who wish to expand their families, simply because they care so much about the future of children and who know that children who grow up in a safe, loving environment are going to be young people who become productive in our society instead of frustrated and oftentimes misguided in their adult efforts.

What I would like to do now is read the resolution and the President's Proclamation on National Adoption Month, because I think it speaks to the kind of cooperative effort that the Congress, that Mary and I and a good many others in this Senate and the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute have, with a lot of other alliances but very importantly with the President and the executive branch of Government.

This is the 2004 Presidential Proclamation on National Adoption Month, by the President of the United States:

By deciding to share their hearts and home with a child, adoptive parents demonstrate great compassion and receive many blessings in return. During National Adoption Month, we recognize the generosity of adoptive and foster families who are providing hope and love, and we encourage the adoption of children of all ages.

In 2002, I signed the Promoting Safe and Stable Families legislation that supports families and promotes adoption, and last December I signed the Adoption Promotion Act of 2003 to increase incentives to adopt older children. We have raised the adoption tax credit to \$10,000 per child and created the AdoptUSKids website that has joined thousands of children with adoptive parents. We are working hard to place more children from foster care to permanent homes. This year, on November 20, communities from all 50 States and the District of Columbia will celebrate National Adoption Day by final-

izing the adoption of thousands of children by loving families. And each one of those families will be enriched by the addition of new members. By bringing care and hope into other lives, individuals can fill their own lives with greater purpose.

Now, therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 2004 as National Adoption Month. I call on all Americans to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities to honor adoptive families and to participate in efforts to find permanent homes for waiting children.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourth day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

GEORGE W. BUSH.

That is what our President has said. He and this administration, as have others, have worked very cooperatively with Senator LANDRIEU and me. Much of what we talk about and much of what the President talked about were activities and efforts initiated right in the Senate—the child tax credit and other efforts to facilitate and make easier for Americans the ability to adopt children and bring them into their homes to create that loving environment that we talk about, that we know is so critically necessary in the lives of young people as they grow up.

So I am tremendously proud to join with my colleague, MARY LANDRIEU of Louisiana, as we work cooperatively together in the passage of this resolution and as we continue to work to foster the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, to grow it.

Let me close by asking all Senators to become an active member with us in the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, to participate in its activities and its purpose as we work to facilitate adoptions both here in this country and around the world.

I thank my colleague from Louisiana, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I am pleased and proud to join my colleague from Idaho. I have the opportunity this morning before this body to thank him for his extraordinary leadership on this issue and his tireless efforts. Despite all of the responsibilities he has as a leader of the majority party and all of the other issues that he leads, he always finds time for this issue. It is not an issue that has a lot of paid lobbyists associated with it because this is a coalition that is actually advocating on behalf of orphans. His leadership is particularly noted, and we are grateful for all the work that our Senators do for children, not only in our country but around the world.

While we do celebrate this month and recognize this month of November and mark this time noting our great progress and success, let me begin by saying, unfortunately, the number of orphans in the world is on the rise. Some experts predict an unprecedented

number of orphans in the world—really in numbers not ever known by the world before. We have had world wars in the past that have caused the number of orphans to expand greatly, but in the midst of this century and this time not only do we have war and famine, but we have something the world has never seen before, and that is the epidemic of AIDS that is an orphan factory in Africa and India.

We come to the floor today to celebrate what successes we have achieved in the United States, and we will talk about those successes in a moment. The challenge is great. I look forward to working with Senator CRAIG and all Members of the Senate as we try to form a leadership team for the world to address this unprecedented number of orphans.

If I could just say one more word about AIDS, sometimes children are orphaned because a parent dies of heart disease or cancer, but those diseases usually just affect one parent, not two. Because of the nature of AIDS and the way this disease is transmitted, it actually works at killing parents in usually a quick amount of time, leaving children in the international community not single orphans but double orphans. So that is quite a challenge to the world.

Let me switch to a happy note. In America last year 120,000 children found loving and permanent homes, and approximately 12,000 of those children came from other countries to the United States to loving homes in all parts of our country; small towns in Idaho, very small towns in Louisiana, as well as to our larger metropolitan areas. And they were welcomed, of course, with happiness and celebration and have become parts of families. I am proud to say that over 100,000 children were adopted, children from the United States to American families right here at home out of foster care and, of course, infant adoptions as well. That was terrific.

Two million children live in adoptive homes today in our country. More extraordinary and more jolting and impressive is the fact that 6 out of every 10 Americans have been personally touched by adoption; either they themselves were adopted or they have adopted into their family or grandparents have received from their biological family adoptive grandchildren. The stories are endless and wonderful. We need to make sure this Government of ours is doing everything it can to connect children who need families because governments do a great job at many things, but raising children is not one of them. Children need to be raised by parents, preferably two parents, but at least one loving adult that can raise that child to be a contributing member of our society.

Our future truly depends on it. We can have all the great tax policies in the world, great health policies, great education policies, but it is parent to child, that carries future values from

one generation to the next. So making these connections is not only a feel-good thing to do, it is a necessary thing to do for the continuation of our great Nation and the world community and family.

Let me share briefly about some of the children waiting in my State. There are 500,000 children in foster care in the United States today. That is tragic. It is tragic and good and I will explain. It is tragic because children have been separated from their parents. Sometimes we could have done a better job of preventing that had we given more drug counseling on substance abuse or stronger educational benefits or job opportunities to those parents. On the positive side, sometimes children have to be separated from their families because, if not, they may literally die at the hands of parents who are not in their right mind and spirit. These children can sometimes be in danger.

While we try to protect, promote and develop a better system, the fact is, 500,000 children are in foster care, anywhere from the age of 1 month up to 21 years old.

These are pictures of some of the children in my State. There are many more. Some are young teens, children who are perfectly healthy, sibling groups. Cynthia is a beautiful child. She was born with cerebral palsy and needs special care and attention. This is a story of one child who gives everyone great inspiration. Children like this with the right love and attention can grow up to be Presidents, mayors of great cities, professors at our great universities. They just need love, attention, and care. That is what National Adoption Month is all about.

Let me in my brief time share a story about an extraordinary young woman who came out of an orphanage. I will tell the story and then show the picture because you will not believe it when I show the picture. I want to tell a story that Senator CRAIG and I know about that has touched our hearts that we want to share with you today.

A young girl, about 9 years ago, was left in an orphanage in Russia. We do not know too much about the circumstances, but what we know is she was severely disabled when she was born. She had spina bifida. She had a hole in her spine. In some places in the world, children born with disabilities are basically just left to die—even with disabilities that we have come to know in America can be fixed and corrected with good health care. But there are truly dying rooms around the world where infants and young children are born and left to die. They are not fed, they are not taken care of because there is no medicine, no doctors, and nobody can do anything, so they make a tough judgment: to feed the healthy children and leave the sick children to die.

This little girl was left in a dying room. But she would not die, basically. After 6 years of living, with very little

support, a woman we know well showed up in one of our adoption agencies and was trying to find children in this orphanage to be adopted. She came across this child who was on the floor because she could not walk. She had no wheelchair but she crawled up and touched her jacket. She looked down at this child's eyes and saw something that obviously no one else had seen and decided to adopt this child. The orphanage kept saying: We don't want you to have this child; we want you to have a "good" child.

She kept saying: This is the child I want. I want this child with a hole in her back, the strong and beautiful little girl.

The long and short of the story is, this woman scoops this child up, brings the child to America, adopts this child as her daughter, and her name is Tatiana McFadden.

I want to show a picture of Tatiana, but no one is going to believe the end of this story. Tatiana represented the United States of America in the Para-Olympics in Greece this year and won the silver medal for our country, for America.

This is a picture of Tatiana, who is now 16 or 17 years old, one of the strongest, most courageous, bravest human beings I have ever met. She proudly carried the American flag over that finish line and won the silver medal in the Para-Olympics.

Senator CRAIG, my good friend from Idaho, and I hoped she would be our special guest at Angels in Adoption, but she was actually winning the medal as our event was taking place.

In honor of Tatiana McFadden, I wanted to speak for her and for the children she represents in America and around the world. This is Tatiana, receiving on our behalf, for the United States of America, the silver medal. She represents everything that Senator CRAIG and I want to share today about National Adoption Month.

There are many orphans waiting. They are not damaged goods. These are children who, through no fault of their own, have been separated from their parents for a variety of different reasons. They need and want families. They have a lot to offer not only to themselves but to their countries and their families.

We hope in November, as we gather around our Thanksgiving table, and as our Nation gathers and spends time on its knees thanking God for our many blessings which we have, remembering our blessings from the early founding of this country. As we gather around our tables and hold the hands of our children, let's think about the children who do not have parents and what we can do.

Every Senator can most certainly do something. Many Senators and House Members are doing a great deal.

My colleagues have been very gracious with this time, but I close by saying that tomorrow, on Saturday, many of our colleagues, House and Senate

Members, will be participating at their courthouses all over America. We are happy to say that we will have 4,000 children adopted tomorrow, on National Adoption Day, an effort started by one judge, Judge Nash in Los Angeles, CA, who started this to call attention to children like Tatiana. All they need is someone to pick them up, hold them, love them. Basically the spirit that God has put in them will do the rest. That is what this month is about.

I thank my colleague for offering this resolution. I thank the Senators in the midst of their busy work schedule for pushing this resolution through. I thank the President for his great support and acknowledge President Clinton and First Lady Clinton's effort, now Senator CLINTON, and President Bush and Mrs. Bush, for their good leadership on this issue—not just in America, as my colleague knows, but as President Bush advocates these policies around the world.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements related thereto be printed in the RECORD without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. DOLE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 474) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 474

Whereas there are approximately 532,000 children in the foster care system in the United States, approximately 129,000 of whom are waiting to be adopted;

Whereas the average length of time a child in foster care remains in foster care is almost 3 years;

Whereas for many foster children, the wait for a loving family in which they are nurtured, comforted, and protected is endless;

Whereas every year 25,000 children "age out" of foster care by reaching adulthood without being placed in a permanent home;

Whereas, since 1987, the number of annual adoptions has ranged from 118,000 to 127,000;

Whereas approximately 2,100,000 children in the United States live with adoptive parents;

Whereas approximately 6 of every 10 Americans have been touched personally by adoption in that they, a family member, or a close friend was adopted, has adopted a child, or has placed a child for adoption;

Whereas every day loving and nurturing families are formed when committed and dedicated individuals make an important difference in the life of a child through adoption;

Whereas, on November 20, 2004, communities from all 50 States and the District of Columbia will celebrate National Adoption Day by finalizing the adoption of thousands of children by loving families; and

Whereas on November 4, 2004, the President proclaimed November 2004 as National Adoption Month: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate recognizes November 2004 as National Adoption Month.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Reserving the right to object.

Mr. BOND. I thank the President.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I will not object to these remarks, but subsequent to that we will begin the postcloture discussion of the issue before the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BOND. Madam President, I commend my colleagues from Louisiana and Idaho. It was a very touching story of the Senator from Louisiana which highlights the importance of adoption month. This is a wonderful effort that my two colleagues have launched. We are pleased to support them and the President's efforts and all those wonderful people who take adopted children into their home.

(The remarks of Mr. BOND pertaining to the introduction of S. 3009 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

MISCELLANEOUS TRADE AND TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT—CONFERENCE REPORT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. KOHL. Madam President, I want to speak on the miscellaneous tariffs bill.

Last spring, Senator FEINGOLD and I sent a letter to the minority leader making it clear we would object to taking up S. 2200, a bill granting NTR status to Laos because of the human rights situation there. At the time we said:

Reports emerging from Laos remain disturbing. Journalists, human rights groups, and many of our constituents inform us that the Laos government continues to be responsible for serious human rights violations, and that conditions are particularly difficult for the Hmong ethnic group.

The situation in Laos has not changed, and, in fact, over the last several months more disturbing evidence has emerged that now is not the time for us to appear to be rewarding one of the most closed and repressive regimes. For the first time, we have independent corroboration of the types of charges which have been made by many Hmong residents of my State for years and by others who have fled Laos more recently.

On September 13, 2004, Amnesty International issued a report entitled "Military Atrocities Against Hmong Children Are War Crimes." The report, which I will read from momentarily, details horrific crimes committed in May of this year reportedly by Laos soldiers. These crimes were captured on a graphic videotape smuggled out this summer and which I understand the State Department has taken very

seriously, and they were also described by witness testimony.

The attack took place against a group of children, five of whom were killed, in a remote area of the country, and was described by Amnesty International as follows:

The 5 children, between 13 and 16 years old and part of an ethnic Hmong rebel group, were brutally mutilated—the girls apparently raped before being killed—by a group of approximately 30-40 soldiers. The victims—four girls, Mao Lee, 14; her sister Chao Lee, 16; Chi Her, 14; Pang Lor, 14; and Tou Lor, Pang Lor's 15 year old brother—were killed whilst foraging for food close to their camp. They were unarmed.

A witness, who has subsequently fled the country and been recognized as a refugee by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, reported hearing one of the soldiers saying: "Hmong. Your mouth allows you to speak. Your vagina allows you to breed".

He then heard moans and a gunshot.

A 14-year-old girl was shot in each breast and the other bodies were mutilated by what appears to be high-powered rifle shots fired at close range. One of the girls was disemboweled.

Several other members of the group were seriously injured with gun shot wounds but managed to return to their encampment. The rebels have little if any medicine and rely on traditional treatments using plants found in the forest.

It is my understanding that in the last several weeks, our State Department has delivered a demarche to the Lao Government, calling for thorough investigation of these atrocities which happened in May—an investigation that is credible and that would withstand scrutiny by the international community. To date, there has been no such investigation and the soldiers involved with these war crimes have not been held accountable.

Also this year, came startling and deeply upsetting reports. Hundreds of former Hmong-Lao insurgents—many of whom courageously helped our military during the Vietnam War—and their families emerged from the jungles in Laos only to be captured by the Lao military and mistreated, and as some allege, killed.

The emerging Hmong-Lao were under the impression that there was an amnesty program organized by the Laotian government, but there was much confusion about this program. The Lao government has officially denied there was such a program, they have refused to provide our Government with any details of this mass surrender of ethnic Hmong and their families, and they would not accept humanitarian assistance for the sudden influx of people seeking assistance.

In response to these reports, Senator FEINGOLD and I, along with others, sent a letter to Ambassador Negroponte asking for his assistance in urging the United Nations to send a high level UN representative or fact finding mission to Laos to monitor the treatment of the Hmong. I also raised the issue with Secretary Powell when he came to testify before the Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations Subcommittee.

Secretary Powell expressed concerns about the reports coming out of Laos. He agreed that there is a need for greater access and that more needs to be done to secure the safety of the Hmong. And, while Laos hasn't exactly been on the front burner, this spring the Secretary raised the issue of the Hmong in Laos with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and he wrote to the Lao Foreign Minister to express concerns about the reports related to the supposed amnesty.

It is my understanding that there has been no reply to Secretary Powell's letter.

So, here we are today offering a carrot to a government that has essentially stonewalled our Secretary of State and has restricted access to independent international monitors, leaving us with no way to investigate the many reports coming from Laos.

I am aware that there are supporters of Laos who have raised questions about the veracity of reports of human rights violations against the Hmong. Because of restrictions put in place by the Lao government that deny policymakers, journalists, and humanitarian groups access to the situation on the ground, it is very difficult to confirm these reports one way or the other. More significantly, it is virtually impossible to ensure that these individuals are being treated fairly and humanely. That is why it is essential for us to keep the pressure on the Lao government to push for international access. Such access would be crucial in determining the facts surrounding the treatment of the Hmong and would allow us to ensure that they are not being mistreated.

The sad fate of the Hmong in Laos has been exacerbated by their role in helping the United States during the Vietnam war. By 1963, as many as 20,000 Hmong fighters were trained and armed by the Central Intelligence Agency to fight against the North Vietnamese Army and Pathet Lao forces as part of the so-called "secret war in Laos." Some reports put the number of fighters as high as 40,000 in 1969. The Hmong sustained heavy casualties during those years, working in coordination with the CIA. The impact on the Hmong community extended beyond the actual fighters: Family members lived under terrible conditions, throughout this period, unable to farm because they were constantly moving to keep one step ahead of the Communists. Since they were never in one place long enough to harvest, they had to eat leaves, wild fruit, tree bark, and whatever else they could find in the jungle. The United States is indebted to these former Hmong insurgents who rescued downed American pilots and disrupted North Vietnamese supply lines—under the most difficult circumstances. We cannot forget these courageous individuals and their families.

In the years since the end of the Vietnam war, thousands of Hmong