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CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — Extensions of Remarks

June 24, 2005

Marshall School of Law and the people of Northeast Ohio.

HONORING THE 2005 GOLDMAN ENVIRONMENTAL PRIZE RECIPIENTS

HON. RAÚL M. GRIJALVA
OF ARIZONA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 22, 2005

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the winners of the 2005 Goldman Environmental Prize, the world’s most prestigious prize honoring grassroots environmentalists.

Now in its 16th year, the Goldman Prize is annually awarded to environmental leaders from six geographic regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Islands & Island Nations, North America, and South & Central America. The recipients are engaged in important efforts to preserve the natural environment, including protecting endangered ecosystems and species, combating destructive development projects, promoting sustainability, influencing environmental policies and striving for environmental justice. Goldman Prize winners often are figurative courageous and end up being from isolated villages and inner cities who are willing to endure great personal risks to safeguard the environment.

To be given the award is a great honor. It is a recognition of the outstanding work that the activists do to ensure social and environmental justice in their communities and around the world.

This year the recipient from Mexico is Isidro Baldenegro López. Mr. Baldenegro is a subsistence farmer and community leader of Mexico’s indigenous Tarahumara people in the country’s Sierra Madre mountain region. He has spent much of his life defending old growth forests from devastating logging in a region torn by violence, corruption and drug-trafficking. Tragically, Baldenegro is acutely aware of this involved in defending the forest. As a boy, he witnessed firsthand the assassination of his father who was killed for his opposition to logging. In the face of these serious risks and repeated threats against his life, Baldenegro has chosen to remain and defend the forest and ancestral lands his community has inhabited for hundreds of years. In 1993, Baldenegro developed a non-violent grassroots movement to fight the logging industry in the Sierra Madres. He later mobilized a massive human blockade, which resulted in a special court order preventing the appropriation of the forests and the people of Honduras. He has said, “Natural resources and life itself are human rights; therefore, to destroy God’s creation is to attack human life; our last remaining option is to defend life with our own life.”

These are just two of the six leaders awarded the Goldman Prize this year, but I would like to commend all the winners for their incredible commitment to a better world for their communities. I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring them today.

THE NEW G.I. BILL: PAYING A DEBT TO TODAY’S VETERANS

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL
OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2005

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the G.I. Bill of Rights for the 21st Century.

This week, we commemorate the 61st anniversary of the G.I. Bill. The bill was enacted in 1944 to support our troops returning from World War II with educational benefits, home loans and medical assistance. This legislation greatly impacted my life.

I was a high school dropout when I first enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1948. After serving in Korea, where I was awarded a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star, I came back home in 1952 with no idea of what to do next. I had achieved the rank of Sergeant, but now I found myself stranded, pushing hand trucks in New York’s garment district, just as I had before I was deployed to Korea. Desperate for help, I went to the Veterans Administration where I learned the government would pay for my education under the G.I. Bill. I decided to finish high school and to pursue a higher education and a law degree. The rest is history.

Almost 8 million veterans went to college as a result of the original G.I. Bill and we owe today’s veterans that same opportunity tailored to their needs. The new G.I. Bill would provide the full cost for college or job training for those who serve four or more years of active duty. It would also provide $1,000 bonuses to the nearly 1 million troops who have been placed in harm’s way in Iraq and Afghanistan. The new G.I. Bill also honors our National Guard and Reserve by expanding military health care to cover all reservists, making sure they do not suffer a pay cut while deployed and improving incentives for recruitment and retention.

For military retirees and the families of those who died in the line of duty, the package would eliminate the Disabled Veterans Tax, allowing disabled veterans to receive disability compensation along with their retirement pension. It would also do away with the Military Families Tax which penalizes survivors, mostly widows, of those killed as a result of combat from injuries sustained in service. These widows lose their survivor benefits if they receive compensation because their spouse has died of a service-connected injury. If passed, the bill would also improve veterans’ health care.

Like me, most of today’s volunteers are from economically depressed urban and rural areas with high rates of unemployment. Enlisted by enlistment bonuses up to $20,000, they look at the military as an economic opportunity. In effect, they are subject to an economic draft. This is why I appealed to President Bush to call on all Americans to share the burden of war.

I oppose the war in Iraq, whose justifications have all been proven false. I strongly support the troops, whose job is not to question the legitimacy of the war, but to follow the orders they are given. We must see to it that we show them how much we appreciate their sacrifice.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TOM COLE
OF OKLAHOMA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2005

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, on June 22, 2005 I was unavoidably detained during votes on H.R. 2985. Had I been present, I would have voted in the following manner: on Rollcall vote No. 299, I would have voted “nay”; on Rollcall vote No. 300, I would have voted “nay”; on Rollcall vote No. 301, I would have voted “nay”; on Rollcall vote No. 302, I would have voted “nay”; on Rollcall vote No. 303, I would have voted “aye”.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATY SIGNING BETWEEN THE TRIBES OF MIDDLE OREGON AND THE UNITED STATES

HON. GREG WALDEN
OF OREGON
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2005

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the 150th anniversary of the treaty signing between the Tribes of Middle Oregon and the United States on June 25th, 1855. I will have the honor this weekend