

positive effect on the welfare of individuals living and working on the island.

The JCT study points out that tax incentives such as Sec. 936 cannot be permanent additions to the Internal Revenue Code, and that there are market distortions associated with these incentives. While not opining on a preferred approach, JCT states that other options might gain a higher rate of return. JCT surveys some of these options, putting them in the context of the various political status alternatives. Unfortunately, JCT articulates the costs, but dodges the really big question of measuring the possible economic benefits of the different status options (independence, statehood, or continued commonwealth status).

Most importantly, the JCT study points out how much misguided federal tax policies have neglected the people of Puerto Rico—and point to a direction that would clearly have a measurable, positive, impact on the very people who need it most: the working poor of Puerto Rico. This is through application of work incentives available to working families in the 50 states: the per-child tax credit (CTC) and Earned Income Credit (EIC), both of which are available to working families on the mainland to offset payroll taxes (which are also paid by residents of Puerto Rico).

By paying payroll taxes for Social Security and Medicare without receiving the earned income tax credit, working families in Puerto Rico face a heavily regressive tax burden. To illustrate, a Puerto Rican on the island who files as a head of household with two children and \$20,000 of income has a total Federal tax liability of \$792. Yet that filer's brother in New York with the same income and family circumstances would receive a tax refund of \$3,708. According to the JCT study, simply making Puerto Ricans eligible for the EITC would provide an annual fiscal stimulus of \$540 million directly to the local economy, which some estimates show would reduce tax burdens on over 90 percent of taxpayers (about 950,000 taxpayer returns).

My legislation, making families eligible for the child tax credit (now applicable only to families of 3 or more), would further reduce taxes for another 32 percent of all tax filers or about 560,000 taxpayers (and add another \$180 million, annually, to the local economy). Independent analysis shows that these targeted tax credits would be up to 40 percent more effective in stimulating the economy than failed subsidies we have tried, which amount to billions of dollars every year (and continue to this day).

In closing, let me say, I applaud GAO and JCT for drawing our attention to the problem of Puerto Rico's economy. The ball is now in our court. It is the responsibility of this Congress to implement new policies. I am not sure what all these policies should be, but do know that what we have tried did not work, and that we should consider a range of options—including my own legislation—with an eye toward what would best serve the nearly four million U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico, who need and deserve our help. I urge my colleagues to move forward expeditiously in this effort.

BELARUS DEMOCRACY
REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2006

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2006

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006, a bipartisan measure to provide support for the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the Republic of Belarus, as well as encourage the consolidation and strengthening of Belarus' sovereignty and independence. I am pleased to be joined by my colleagues, Representatives LANTOS and McCOTTER, as original cosponsors.

Three years ago, I introduced the Belarus Democracy Act which passed the House and Senate with overwhelming support and was signed into law by President Bush in October 2004. At that time, the situation in Belarus with respect to democracy and human rights was already abysmal. Belarus continues to have the worst rights record of any European state, rightly earning the country the designation as Europe's last dictatorship. Bordering on the EU and NATO, Belarus is truly an anomaly in a democratic, free Europe.

The need for a sustained U.S. commitment to foster democracy and respect for human rights and to sanction the regime of Belarus' tyrant, Alexander Lukashenka, is clear from the intensified anti-democratic policies pursued by the current leadership in Minsk. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to note that the United States is not alone in this noble cause. Countries throughout Europe have joined in a truly trans-Atlantic effort to bring hope of freedom to the beleaguered people of Belarus. Prompt passage of the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006 will help maintain the momentum sparked by adoption of the 2004 law and the further deterioration of the situation on the ground in Belarus. Indeed, with the further deterioration in Belarus with the massive arrests of recent weeks, this bill is needed now more than ever.

One of the primary purposes of the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006 is to demonstrate sustained U.S. support for Belarus' independence and for those struggling to promote democracy and respect for human rights in Belarus despite the formidable pressures and personal risks they face from the anti-democratic regime. The bill authorizes \$20 million in assistance for each of fiscal years 2007 and 2008 for democracy-building activities such as support for non-governmental organizations, including youth groups, independent trade unions and entrepreneurs, human rights defenders, independent media, democratic political parties, and international exchanges.

The bill also authorizes \$7.5 million for each fiscal year for surrogate radio and television broadcasting to the people of Belarus. While I am encouraged by the recent U.S. and EU initiatives with respect to radio broadcasting, much more needs to be done to break through Lukashenka's stifling information blockade.

In addition, this legislation would impose sanctions against the Lukashenka regime, and deny senior officials of the regime—as well as those engaged in human rights and electoral abuses, including lower-level officials—entry

into the United States. In this context, I welcome the targeted punitive sanctions by both the Administration and the EU against officials, including judges and prosecutors, involved in electoral fraud and other human rights abuses.

Strategic exports to the Government of Belarus would be prohibited, except for those intended for democracy building or humanitarian purposes, as well as U.S. Government financing and other foreign assistance, except for humanitarian goods and agricultural or medical products. The U.S. Executive Directors of the international financial institutions would be encouraged to vote against financial assistance to the Government of Belarus except for loans and assistance that serve humanitarian needs. Furthermore, the bill would block Belarus Government and senior leadership and their surrogates' assets in property and interests in property in the United States, that hereafter come within the United States, or that are or hereafter come within the possession or control of United States persons. To this end, I welcome the Treasury Department's April 10 advisory to U.S. financial institutions to guard against potential money laundering by Lukashenka and his cronies and strongly applaud President Bush's June 19 "Executive Order Blocking Property of Certain Persons Undermining Democratic Processes or Institutions in Belarus."

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it absolutely clear that these sanctions are aimed not at the people of Belarus, whose desire to be free we unequivocally support, but at a regime that displays contempt for the dignity and rights of its citizens even as the corrupt leadership moves to further enrich itself at the expense of the people.

Mr. Speaker, Belarus stands out as an even greater anomaly following Ukraine's historic Orange Revolution and that country's March 26th free and fair parliamentary elections which stand in glaring contrast to Belarus' presidential elections held just one week earlier. The Belarusian elections can only be described as a farce. The Lukashenka regime's wholesale arrests of more than one thousand opposition activists, before and after the elections, and violent suppression of post-election protests underscore the utter contempt of the Belarusian authorities toward the people of Belarus.

Illegitimate parliamentary elections in 2004 and the recently held presidential "elections" in Belarus brazenly flaunted democratic standards. As a result of these elections, Belarus has the distinction of lacking legitimate presidential and parliamentary leadership, which contributes to that country's self-imposed isolation.

Lukashenka, the Bully of Belarus, has repeatedly unleashed his security thugs to trample on the rights of their fellow citizens. Indeed, they demonstrated what Lukashenka truly thinks about his own people. Nevertheless, courageous peaceful protesters on Minsk's central October Square stood up to the regime with dignity and determination. Almost daily repressions constitute a profound abuse of power by a regime that has blatantly manipulated the system to remain in power.

Albeit safely ensconced in power, Lukashenka has not let up on the democratic opposition. On July 17, in a particularly punitive display against those who dare oppose Lukashenka, former presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin was sentenced to an obviously politically motivated 5½ years' term of

imprisonment for alleged “hooliganism” and disturbing the peace. Democratic opposition leaders such as Anatoly Lebedka and Vincuk Viachorka have been arbitrarily detained and sentenced to jail terms which have been as much as 15 days. Last month, opposition activists Artur Finkevich received a two-year corrective labor sentence and Mikalay Rozumau was sentenced to three years of corrective labor for allegedly libeling Lukashenka. Other opposition activists, including Syarhey Lyashkevich and Ivan Kruk have received jail sentences of up to six months.

In a patent attempt to discourage domestic observation of the fraudulent March 19 presidential elections, authorities arrested activists of the nonpartisan domestic election monitoring initiative “Partnerstva”—Tsimafei Dranchuk, Enira Branitskaya, Mikalay Astreyka and Alyksandr Shalayka. They have been in pre-trial detention since February 21, charged with participation in an unregistered organization.

Lukashenka’s pattern of anti-democratic behavior began a decade ago, and this pattern has only intensified. Through an unconstitutional 1996 referendum, he usurped power, while suppressing the duly-elected legislature and the judiciary. His regime has repeatedly violated basic freedoms of speech, expression, assembly, association and religion. In its May 3 annual report, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom included Belarus on its watch list, as Belarus appears to be adopting tougher sanctions against those who take part in unregistered religious activity. The democratic opposition, non-governmental organizations and independent media have been subject to intimidation and a variety of punitive measures, including closure. Political activists and journalists have been beaten, detained and imprisoned. Independent voices are unwelcome in Lukashenka’s Belarus and anyone who, through their promotion of democracy, would stand in the way of the Belarusian dictator puts their personal and professional security on the line. Their courage deserves our admiration, and, more importantly, our support.

Moreover, we have seen no progress on the investigation of the disappearances of political opponents—perhaps not surprisingly, as credible evidence points at the involvement of the Lukashenka regime in their murders. I welcome President Bush’s decision to personally meet with two of the widows in the Oval Office to discuss the situation on Belarus. An Administration report mandated by the Belarus Democracy Act and finally issued on March 17 of this year reveals Lukashenka’s links with rogue regimes such as Iran, Sudan and Syria, and his cronies’ corruption. Despite efforts by the U.S. Government, working closely with the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other European organizations, and non-governmental organizations, the regime of Lukashenka continues its grip on power with impunity and to the detriment of the Belarusian people.

Colleagues, it is my hope that the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006 and efforts by allies in Europe will help put an end to the pattern of clear, gross and uncorrected violations of OSCE commitments by the Lukashenka regime and will serve as a catalyst to facilitate independent Belarus’ integration into democratic Europe in which demo-

cratic principles and human rights are respected and the rule of law is paramount. The Belarusian people deserve better than to live under an autocratic regime reminiscent of the Soviet Union, and they deserve our support in their struggle for democracy and freedom.

TRIBUTE TO MR. CHARLES
“BUSTER” BOWEN

HON. MARILYN N. MUSGRAVE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2006

Mrs. MUSGRAVE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory and courageous patriotism of Mr. Charles “Buster” Bowen. As a navigator on a B-25 Bomber, Mr. Bowen proudly served his country in the Army Air Corps during the Second World War. The sacrifices he made to ensure the liberty and freedom of future generations will never be forgotten.

In the late autumn of 1941, Buster Bowen was a senior studying accounting at the University of Texas. He was undoubtedly eager for graduation and full of enthusiasm for the future. However, like many young men and women of his generation, Mr. Bowen’s world was unalterably changed following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

After graduating from the University of Texas in June 1942, Mr. Bowen volunteered for military service. His military career began in the spring of 1943 at Kelley Field near San Antonio, Texas. After completing his training, Mr. Bowen was assigned to the 345th Bombardment Group and sent to the Pacific. In a letter to his concerned mother, Mr. Bowen assured her he was assigned an office job—he didn’t mention that his office was a small table under the turret of a B-25 Bomber.

The crews of the 345th frequently flew low-level bombing runs over enemy targets. On one such mission over Formosa on June 15, 1945, a 40 millimeter explosive shell struck the escape hatch of Mr. Bowen’s B-25 Bomber. The shrapnel from the shell pierced the fuselage and badly injured Engineer Harold Warnick and Mr. Bowen. Mr. Warnick sustained injuries to his foot and Mr. Bowen to his back. Even after being injured, Mr. Bowen plotted a course to an auxiliary air base in northern Luzon so that Mr. Warnick could receive the medical attention he needed.

For the injuries sustained by Mr. Bowen in June of 1945, he was awarded the Purple Heart. His squadron commander even displayed Mr. Bowen’s bloodied shirt in the squad room to emphasize the importance of flight crews wearing the uncomfortable flak jackets.

Following his injuries, Mr. Bowen was taken off flying status, but began flying once again before the end of the war. After hostilities in the Pacific ended, Mr. Bowen was stationed on the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido as part of the American occupation force.

Mr. Speaker, like so many other young members of this Greatest Generation, Mr. Bowen set aside his ambitions and risked his life to ensure the continued freedom of our great nation. I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing the patriotic service of Mr. Charles “Buster” Bowen.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT FAMILIARLY FARM ENERGY RELIEF ACT

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2006

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, rising costs tied to current energy prices are adversely impacting family farmers rendering some farms unsustainable. In fact, I have heard from some constituents in my home state of New Mexico who cannot afford to plant crops this year due to energy prices. We are in danger of losing family farms.

That is why I rise today to introduce the Family Farm Energy Relief Act. This legislation proposes to repeal tax incentives to oil and gas companies from the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to instead provide energy rebates to family farmers.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 provided approximately \$2.633 billion in tax breaks for oil and gas companies over the next 11 years. During times of high gas prices and record profits for oil and gas companies these tax breaks are wholly unnecessary. In fact, the current administration has agreed that they are unnecessary. President Bush recently stated Congress has got to understand that these energy companies don’t need unnecessary tax breaks . . . I’m looking forward to Congress to take about \$2 billion of these tax breaks out of the budget over a 10-year period of time. Cash flows are up. Taxpayers don’t need to be paying for certain of these expenses on behalf of the energy companies.

The Family Farm Energy Relief Act legislation redirects the monies from the Energy Policy Act to family farmers to help pay the cost of farm diesel over the next three years. Approximately 3.4 billion gallons of farm diesel were sold in the United States in 2004, 35 million gallons to New Mexican farmers and ranchers.

The rebate program gives a tax credit to qualified family farmers equaling 10 percent of yearly farm diesel expenses. Additionally, qualified family farmers who produce biodiesel for sale or personal use would receive an additional 10 cents per gallon credit.

The program will redistribute approximately \$870 million per year in tax credits for farm diesel expenditures and approximately \$8 million per year in tax credits for biodiesel production over three years. Expenditures from this program will not exceed the \$2.633 billion oil and gas tax incentives from the Energy Policy Act.

Mr. Speaker, family farmers and the Agriculture sector have been a staple of the American economy since before we were a nation. Many family farmers already face great obstacles to success and may have already succumbed to large agriculture conglomerates. The Family Farm Energy Relief Act is not meant to be a substitute for the long-term energy solutions we all seek for our Nation. As much as each of us understands the necessity of a comprehensive and balanced approach to energy development, so too should we realize that in every state there are hard-working family farmers whose monthly budgets are being stretched to the breaking point by energy costs. While we must approach this country’s energy demand with the willingness to make the tough, long-range choices demanded of