

borrowed money from China and Japan to go to war against Iraq? We have to look at what we are doing here.

While this resolution, I am sure, will pass overwhelmingly, we have to see that circumstances are being set in order which could lead us towards a path of war against Iran. We have to ask ourselves, is that what we really want?

I can stand here with my colleagues and say, absolutely, I support the religious freedom of the Baha'i. I do. Absolutely. I support human rights for all people in Iran, and I do. Absolutely. I support democratic principles in Iran and every other country in the world, and I do.

But I am not for war against Iran. I don't believe the American people want war against Iran. I don't think they wanted war against Iraq, but they were dragged into it.

I am just offering these remarks as a cautionary note to make sure that we have our eyes open as we walk in the days ahead with respect to policy and Iran. Yes, we need to make sure that Iran has peaceful uses of its atomic energy. We have an obligation to do that.

But, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I maintain that we should begin first with direct negotiations with Iran. Second, we should assure Iran that we are not going to attack it. Third, we should demand that Iran open itself up to inspections once again by the IAEA. Fourth, we need assurances, and they are fair, that Iran is not going to be developing nuclear weapons.

There is a way out of this, and I am hopeful that in our stand for human rights, we are not paradoxically beginning a process that would deprive millions of Iranians of their human right to life.

I thank the gentleman from California for his friendship and also for his willingness to see debate in this House of the people. You have always done that, Mr. LANTOS. Whether we have agreed or not, you have always been willing to see the debate continue.

Mr. LANTOS. I thank my friend for his generous words.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H. Res. 976, condemning human rights abuses by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and expressing solidarity with the Iranian people.

It is astonishing that the Iranian government denies that there is a human rights issue in the country. The Iranian government suppresses expression and opinion, and persecutes individual for peaceful expression of their political views. Iran is constantly cited and criticized by our Department of State, Amnesty International, and many other human rights watch groups for its human rights record.

I have long been an advocate of a free, independent, and democratic Iran; an Iran that is non-threatening to its neighbors and that honors its commitments in the world community. There is no dissent in the world community about the inherent dangers of nuclear proliferation in the region.

For years, I have been a supporter of the democratic movement in Iran, and today more

than ever, the people of Iran need to be supported, empowered, and given the confidence to create for themselves a new nation. Wars and appeasements are temporary actions, and not even close to a solution.

The only effective way to achieve a lasting peace and prosperity in the region is to support the Iranian people, men, women and children, in their endeavors to make Iran a democratic state.

Democracy is a struggle, but democracy is just. No one should experience the terror of a government that would torture or kill its own. We cannot ignore a country that gleefully thwarts international peace treaties and human rights conventions.

This bipartisan bill sends a very clear message that any government that oppresses its people will not be tolerated, and a smug tyranny is not acceptable. I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

May we all soon see peace and stability return to all of the Middle East.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 976, introduced by my colleague, Mr. MCCAUL from Texas.

H. Res. 976, Condemns human rights abuses by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and expresses solidarity with the Iranian people.

The resolution notes the injustices inflicted upon the people of Iran by an unaccountable government against their will.

It urges the President and the international community to increase pressure on the Iranian government to improve its human rights situation and expresses unity with the Iranian people.

The recent untimely deaths of two political prisoners, reinforces the urgency that Iran free all prisoners of conscience.

The incarceration of student and political opposition activists is a form of intellectual terrorism that seriously undermines indigenous democratic reform.

In addition, the recent decision by the Iranian government to outlaw the Center for Defense of Human Rights, which was established by the first Muslim Woman Nobel Laureate, Shirin Ebadi, is a violation of Iran's post revolutionary constitution.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is an opportunity for the American people to convey to the Iranian people that we support their efforts to bring freedom to their nation.

As a co-sponsor of this measure and strong advocate for the right of every human being—every Iranian—to live free from intimidation and be able to exercise their fundamental rights, I ask that we render our strong support for this resolution.

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

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOHMERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 976.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

□ 1715

RECOGNIZING AND SUPPORTING THE SUCCESS OF THE ADOPTION AND SAFE FAMILIES ACT OF 1997

Mr. CAMP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 959) recognizing and supporting the success of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 in increasing adoption and the efforts the Act has spurred including National Adoption Day and National Adoption Month, and encouraging adoption throughout the year.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 959

Whereas since the passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, the number of children adopted from foster care has increased significantly, with approximately 51,000 children adopted from foster care in fiscal year 2004 alone;

Whereas despite this remarkable progress, approximately 118,000 children in the United States foster care system are waiting to be adopted, and 49 percent of these children are at least nine years old;

Whereas adoptive families make an important difference in the lives of the children they adopt by providing a stable, nurturing environment for those children;

Whereas National Adoption Day is a collective national effort to find permanent, loving families for children in foster care;

Whereas both National Adoption Day and National Adoption Month are in November;

Whereas the Department of Health and Human Services launched a series of public service announcements promoting the adoption of children eight and older in 2002;

Whereas more than 6,000 children have been placed into adoptive homes since the Department of Health and Human Services launched www.adoptuskids.org, a national photo listing service for children awaiting adoption across the United States;

Whereas judges, attorneys, adoption professionals, child welfare agencies, and child advocates in 45 States and the District of Columbia participated in 227 events in conjunction with National Adoption Day in 2005; and

Whereas these events finalized the adoptions of more than 3,300 children from foster care: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes and supports the success of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 and of the efforts it has spurred;

(2) recognizes and supports the goals and ideals of National Adoption Day and National Adoption Month; and

(3) encourages adoption throughout the year.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CAMP) and the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. CAMP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 959, a resolution that recognizes the successes of the landmark Adoption and Safe Families Act and honors National Adoption Day and Month. I was proud to introduce this resolution and the Adoption and Safe Families Act, which we honor today.

The work of Congress over the past decade has led to dramatic improvements for children in the foster care system. In fact, since 1997, the number of children adopted from foster care has increased significantly, from 28,000 in 1998 to 51,000 in 2004.

I have been pleased to work with my colleagues to refocus Federal child welfare programs, to ensure the best interests of children are first. The way to make that happen is to place children in safe, permanent loving homes. That is why National Adoption Day and Month are so important.

This year, National Adoption Day will take place on November 18, 2006, and is designed for communities around the country to highlight adoptions. Last year, over 227 events were held in 45 States, which finalized the adoption of 3,300 children.

I have been honored to participate in these events the past several years. To be part of such a special occasion reinforces the need for further efforts to move children into adoptive homes. I would like to applaud the Department of Health and Human Services for their efforts in this cause. In 2002, HHS launched a series of public service announcements promoting the adoption of children eight and older and activated the Web site www.adoptUSkids.com. This Web site has helped move 6,000 children into adoptive homes.

The consideration of this resolution today is timely. Tomorrow, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute will be holding its annual Angels in Adoption awards ceremony. This event also seeks to highlight those who have opened their hearts and their homes.

The couple I nominated this year, Pam and Randy Streu of Midland, Michigan, have three biological children, and have opened their hearts and their home to seven adopted children and almost 50 adoptive foster children placements. They deserve special recognition, not just for the number of children they have helped, but for helping those children that needed the most love. When others may have said the challenge was too great, Pam and Randy stepped in, recognizing that each life was worth fighting for and that it was about hope and love.

I first got involved by helping families with their adoption proceedings in private practice as a court-appointed lawyer. Since that time, I felt that the government should do more to encourage adoption and help those in the foster care system. That is why it is so important to recognize families who make extraordinary efforts to welcome children into their family.

I thank my colleagues who have helped me move this resolution forward, including Mr. HERGER, chairman of the Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee; Mr. MCDERMOTT, the ranking member of the subcommittee; and Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE and Mr. OBERSTAR, co-chairs of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. I look forward to further working with my colleagues to promote adoption.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak in behalf of H. Res. 959. As was described by Congressman CAMP, the bill recognizes National Adoption Month and National Adoption Day. It commemorates the success of the Adoption and Safe Families Act and encourages adoption.

As Congressman CAMP noted, it is particularly timely that the House take action on this resolution today, the week we have heroes from around the country into Washington celebrating the Angels in Adoption gala in recognition of their extraordinary commitment to the adopted children that have been brought into their families.

I want to tell about the North Dakota family of Pat and Michelle Beyer. They are in town this week. They have quite a story, like each and every family being honored at the Angels in Adoption gala.

Pat is a North Dakota National Guardsman. He is on leave from his service in Iraq. At home, Michelle is raising two naturally born children, three adopted children, each of whom have some special needs, and this wonderful loving couple is now proceeding with the adoption of yet another child with special needs.

Mr. Speaker, your heart goes out to people like this. They really reflect, I believe, the very best of goodwill and compassion in our country. I am so proud of them.

Even as I speak about what they have done to make their home available to children and what we recognize with adopted families everywhere in terms of the homes they create for children, the fundamental and profound truth of adoption, in my view, is that the parents benefit far more than they possibly could contribute to the children. I know a little bit about what I am talking about on this score. These are my children, Kathryn and Scott, adopted from Korea, the best thing that ever happened to me. So I care just enormously about this resolution.

I also want to for a moment congratulate my colleague DAVE CAMP for his role in the passage of what has been a very important piece of legislation to encourage and move adoption forward.

I remember very well 10 years ago with C-SPAN on in my office hearing floor debate about a proposal that was precisely something that had been worrying me for months, because I had

been told in North Dakota by judges that things were out of whack, that in this business of evaluating children in foster care, the best interests of the child were being hopelessly confused and sometimes placed secondary to the goal of family reunification of completely dysfunctional families.

Now, maybe Congress had a role in its earlier legislation in giving some confusion out there to the social services system, but there was one thing we knew, and we knew very clearly, to a person, Republican and Democrat, and I also commend Barbara Kennelly, the lead cosponsor on the legislation, and that was put the best interests of the children first, foremost, exclusively, only. We wanted nothing more than to advance the interests of the children.

The legislation straightened that out, and made no bones about it, and then placed substantial expectations on the system with defined time limits about children who had been just kicked down the road without end in interim foster care arrangements. We wanted them moved out of those arrangements and into permanent adoptive status, to the extent we possibly could.

You know, there are a lot of things we do here, and we sure mean the best as we do them, and we don't always know how they work. Well, the jury is in on this one, and this act has worked, I think perhaps even better than I had hoped it might.

The number of children annually adopted out of the foster care system has nearly doubled, from 27,000 in 1996 to 52,000 in 2004. The North Dakota situation I had been worrying about, we have gone from 41 adopted in 1996 to 128 in 2004. We tripled.

So, again, David Camp, as I told you that day in debate, you have got a real fine piece of work here, and I again commend you for the leadership you have played in such an important bill.

Another aspect of this bill, in addition to the time expectation put forward by Congress, we actually put some money on the table as positive incentives for States that really took the charge to move children into permanent adoptive homes. We have paid out more than \$200 million to States since that legislation. I think it has without question proven to be an extremely effective and cost-effective use of taxpayer dollars. It is also a reminder and something I think we need to keep in mind as we look at what else we can do that the carrot needs to go along with the stick.

Another positive bill we passed in advancing legislation is moving the tax credit for adoption expenses into law and then increasing it so it more appropriately reflects expenses incurred by a family in seeking to adopt.

I have gotten to experience the miracle of adoption in my life, but I don't think that in any way you have to have some kind of financial status to experience this miracle. We want everybody

to be able to experience this miracle, if they want to open their homes and raise children in an adoptive family. So increasing this tax credit from \$5,000 to \$10,000 is important. My Ways and Means colleague, NANCY JOHNSON, has played an important role on that one.

Now, for all the platitudes, and they were especially in commemorating the successes important to make, I know David doesn't feel like we have arrived and gotten the job done. I don't either. We have more to do. There are 118,000 foster children today waiting to be adopted. To find a loving home for every waiting child, we should focus more attention on recruiting adoptive parents and on providing post-adoption services to help families with ongoing medical, counseling and referral needs.

In the passage of this resolution, I hope there is a bit of this vote that represents a recommitment to continuing to explore whatever we can do to unite families, parents who want to provide a loving home to innocent, precious children that so richly deserve it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CAMP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Dakota for his comments, a distinguished member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE).

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this resolution. The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 has proven itself instrumental in increasing adoption in every month of the year. The legislation made it easier to adopt children across State lines, and it also provided some financial incentives to States to improve their foster care systems.

Prior to adoption of the bill, the number of children in foster care and the length of time that they spent in foster care was rapidly increasing. In just two decades prior to the mid-1990s, the number of children in the foster care system more than doubled. The crisis was threatening to overwhelm various State social services departments. More importantly, it was brutally unfair to hundreds and thousands of children.

However, since passage of the bill in 1997, the number of children adopted out of foster care has actually increased by some 65 percent. In 1996, only 31,000 children were adopted. By 2004, that number rose to 51,000. It is a start. We certainly need to have more adoptive families out there.

Moreover, not only are more children being adopted, but they are also spending less time in the foster care system. However, this Congress must not forget that hundreds of thousands of children still remain in the foster care system and more still remains to be done. This year alone, those older foster care children, some 19,000, will age out of the foster care system. Additionally, one in

five children will still languish in foster care for more than 5 years.

□ 1730

I am a board member of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institutes, and it is a very, very worthwhile group out there to promote foster parents, good foster parents, as well as adoption.

I have two beautiful children I gave birth to and one child that I adopted. She was an older, hard-to-place child, and usually in the adoption system the older children, especially someone designated as hard to place, are the last ones to be adopted.

I certainly hope that this resolution will shine some light on the need for more people to step forward and consider adoption of children of all ages. In my heart of hearts, I have a very special place for my adoptive daughter who is now an adult. She was a special needs child. They do require more time, they require more love and certainly a lot of structure, and with that plan, they can become very productive members of society.

We must build on the success of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 by continuing to raise awareness about foster youth and adoption.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I commend the preceding speaker, our colleague, for the personal commitment she has made in this area she indicated, and I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for yielding.

First, I want to commend him and Mr. CAMP for their outstanding leadership and the passion with which they display relative to this issue and their personal involvement.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the significance of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. ASFA provided sweeping changes in Federal child welfare law designed to ensure children's safety and to quicken permanent placements in the event that a child could not return home.

By enacting the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, Congress recognized the need to align Federal incentives with the desired goal of providing abused and neglected children safe, permanent homes. This law has helped move States to promote adoption and has helped moved children into permanent homes.

In praising ASFA, I want to take a moment to highlight the need to develop similar policies to promote permanency more broadly. ASFA has done much to promote adoption, but policymakers should extend ASFA's successes to other areas of permanency to address the needs of hundreds of thousands of children for whom adoption is not appropriate.

Using ASFA as a model, the bipartisan Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care recommended that Federal

policies create subsidized guardianship programs and State incentives to promote permanency more broadly, be it via reunification, adoption or guardianship.

Also, we must use our understanding of the implementation of ASFA to make it better. I am particularly concerned about the over 29,000 children who have entered our child welfare system due to parental incarceration, most often from nonviolent acts. The parameters set forth by ASFA do not align well with those of the criminal justice system, leading to a permanent separation of many children from their parents and family.

I encourage my colleagues to consult the wonderful policy brief by the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law on the topic. "Rebuilding Families, Reclaiming Lives," draws attention to hurdles created by the lack of consistency in Federal policies with regard to children of incarcerated parents. It also offers policy recommendations to promote stability and well-being for the children.

Mr. Speaker, I also take this second to commend the One Church, One Family, One Child program in Illinois, who are indeed going to be here for the Angels in Adoption gala. They have developed a unique program of recruiting families to become foster parents to children coming out of correctional institutions. I commend them for that outstanding work and note Reverend Parks, Reverend Nelson and Ms. Hunt who have developed a fantastic program with the other members of their board.

Again, I commend the gentlemen for their outstanding work on this issue.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 959, which recognizes and supports the success of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 in increasing adoptions. I would like to thank the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. CAMP, for introducing this resolution and for his work to enact legislation to improve the lives of abused and neglected children.

The number of children adopted from our nation's foster care system has substantially increased since enactment of the Adoption and Safe Families Act from 31,000 in 1997 to over 51,000 in 2004. I applaud the judges, attorneys, state officials, and other adoption professionals who have worked tirelessly to move foster children more quickly into permanent, loving families. National Adoption Day in November 2005 finalized the adoptions of more than 3,300 children from foster care and I hope the November 2006 National Adoption Day is even more successful.

There are currently 118,000 foster children available for adoption and we must do more to find them loving families. Almost half of these children are aged 9 or older and therefore at risk of spending their entire childhood in foster care and aging out of the system without a permanent home. In 2003, President Bush signed the Adoption Promotion Act, which extended the availability of adoption incentive payments to the States while promoting the adoption of older children. We will continue to support policies that ensure children who cannot be safely reunified with their parents are