

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF WORLD WATER DAY

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 196) supporting the goals and ideals of World Water Day.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 196

Whereas the global celebration of World Water Day is an initiative that grew out of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro;

Whereas the United Nations General Assembly, via resolution, designated March 22 of each year as World Water Day;

Whereas although water is the most widely occurring substance on earth, only 2.53 percent of all water is freshwater and the remainder is salt water;

Whereas freshwater resources are further impaired by various forms of industrial, chemical, human, and agricultural pollution;

Whereas climate change will increasingly pose a challenge for ensuring the availability of sufficient water supplies at the appropriate times;

Whereas approximately one in six people in the world lack access to safe drinking water and approximately two in every five people lack access to basic sanitation services;

Whereas water-related diseases are among the most common causes of illness and death, afflicting primarily the poor and very poor in developing countries;

Whereas up to five million people die each year from preventable water and sanitation related diseases, including one out of every five children in the poorest countries;

Whereas every \$1 invested in safe drinking water and sanitation yields an economic return of between \$3 and \$34, depending on the region;

Whereas increasing access to safe drinking water and sanitation advances efforts towards other United States development objectives including fighting poverty and hunger, promoting primary education and gender equality, reducing child mortality, promoting environmental stability, improving the lives of slum dwellers, and strengthening national security;

Whereas the participants in the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, including the United States, agreed to the Plan of Implementation which included an agreement to work to reduce by one-half from the baseline year 1990 "the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water," and "the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation" by 2015; and

Whereas Congress passed and the President signed into law the "Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005" (Public Law 109-121) which was intended to "elevate the role of water and sanitation policy in the development of U.S. foreign policy and improve the effectiveness of U.S. official programs": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of World Water Day;

(2) recognizes the importance of increasing access to safe drinking water and sanitation, as well as the conservation and sustainable management of water resources, to human health and quality of life across the globe;

(3) urges an increased effort and the investment of greater resources by the Department of State, the United States Agency for Inter-

national Development, and all relevant Federal departments and agencies towards providing sustainable and equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation for the poor and very poor; and

(4) encourages the people of the United States to observe World Water Day with appropriate recognition, ceremonies, activities, and programs to demonstrate the importance of water to humanity.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROSLEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and I yield myself such time as I might consume.

I would first like to commend my distinguished colleague and a former member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, EARL BLUMENAUER of Oregon, for introducing this important resolution.

Nearly 5 years ago, representatives of governments around the globe, including the United States, stood together and agreed to reduce by one-half the number of people who lack access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by the year 2015. We now stand at the midpoint of that target, and we are no closer to reaching it than we were at the outset.

Today over 900 million people lack access to safe water, and over 1.3 billion people do not have access to basic sanitation. Climate change is rapidly depleting the world's already badly stretched water resources.

Each year more than 3 billion of our fellow human beings suffer from preventable water-related diseases. As a result of these diseases, 5 million people die. Most of these victims are children under the age of 5. Clearly, more must be done to address this humanitarian catastrophe.

Our legislation, H. Res. 196, demonstrates the commitment of the Congress to achieve the goals and ideals of World Water Day to increase the availability of clean water.

Collectively, we have the means to address this global crisis. What we need is political will for action. Congress swiftly acted with the passage of the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act in 2005, a critically important piece of legislation spearheaded by the distinguished gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) with the support of my former colleague, Chairman Henry Hyde, and myself.

This resolution is another step in improving our commitment to bringing

clean water and basic sanitation to the poorest of the poor. H. Res. 196 urges our own government to utilize every resource at our disposal to improve access to clean water and sanitation for those most in need. It recognizes the importance of conservation and sustainable management of water resources to both human health and the quality of life.

We must do all we can to provide clean water and basic sanitation for all people across the globe.

Madam Speaker, I strongly support this resolution and urge all of my colleagues to do so.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROSLEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of House Resolution 196, which expresses the support of this House for the goals and ideals associated with World Water Day.

The lack of access to safe drinking water and the lack of adequate sanitation systems continue to be major problems for poor people around the world despite our strong efforts over many decades to help address those challenges. The lack of clean water and sanitation systems in many parts of the world lead to the spread of disease and to the deaths that might otherwise have been avoided and undermines the efforts we take to assist poor people around the world as they seek a better life.

Madam Speaker, I just got back last week from a heart-wrenching trip to Darfur, and we saw firsthand how important a resource water is to so many people. We saw, by visiting the clinics, how many people are afflicted with the diseases that are borne because of the water that is not pure, that is not sanitized and that is, in fact, full of bacteria. I understand how important it is to support the goals and ideals of this resolution before us commemorating World Water Day.

In addition to sanitation and access to clean water, the conservation of water resources is, itself, an increasing challenge around the world. Conservation of drinking water will, in fact, remain even a greater challenge in the near future as mankind's population continues to expand and the demand for fresh, clean water increases.

In calling for the appropriate Departments and agencies of the United States Government to increase our efforts to support access to clean water, availability of sanitation systems and conservation of water, this resolution properly cites the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005 enacted in the last Congress, which called for a greater focus on the objectives that are associated with World Water Day.

This resolution rightfully seeks to highlight this global problem encouraging all of us to observe World Water Day every year on March 22. I support the intent of this resolution and its adoption by this House.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of our time.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 7 minutes to the author of this resolution, my good friend from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the chairman's courtesy. I appreciate his leadership in working with me on this bill.

Madam Speaker, as we stagger under the implications of what we have just witnessed at Virginia Tech, I think part of what we ought to do is to rededicate ourselves to simple steps that will help make the world a better place. I can think of no better or direct way for us to act today than what this legislation means for us.

I would begin by thanking the gentlewoman from Texas, Ms. JOHNSON, who can't be here right now because she is actually chairing a committee dealing with water pollution as we speak, as Chair of the Water Resources Subcommittee. She has been really a terrific champion. I see here today my friend from Tennessee, the former Chair of the subcommittee, who likewise has been focusing on the central need for us to be respectful of water supply.

As the old joke goes, God gives us water for free, but he doesn't give us the pipes, the distribution system and purification.

Across the world, as my good friends from the Foreign Affairs Committee have just enumerated, every day millions and millions of poor people are paying the price for nature's failure to provide water exactly where they live, and a failure of stewardship on the part of governments and individuals to take care of the water that they have.

□ 1415

They are paying the price for pollution from inadequate or nonexistent sanitation, and far too many poor people are paying a huge amount of their scarce income because they can't otherwise get water. They are paying in time and in money. There are some poor people that are slowly going blind because of arsenic poisoning in their water system in Bangladesh.

I used to think that the pictures in the National Geographic articles with the water jug on the head was sort of exotic, but now I recognize this as the face of poverty. Indeed it is a travesty as young women particularly spend 1, 2, or 3 hours with that jug of water balanced on their head to meet the needs of their family. That is time that they are not spending in school, that is time that they are not spending economically to support that family. As has been mentioned, every 15 seconds a child dies from lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and each is an unnecessary death because we know exactly what to do to stop it. Indeed, there are people from churches and synagogues and Boy Scout troops and Kiwanis Clubs that are acting on their own to help provide water around the world.

Lack of access to drinking water and sanitation is the number one preventable killer in the world. And I won't repeat the statistics, mind numbing as they are, of over 2 billion people without access to sanitation, and the fact that half the people who are sick today around the globe are sick needlessly from waterborne diseases.

As my friend from Florida said, this is tied to other health problems, HIV/AIDS, and poverty reduction. The tragedy is compounded because we are not doing enough to stop it. By recognizing the goals and ideals of World Water Day, we commit again on this floor to spread the word about this grave issue and build the momentum to address it.

As the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee pointed out, in 2002 the world did take a stand. I was privileged to be at that conference in Johannesburg, where the United States and 185 other countries agreed to that ambitious goal. The frustration is that this goal can be met, if done correctly, for less than the cost of a takeout pizza a year for an American family.

In 2005, the Congress passed and the President signed into law the Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, which I thought was important because not only were we for the first time taking a stand, but the way that we did it, with the leadership of Mr. LANTOS and Mr. Hyde; and on the Senate side we had the minority leader and the majority leader coming together in broad bipartisan legislation. We were for the first time providing a plan to implement the commitment that the United States and 185 other countries made.

I am saddened as we come to the floor today, however, that the Bush administration has failed to implement this legislation. Instead, as I read the budget, the President has proposed major cuts to the already inadequate commitment from the United States to water and sanitation.

The centerpiece of this bill was to create a strategy for meeting our international commitments, to bring together some 15 agencies and departments, to have a plan. Sadly, the deadline has passed, and as yet, we don't have yet that comprehensive plan. We continue to use gimmicks and numbers games to claim that the administration is meeting Congress' requirements, but they are not. This resolution ought to be a point of emphasis that Congress demands a greater effort, not lesser, from the administration, and indeed from ourselves, as we come forward with the budgets this year. We should insist that the United States stand by its word and actually do something about this crisis. We are saying that we have to partner with poor people wherever they are, not in a few allied countries in the Middle East, but especially in sub-Saharan Africa, in South Asia, and around the world.

I would hope that with the help of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the distinguished leadership on the floor here that when the State Department

comes back to Congress this June with its second report on the implementation of the bipartisan "Water for the Poor Act," I would hope that it will match our legislation in scope, ambition, and focus. If not, let us return to the drawing board to find ways to help the State Department meet its obligation under the Act.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I am now pleased to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN), who is the former chairman of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment, and representing a district that surrounds Knoxville and includes Knoxville, who passed a resolution supporting the ideals of the issue before us.

Mr. DUNCAN. Madam Speaker, I thank, first of all, the gentlelady from Florida, the new ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, for yielding me this time and for her kind words and her strong support of this legislation. I also commend Chairman LANTOS for bringing this resolution to the floor. But I especially want to commend my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for his work in bringing this matter to the floor today and also calling attention to what is a very, very serious problem.

I had the privilege of chairing the Aviation Subcommittee for 6 years, and that subcommittee seemed to generate a lot of attention and publicity. Then I chaired for 6 years the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee, and unfortunately I think people did not pay as much attention to that subcommittee; and I thought it was just as important, perhaps more important, than the Aviation Subcommittee. And yet I said many times there probably is nothing that the people in this country take for granted as much as they do our clean water and wastewater infrastructure in this Nation.

Madam Speaker, much work needs to be done in this country in regard to our water to keep it to the standards that the people of this country want. And so the day after tomorrow we will hopefully pass a long overdue bill, the Water Resources Development Act, a bill that we passed two or three times here in the House, that has been held up in the Senate, but that is very, very important for our water infrastructure in this Nation.

You have heard some of the statistics already. My statistics vary just a little bit. I was given the information that 1.2 billion don't have access to clean water; Chairman LANTOS said a lower figure, I think Mr. BLUMENAUER said a higher figure, but it is an astounding number of people, whatever the exact number is, that don't have access to a good, clean water source.

Water-related diseases, as Chairman LANTOS said, kill over 5 million people each year. Six million are blind today because of trachoma, an eye infection

spread through poor hygiene caused by dirty water and unsanitary conditions. I could give all kinds of statistics.

As the gentlelady from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) said, I was proud that in my hometown of Knoxville recently, the city council, at the urging of our great Mayor Bill Haslam, passed a proclamation in support of World Water Day. This was done without my knowledge, and so I am pleased that other people are helping to call attention to what is one of the most serious problems that this world faces today.

And so I think that it is very appropriate that the Congress take up a resolution at this time, and I think that this will help lead to progress in this area, much, much needed progress; and I urge support for this resolution.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to my good friend from Ohio, the distinguished chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Domestic Policy, Mr. KUCINICH.

Mr. KUCINICH. I thank my friend, Mr. LANTOS.

I rise as a proud cosponsor of this bill emphasizing the importance of water. Despite the availability of advanced and inexpensive water treatment technologies and despite an aggregate level of wealth that should preclude injustice, one in six people in the world still lack access to safe drinking water. Global warming is expected to worsen the situation.

At the same time, privatization of our scarce water supplies is also proliferating. It drives up the price of a life-giving resource under the guise of making it cheaper. In its most egregious form, bottled water companies overpump a valuable water supply, restricting access to only those who can afford to pay more for water than for gas.

I represent an area of Cleveland that, like many nearby cities, relies on Lake Erie for drinking water. During negotiations by Great Lakes States over the conditions under which water could be withdrawn from Lake Erie and the surrounding Great Lakes, the bottled water industry slipped in their own language; it allowed exclusive, unlimited access to Great Lakes water by their industry. By weakening the agreement in this way, it also paved the way for any corporation to have full access to the lakes, even at the expense of the public water supply. This is happening at a time when both water quality and quantity are expected to decline as a result of global warming.

In Nottingham and Barrington, two small New Hampshire towns, a company called USA Springs is attempting to pump 310,000 gallons a day in an area populated with homes that get their water from small, private, household wells. The community is concerned about loss of their water supply, loss of water quality, degradation of nearby wetlands, but USA Springs is using their substantial resources to overwhelm the community. The result is

that this company, USA Springs, is now dangerously close to winning this battle it started in 2001. Similar battles are being fought in communities all over the country.

The basic building blocks of life, like water, must be accessible by people before corporations and must be managed as a public trust, not reduced to a commodity.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to my friend and neighbor from California, Congresswoman LYNN WOOLSEY, chairwoman of the Education and Labor Subcommittee on Workforce Protections.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, today I rise in support of the World Water Day resolution, H.R. 196, and I am proud to be a cosponsor of Congressman BLUMENAUER's resolution.

The district I represent includes Marin and Sonoma Counties just north of San Francisco. My district is very ecologically diverse. In fact, we are putting new life into our wetlands, we are expanding our wetlands. We have wastewater treatment plants that make it possible for us to send our wastewater and use our wastewater to water our grapes, and we have one of the best grape growing counties in the country.

In fact, in my very own backyard, my drip system that waters my yard is controlled by satellite because my town of Petaluma is experimenting. They picked 100 houses and asked us, would we let them use our drip systems as an experimental project; and it will indeed save me money and save water, I am sure. Along with that, many of our commercial and recreation activities in my district are focused around water.

So even with programs like this throughout our country, throughout the world, we are squandering. We still squander this precious resource called water.

World Water Day raises the profile of the issue. It means that we must keep on working, we must keep on paying attention to safe and sustainable water supplies, and we must make safe and sustainable water available without regard to any economic or any political boundaries.

Recently, there has been an entirely renewed attention to global warming, and with that, we are paying more attention to our water resources and what we need to do to keep a safe and liveable world, not just for Americans, not just for Petalumans, but for everyone.

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 196.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam 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.

□ 1430

CONDEMNING RECENT VIOLENT ACTIONS OF GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE AGAINST PEACEFUL OPPOSITION PARTY ACTIVISTS AND MEMBERS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 100) condemning the recent violent actions of the Government of Zimbabwe against peaceful opposition party activists and members of civil society, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 100

Whereas in 2005 the Government of Zimbabwe launched Operation Murambatsvina ("Operation Throw Out the Trash") against citizens in major cities and suburbs throughout Zimbabwe, depriving over 700,000 people of their homes, businesses, and livelihoods;

Whereas on March 11, 2007, opposition party activists and members of civil society attempted to hold a peaceful prayer meeting to protest the economic and political crisis engulfing Zimbabwe, where inflation is running over 3,000 percent and formal sector unemployment stands at 80 percent and in response to President Robert Mugabe's announcement that he intends to seek reelection in 2008;

Whereas opposition activist Gift Tandare died on March 11, 2007, as a result of being shot by police while attempting to attend the prayer meeting and Itai Manyeruke died on March 12, 2007, as a result of police beatings and was found in a morgue by his family on March 20, 2007;

Whereas under the direction of President Robert Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) government, police officers, security forces, and youth militia brutally assaulted the peaceful demonstrators and arrested opposition leaders and hundreds of civilians;

Whereas Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangarai was brutally assaulted and suffered a fractured skull, lacerations, and major bruising; MDC member Sekai Holland, a 64-year old grandmother, suffered ruthless attacks at Highfield Police Station, which resulted in the breaking of her leg, knee, arm, and three ribs; fellow activist Grace Kwinje, age 33, also was brutally beaten, while part of one ear was ripped off; and Nelson Chamisa was badly injured by suspected state agents at Harare airport on March 18, 2007, when trying to board a plane for a meeting of Africa Caribbean Pacific (APC) lawmakers in Brussels, Belgium;

Whereas Zimbabwe's foreign minister warned Western diplomats that the Government of Zimbabwe would expel them if they