

well known in the U.S. and Europe for his leadership in helping Russia make the transition to a market economy.

But the Yukos Company's vast energy resources and Mr. Khodorkovsky's Western leanings proved too much for Kremlin operatives eager to assert state control over the energy sector and discipline Russian businessmen who supported opposition parties.

In what was widely reported by major news publications at the time, Russian authorities used arbitrary and possibly extralegal means to dismantle Yukos and redistribute \$100 billion of its assets to state companies overseen by the Kremlin. At the end of the day, American investors in Yukos lost somewhere between \$7 and \$12 billion and Mr. Khodorkovsky, convicted on trumped up tax charges, was condemned to a penal colony.

Quite simply, U.S. and other would-be foreign investors need to know whether the rule of law will be upheld in Russia. And the Bush Administration needs to be motivated to start asking the Kremlin some tough questions when it comes to protecting the interests of U.S. investors.

From a Russian perspective, instances like the Yukos situation will create an uncertainty among potential investors, which could result in a substantial loss of investment and impede Russia's integration into the global economy.

In a December 12, 2007, article in the Washington Post, Dr. Anders Aslund of the Peterson Institute for International Economics writes that the Yukos incident, "unleashed a great wave of renationalization in the post-communist world," and that the men in the Kremlin are, "taking over one big, well-run private company after another, turning them into less efficient state-owned firms."

In support of his assertions, Dr. Aslund mentions Leonid Reiman, a former KGB official, who is now Russia's Minister of Communications, while still controlling \$8 billion in personal telecommunications assets.

The United States and Russia signed a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) in 1992 but the treaty has not been ratified by Russia. Ratification of the BIT would provide protection for U.S. investors against the types of actions taken by the Russian government in the Yukos case.

The failure of Russia to ratify the BIT, has been a key weakness in the U.S.-Russia economic relationship. Compared to investors from many other nations, U.S. investors are at a disadvantage. For example, 38 countries—including France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain and the U.K.—have concluded bilateral investment treaties with Russia that have also been ratified. The presence of these treaties allows Yukos shareholders from these countries to sue the Russian government, but that option is not available to U.S. shareholders.

I want to again call on the Bush Administration to persuade Russia to ratify the BIT. By ratifying the BIT, President Putin would send a strong message to U.S. investors that investing in projects in Russia is safe, and that the Yukos situation is the exception, not the rule.

Madam Speaker, I recommend to my colleagues Dr. Aslund's article in the Washington Post of December 12, 2007, and I request that the article be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

RUSSIA'S NEW OLIGARCHY

FOR PUTIN AND FRIENDS, A GUSHER OF
QUESTIONABLE DEALS
(By Antlers Aslund)

The news that Dmitry Medvedev, Vladimir Putin's nominee to succeed him as president, wants Putin to become prime minister of Russia next year opens one option for Putin to retain power after his term ends. Putin has little choice but to stay in power as long as he can.

A year ago, a famous Russian journalist asked me: Is it true that Putin has a net fortune of \$35 to 40 billion?" (This journalist, of course, has long been excluded from Kremlin-controlled media.)

This fall, the respected Polish magazine *Wprost* published its annual response to *Forbes*, its list of the richest people in Eastern Europe. Besides the well-known business executives, there is Gennady Timchenko, a little-known character with a purported fortune of \$20 billion. A small oil trader who resides in Geneva, Timchenko is from St. Petersburg, where he belongs to the same luxurious dacha collective as Putin.

I first heard of Timchenko in February 2004. Ivan Rybkin, a Russian politician who audaciously opposed Putin in the presidential election that year, claimed that Putin was "one of Russia's biggest oligarchs" and that he operated through three middlemen, including Timchenko. Rybkin charged that the Putin-Timchenko group was gobbling up the embattled oil giant Yukos. He swiftly disappeared under mysterious circumstances and after he re-emerged, was forced to suspend his campaign.

Indeed, the privately owned Yukos oil company has been devoured by the state-dominated Rosneft, whose chairman is Igor Sechin, Point's closest adviser and collaborator. The confiscation, which began in 2003, was publicly justified with not-very-credible citations of tax violations. Rosneft's gain was probably about \$100 billion in Yukos assets. U.S. investors in Yukos have lost at least \$7 billion; some claim the figure is as much as \$12 billion. In October, the House Financial Services Committee's subcommittee on domestic and international monetary policy held a hearing on this, at which I testified.

The Bush administration, however, has not protested this outrageous confiscation of private American property. Then-Secretary of State Colin Powell expressed strong support for Putin in October 2004: "The Russian people came out of the post-Soviet Union era in a state of total chaos—a great deal of freedom, but it was freedom to steal from the state and President Putin took over and restored a sense of order in the country and moved in a democratic way." Putin appreciated—and might have been encouraged by—these words. Two months later, Yukos's main oil field was sold to Rosneft in an auction that Putin's economic adviser, Andrei Illarionov, called "the scam of the year" (for which he was sacked). U.S. shareholders in Yukos have come to realize that the United States has no single valid agreement that safeguards their property rights; European investors, though, can sue the Russian state under three treaties.

The Yukos confiscation has not cost Putin anything. In fact, he unleashed a great wave of renationalization in the post-communist world. His chums from St. Petersburg are taking over one big, well-run private company after another, turning them into less efficient state-owned firms. One of Putin's close friends from the KGB, Leonid Reiman, is his minister of communications. Last year, an independent arbitration court in Zurich ruled that Reiman, despite his denials,

was the real owner of Russian telecommunications assets currently valued at on less than \$6 billion. Reiman has amassed this extraordinary fortune as a state official, partly through beneficial privatizations, partly through privileged licenses issued to his companies. A government with any standards would fire such an official, but Putin suppressed this negative information within Russia and kept Reiman on, showing that he accepts corruption.

The Russian daily *Kommersant* published a long interview with Russian businessman Oleg Shvartsman on the eve of the recent Duma elections. Sensationally, he described how he raided private enterprises to the benefit of KGB officials described his activity as "velvet reprivatization." Kremlin spokesmen have denied the report.

Even more striking was an interview last month with the Kremlin-connected Russian political observer Stanislav Belkovsky in the German daily *Die Welt*. Belkovsky, who initiated the Kremlin attack on Yukos, claimed that Putin controlled specific shares of three companies (Surgutneftegaz; Gazprom; and Gunvor. Timchenko's company) worth some \$40 billion. Putin has not commented on this allegation.

According to Transparency International, Russia is growing more corrupt even as most other post-communist countries are controlling their corruption. The fundamental dilemma for Russia, and Putin, is that a system so corrupt cannot be very stable. It's less clear why President Bush does not call Putin out on this or even defend the interests of U.S. citizens and corporations.

INTRODUCTION OF THE BEST BUDDIES EMPOWERMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES ACT OF 2007

HON. ROY BLUNT

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Mr. BLUNT. Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to join my colleague from Maryland, the House majority leader, to introduce the Best Buddies Empowerment for People with Intellectual Disabilities Act of 2007. As Mr. HOYER will attest, this is not the first time we have come together in a meaningful way in this important area—and we were both proud when the Special Olympics Sport and Empowerment Act of 2004 became law in the 108th Congress.

It's estimated that between 7 and 8 million Americans live with intellectual disabilities, impacting nearly 1 out of every 10 families. For these individuals, life is not always welcoming—and very rarely is it easy. People with intellectual disabilities are often excluded from society—whether at school, in the workplace or in their communities—simply because of their differences. So I was glad to learn of a program called Best Buddies. This organization, founded in 1989 by Anthony Kennedy Shriver, helps integrate people with intellectual disabilities into mainstream society, end their social isolation, and embark upon productive, fulfilling lives. The Best Buddies program works with volunteers to establish meaningful friendships with their non-disabled peers in order to help increase the self-esteem, confidence, and abilities of people with and without intellectual disabilities. This is a program that has enhanced the lives of actual people

by providing real and safe opportunities for one-on-one friendships and new options for employment.

And while these activities may not sound like life-changing events to the average person, for individuals with intellectual disabilities, they make a world of difference. This bill helps accomplish that goal in a number of significant ways. It authorizes the Secretary of Education to award grants or contracts with Best Buddies to conduct and expand its activities—with an eye on increasing the participation of individuals with intellectual disabilities, as well as to promote outreach programs. This bill will go a long way toward dispelling negative, hurtful stereotypes and make clear the extraordinary gifts that people with intellectual disabilities nonetheless possess and utilize. More important, it will help move people with intellectual disabilities from the margins of society to the mainstream of society.

I am also pleased to note that this bill is budget neutral. The \$10 million authorization in this bill is offset by repealing two programs that in the most recent fiscal year were funded at \$10.4 million. I know Mr. HOYER and I look forward to working with our colleagues to enact this bill into law, in the hope that we can help raise the hope and dignity of people with intellectual disabilities, and further empower their full participation in our communities.

RECOGNIZING SHARON ADAMSON

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Mr. LATHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the retirement of Sharon Adamson, coordinator for Boone County CARES (Child Abuse Resources and Educational Services), and to express my appreciation for her dedication and commitment to the safety of the children in Boone County, Iowa. For the past 14 years, Sharon has contributed her time and talents for the betterment of many young children, and for this I offer her my congratulations and thanks.

A native of Charles City, Sharon graduated from Moody Bible College in Chicago and received her B.A. in education from Trinity College in Deerfield, IL. After receiving her master's degree in counselor education she became a guidance counselor at an elementary/junior high school in Wisconsin before moving to Boone. While at CARES, Sharon played a key role in the growth of seven programs: Happy Bear, No More Secrets, Time Out for Moms, Parent Education, Children in the Middle, Stork's Nest, and Community CARES. She is very proud of Community CARES because it is a community created through "radical" hospitality which provides a safe place where people in need can go.

Sharon has made a significant impact on the Boone community by dedicating her career to benefiting and working towards growing a safe environment for all children. I know that my colleagues in the United States Congress will join me in commending Sharon Adamson for her leadership and service. I consider it an honor to represent her in the United States

Congress and I wish her the best in her future endeavors.

OPEN GOVERNMENT ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2007

Ms. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the "OPEN Government Act."

Since coming to Congress, I have been working for an improved Freedom of Information Act process, a critical component to ensuring an open and transparent government. In 1996 Congress passed important legislation that reflected the changing technological times, the "Electronic Freedom of Information Act of 1996." This important law helped to make FOIA more efficient by providing public access to information including in an electronic format.

The Oversight and Government Reform Committee, of which I am a member, has held several hearings during the past few years about the FOIA process where we learned that it has not progressed as well as we had hoped. Some agencies and departments are doing a better job of fulfilling freedom of information requests while some continue to lag behind.

Requesters often wait months or years to find out the status of their requests or to obtain the information. As a result, the backlogs at agencies and departments continue to grow. Frequently, the only recourse for the denial of requested information is to file lawsuits. However, many requesters cannot afford the high costs associated with court cases.

The "OPEN Government Act" includes many important provisions that I hope will improve the process and eliminate many of the problems that exist in today's system including an amendment that I offered in committee that would provide for greater disclosure to the FOIA requester about the exemption under which a deletion has been made from requested material.

I have heard from constituents who say that when they receive a response from the agency, they are unable to determine why certain information was redacted. While I recognize that in some cases linking a redaction to an exemption may reveal sensitive information, where possible I believe that agencies should specify which exemption applies to which redaction.

Passage of today's legislation is long overdue, and I commend Chairman WAXMAN and Ranking Member DAVIS and their staffs for bringing this bill to the Floor today.

A TRIBUTE TO ANNA GONZALEZ

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Anna Gonzalez, a resident of

Brooklyn for more than 40 years. Anna is the current director of the Hope Gardens Multi-Service Center; a community center that seeks to educate and empower the people of Bushwick, Brooklyn.

Anna Gonzalez, formerly Anna Rodriguez, attended Clara Barton High School. Ms. Gonzalez worked as a nurse during her 20s until she decided to take time off to raise a family. She first became involved in community activism at Public School 86, the elementary school her children attended. She worked as a parent leader, volunteering to help improve the school and then as a leader of a successful boycott to prevent the school's rezoning by local officials.

Ms. Gonzalez's participation in the boycott was a springboard to her next position as Community Associate with the Knickerbocker-Wycoff Service Center, an organization that assists residents with their problems and concerns. Ms. Gonzalez then worked at St. Barbara's Roman Catholic Church, organizing and running youth activities and religious educational services. In 1981, she accepted a position at the P-60 Senior Center, now the Hope Gardens Multi-Service Center. Within 6 months she was promoted to director.

Ms. Gonzalez's tenure as the Director of Hope Gardens has been marked by huge growth in the number of services that are being offered as well as the number of people being served. Today, Hope Gardens is an important community resource. However, her professional responsibilities did not interfere with her community involvement. Ms. Gonzalez was elected twice, the first time as a write-in candidate, to Community School Board #32, serving as chair for 2 years. She has also served on Community Planning Board #4 for more than 20 years, serving as chair for more than 6 years.

Ms. Gonzalez has been married to Pablo Gonzalez for 46 years; is the mother of four children: George, Aida, Jose, and Ralph; and the grandmother of seven children: Christopher, Justin, Anissa, Jacob, Megan, Kelsey, and Jeremy.

Madam Speaker, I cannot say enough about Anna Gonzalez. She is extremely generous with her time and cares a lot about her community.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to this awesome woman.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, on December 19, 2007, I missed votes because of scheduled eye surgery in Dallas.

Were I able to attend today's session in the House of Representatives, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall votes Nos. 1183, 1184, 1185 and 1186.