

the oil companies would like to have you believe that. Because of the very same weak dollar, U.S. oil reserves are extremely profitable at this time, so it is no surprise they are pushing hard for expanded drilling. I can't imagine a better scenario for them—an outraged public and production costs that keep dropping as the dollar weakens.

Of course we need to conserve and develop alternative forms of energy, but to ignore the role of the dollar in all this will just mean we continue down this road to disaster we've been on the last few years.

This might not be the story of suffering you're looking for (actually just the opposite in my case). But I think it might be more constructive than an inbox full of moaning and groaning about how much it costs to commute to work from Nampa.

Regards,

STAN, *Boise.*

HMONG DETAINEES IN LAOS

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I would like to submit for the RECORD a statement given by Mrs. Sheng Xiong, a spokeswoman for her husband Hakit Yang and other families of Hmong-American citizens from St. Paul, MN, that are being detained by the the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, LPDR, regime. This statement was given by Mrs. Xiong at a congressional forum on Laos on January 31, 2008, organized by the Center for Public Policy Analysis.

I ask unanimous consent that the Statement to which I referred be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

STATEMENT BY MRS. SHENG XIONG

I want to thank Congressman Dana Rohrabacher, Congressman Frank Wolf, Congressman Patrick Kennedy, Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin and other Members of the U.S. House of Representatives for co-hosting today's U.S. Congressional Forum on Laos in cooperation with Mr. Phillip Smith, Executive Director of the Center for Public Policy Analysis, Dr. Jane Hamilton-Merritt, Lao Hmong scholar; Vaughn Vang of the Lao Human Rights Council of Wisconsin and Minnesota; Khamphet Moukdarath of the United League for Democracy in Laos and T. Kumar, Advocacy Director of Amnesty International. I appreciate their leadership on the current human rights crisis in Laos, especially facing the Hmong people, and the serious situation regarding the arrest and imprisonment in Laos of my husband, Hakit Yang, and his two Hmong-American colleagues from St. Paul, Minnesota last year.

The U.S. Government granted Normalized Trade Relations (NTR) to Laos in 2005. Today, it encourages citizens to consider foreign investments in the communist state despite the country's atrocious human rights records and the unjustified arrest, jailing and continued detention of three Hmong-American citizens from St. Paul, Minnesota including my husband Mr. Hakit Yang.

On July 10, 2007, Hakit Yang, Congshineng Yang and Trillion Yuhaison departed the United States for Laos to pursue business investment opportunities. The men were staying at the #5 Guest House in Phousavan, Laos when they were arrested by secret police forces. They were detained in Phonthong Prison and later transferred to an unknown destination. Several unofficial reports suggest they are being detained in the North of Laos near the Vietnam border.

The last phone call and communication was received from Yuhaison on August 26, 2007 at approximately 9:00 am (CST). Yuhaison called Hakit's older brother Xai Yang, and stated that he was calling from a security guard's cell phone and confirmed that all three men had been arrested without warrant. Yuhaison sounded very worried and wanted Xai to contact the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane right away.

A U.S. Embassy staff confirmed with local Lao authorities that three U.S. Citizens were arrested, however, the authorities refused to release any names. According to the U.S. Embassy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could not confirm the situation over the phone, but it appeared they knew about the cases.

The U.S. Embassy contacted the Lao government who denied having any record of the men entering their country and any U.S. Citizens being detained or arrested. Later, the Lao government changed their previous denials and admitted that the men did indeed enter Laos, but allegedly claimed that they had allegedly departed Laos via the Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge on August 29, 2007. Despite repeated requests from the U.S. Embassy no departure cards have ever been produced as evidence for their departure. Other documents produced are clearly bogus and fabricated allegedly claiming to support the Lao government's false claims that my husband and the other two departed from Laos to Thailand, which is not factual.

It has been many months since the arrest and disappearance of Hakit Yang, Congshineng Yang and Trillion Yuhaison. To this day, our family has not received any concrete answers from the U.S. Embassy in Laos nor the State Department. I have been in contact with the other men's families and they also have not received any answers.

The U.S. Government and U.S. Embassy have a responsibility to inform U.S. Citizens that there are no real protections in place to safeguard their civil and legal rights. The U.S. Government has failed to properly hold the Laos Government accountable for the disappearance of these U.S. investors.

Hakit, Congshineng, and Trillion represent the first of many U.S. investors and tourists to travel to Laos under the new Normalized Trade Relations agreement but their disappearance clearly proves that no U.S. Citizen is safe in Laos and no U.S. citizen should invest in the current Lao regime until proper protections can be put in place, to safeguard the civil, legal and human rights of all U.S. Citizens traveling to Laos.

I respectfully ask that the U.S. Government and U.S. Embassy in Laos continue to investigate the arrest and disappearance of Hakit, Congshineng, and Trillion and to press the Lao government for humanitarian access to the three U.S. citizens and their unconditional and immediate release.

The Lao government continues to jail my husband and the two other Americans from St. Paul that he was traveling with in clear violation and contempt of international law. Lao and Hmong Americans should not invest in the current regime in Laos, the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic. NTR Trade Status to Laos should be revoked by the U.S. Congress; and, U.S. foreign aid and assistance to the Lao regime should also be cut by the U.S. Congress and U.S. Government completely, including all de-mining funding, until at least such time as my husband Hakit Yang, Congshineng and Trillion, as Hmong-American citizens, are released from prison in Laos and brought home safely to America and their homes and families in St. Paul, Minnesota.

We will not forget and not give up fighting until we have truthful answers and the Lao regime releases Hakit Yang, Congshineng

and Trillion. We appeal to the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Government and international community for assistance in pressing the Lao regime to release our family members and restore human rights and freedom to them so that we can be reunited and these American citizens can return home once again from this terrible darkness.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

IN RECOGNITION OF JEANNA HENRY

● Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, today I recognize the outstanding contributions of Jeanna Henry, whose dedication to the Environmental Protection Agency earned her the Glen Witmer Award. Jeanna, noted for her dedication, resourcefulness, and sheer joy in her work, is an excellent example of the quality employees who serve us at the EPA.

The Glen Witmer Award is presented each year to the employee whose service is distinguished by concern for our environment, enthusiasm for environmental programs, a logical approach to problem solving, attention to detail, resourcefulness and initiative, and an ability to interact with people in a manner that fosters cooperation, understanding, and resolution of environmental problems. It is the highest award that may be presented to an employee by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Jeanna grew up in Delmar, MD—the town too big for one State—and graduated from Salisbury State University in 1996 with a degree in environmental health and minors in biology and chemistry. Following through on a goal she set her freshman year of college, Jeanna went on to work as an environmental scientist at the EPA upon winning a National Network for Environmental Management Studies Fellowship. Currently an enforcement officer at EPA's Waste and Chemical Management Division in Wilmington, DE, she has managed a multitude of hazardous waste and underground storage tank enforcement cases, all with motivation, professionalism, and extraordinary attention to detail.

Beyond her achievements in her field, Jeanna is most noted for her work ethic, exceptional communication skills, and for the passion that she brings to all of her undertakings. New employees often gravitate towards her because despite her heavy workload, she is never too busy to take time out to help others. She has become a mentor for new employees, a role model for her peers, and an absolute joy to her supervisors.

Jeanna is not only an outstanding employee, but a remarkable person, as well. Her lifelong passion for the environment has enabled her to help shape and enrich the lives of many in her field and the lives of those lucky