

his legacy for future generations so that they may also choose to expose the crimes of tyrants and fight for the freedom of all people.

Thank you, Dr. Conte-Aguero.

TARP REFORM AND
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 15, 2009

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 384) to reform the Troubled Assets Relief Program of the Secretary of the Treasury and ensure accountability under such Program, and for other purposes:

Mr. STARK. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of H.R. 384, the TARP Reform and Accountability Act.

I am one of the few members on my side of the aisle to vote against the TARP bill both times it came before this House. I did so because I believed that it rewarded the very entities that built the financial house of cards that has come crashing down. The Bush Administration pressed this body to act with all haste based on faulty information about the problems we faced and with scant explanation for how the resources requested would be used. The bill left too much discretion to the Secretary, and provided too little oversight of the historic outlay of taxpayer funds. I compared the Bush Administration's rush to bail out Wall Street to their rush to invade Iraq. I take no pleasure in being right on this score—but the management of the first outlay of TARP funds has been erratic and inefficient. In fact, the execution of this bailout provides the perfect thumbnail of the eight years of the Bush Administration: they didn't have a plan, they didn't do what they said they were going to do, they didn't take care of struggling homeowners, but made sure to look after the interests of big business. The mission was not accomplished.

I do not support the release of additional TARP funds and will vote to withhold those funds if such a bill comes before the House. Today, however, we have a chance to make a bad law better and that deserves our support. The reforms in this bill are the conditions that should have been included in the original package. This bill requires reporting by institutions that receive taxpayer money and requires Treasury to reach an agreement with institutions that take taxpayer funds on exactly how those funds will be used. This bill also limits the ability for those institutions to use taxpayer funds to pay their executives big bonuses that encourage short-term risk taking.

Most importantly, this bill mandates that the Treasury Department commit significant funds—up to \$100 billion—to foreclosure mitigation and keeping people in the homes they own or rent.

Our Nation is in a deep recession and people at all economic levels are feeling the pain. People struggling to make ends meet are having a tough time understanding why our government is using tax money to bail out the

bank that is foreclosing on their home. The first \$350 billion is gone with very little to show for it. I would prefer that Congress go back to the drawing board and develop a comprehensive program to save people's houses without rewarding the institutions that made bad loans. In the absence of such action, I support H.R. 384, because we must ensure that at least some of the second \$350 billion of taxpayer dollars goes to help people stay in their homes and weather this recession.

AMERICA MUST STAND WITH
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I would like to share with our colleagues an editorial in the New York Times highlighting the case of Iranian human rights activist, and Nobel Prize laureate, Shirin Ebadi, who faces harassment and intimidation at the hands of the Iranian government.

She is not alone.

According to the most recent State Department Human Rights Report, “[Iran’s] poor human rights record worsened, and it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses . . . Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained individuals and held political prisoners and women’s rights activists. There was a lack of judicial independence and of fair public trials. The government severely restricted civil liberties, including freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, movement, and privacy. The government placed severe restrictions on freedom of religion. Official corruption and a lack of government transparency persisted.”

We must continue to stand with human rights defenders like Shirin Ebadi, who is bravely confronting her own government’s injustices.

[From the New York Times, January 2, 2009]

THE WOMAN THE MULLAHS FEAR

(Editorial)

Men hold all of the meaningful levers of political power in Iran, but it is a woman they fear. If not, why is the mullah-led government trying to shut down the operations of Shirin Ebadi?

Ms. Ebadi, a lawyer and her country’s leading human rights activist, is the first Muslim woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize. On Monday, the authorities stormed her private office, seizing her computers and her clients’ documents. A week earlier, they closed her Center for Defenders of Human Rights, a coalition of human rights groups and other activists whose members had planned to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

When she was awarded the peace prize in 2003, the Nobel committee called Ms. Ebadi “a courageous person” for standing up against Iran’s bullying government. In the years since, she has endured repeated death threats from radical groups and regular government intimidation. That courage has never faltered.

With presidential elections scheduled for June, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and

his allies apparently decided they could not risk letting Ms. Ebadi continue the work she has done with distinction (and without pay) for the past 15 years—exposing government violations of human rights and defending human rights and democracy activists.

No doubt the authorities were unhappy with a report produced by her center that was cited recently by the United Nations’ secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, when the General Assembly approved a nonbinding resolution condemning Iran’s human rights record. But we suspect their ambitions go far beyond trying to suppress one report. They are clearly hoping to intimidate Ms. Ebadi and all other independent voices in Iran. That must not be allowed to happen.

We condemn Tehran’s mistreatment of this woman of extraordinary honor and courage. We urge the United States, Europe and other major powers to keep pressure on Iran to ensure that no further harm comes to Ms. Ebadi and that she remains free to do her essential work.

If Tehran wants relief from international criticism about its human rights record, it must start by adhering to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and respecting the rights of all of its citizens.

JACK HAMILTON AND THE COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY OF SOMERVILLE

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Mr. CAPUANO. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to my friend and constituent, Jack Hamilton, who is retiring after almost three decades as Executive Director of CAAS, the Community Action Agency of Somerville. Jack is the man who made both “community” and “action” a reality in the day to day work of the agency. He fought poverty and discrimination every day of his adult life. He communicated a sense of urgency to his staff and inspired both colleagues and clients with his deep commitment to the dignity and well-being of every person.

Under his leadership an anti-poverty agency grew to offer services ranging from early childhood education and parenting support, to help for tenants, access to health care, and advocacy for the disabled. He was an active citizen, far beyond what would have been expected of him as CAAS Executive Director, and he encouraged others to become involved. He never shied away from personal involvement in electoral politics, for and against those candidates whom he saw as worthy, or unworthy, of support, but he never let petty political differences limit his effectiveness.

Jack worked with elected officials and with me when I served as Mayor, collegially and constructively, but he never withheld his criticism when he felt a rebuke was necessary. Above all, he was determined to work with anyone and everyone engaged in an important issue, to cooperate and to understand such honest differences as might arise. He is a man of compassion and integrity, capable of righteous indignation and generous anger. I am proud to be his friend and I am grateful for his service to the city we both love.