

scholar, Judge Roberson has lectured on civil procedure at California State University, Los Angeles, and appeared before numerous Bar Associations as a professional panelist and moderator.

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honor to pay tribute to Judge Roberson today. I commend him for his outstanding service to the citizens of Los Angeles, and wish him a long, healthy, and prosperous retirement.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION
TO INCREASE VETERANS' BURIAL
BENEFITS

HON. BERNARD SANDERS

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 1999

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, today I will introduce legislation to increase the burial benefits for certain veterans from the current allowance of \$300 to \$600. This will represent the first increase in the burial benefit in 20 years.

Current law allows a funeral benefit of \$300 for veterans who were receiving disability pay or pensions, or those who were eligible for pensions but who weren't receiving them. This was intended to help defray the costs of funerals for the surviving families. However, Congress has not seen fit to increase this allowance since 1978, and it is past time to do so.

Just before the end of World War I, Congress created a funeral allowance of up to \$100 for some war veterans. After World War II, the maximum allowance was increased to \$150, and, in 1978, it was increased to \$300—where it is today.

When the House was deliberating an increase in 1958, several members rose to point out that it had been 12 years since the last increase in this modest benefit, and that the benefit level was no longer realistic. They said increasing the benefit for the families of those veterans who were eligible for it was "long overdue," and showed that Congress was aware of the economic realities faced by those families. I think, if those Members were here today, they would be saying the same things.

Everyone understands that because of inflation a proper memorial, either a funeral or a cremation, if far expensive in 1998 that it was in 1958, or 1978. A funeral, today, can run thousands of dollars, creating a burden on a bereaved family at a difficult time. I don't think it is asking too much to increase this small benefit for these veterans, which is why I will introduce legislation to double it, to \$600.

When members of Congress created this allowance after World War I, they did so because they believed that every veteran receiving disability pay or a pension had a right to be buried with dignity, and without undue financial hardships for the family. That principle was true then, and it remains true today.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

FLEETWOOD HOMES OF TENNESSEE WINS THE 1998 NATIONAL CHAMPIONS OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AWARD

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 1999

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Fleetwood Homes of Tennessee, an organization that has achieved distinction for its outstanding work to ensure comfortable living.

I want to offer my personal congratulations on a great job in customer satisfaction again this year. The 1998 National Champions of Customer Satisfaction Award is a distinguished achievement in itself, but this is the fifth year that this organization has been recognized. The continual satisfaction they have provided their customers makes this an even more remarkable accomplishment.

This award is based on customer satisfaction with the quality of their home after a period of six months. Fleetwood has received a 95.3% positive response after this period of time, making this organization the highest rated out of 46 manufacturers across the United States. This is quite an incredible number of people in Tennessee and across the nation that are satisfied with their service from Fleetwood Homes.

I particularly want to recognized the office in Westmoreland, Tennessee that has received the award for their outstanding service in the Sixth District. They have not only achieved this particular award five out of the ten years it has been presented but also have gained recognition by receiving the Division Champion Award. I am very proud to have a company of such high standards in service and quality in my district.

I want to congratulate Fleetwood once again on this accomplishment and thank them for satisfying so many Tennesseans with their efforts. I hope to see this organization continue with its success in the future and encourage them to keep up the great work.

HONORING THE 1999 FAIRFAX COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE VALOR AWARD WINNERS

HON. THOMAS M. DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 1999

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the 1999 Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce Valor Award Winners. On Thursday, February 11, 1999, the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce will present the Annual Valor Awards at the McLean Hilton.

The Valor Awards honor public service officials who have demonstrated extreme self-sacrifice, personal bravery, and ingenuity in the performance of their duty. There are five categories: The Gold Medal of Valor, The Silver Medal of Valor, The Bronze Medal of Valor, The Certificate of Valor, and The Life Saving Award.

The Valor Award is a project of the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce, in conjunction with the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. This is the twenty-first year that these awards have been presented.

The Silver Medal of Valor is awarded in recognition of acts involving great personal risk.

The Silver Medal of Valor Award Winner for 1999 is: Lieutenant Sandra K. Caplo.

The Bronze Medal of Valor is awarded in recognition of acts involving unusual risk beyond that which should be expected while performing the usual responsibilities of the member.

The Bronze Medal of Valor Award Winners for 1999 are: Police Officer First Class Timothy C. Benedict, Police Officer First Class Troy W. Fulk, Police Officer First Class Michael E. Ukele, Second Lieutenant Tony C. Young and Lieutenant Michael I. Runnels.

The Certificate of Valor is awarded for acts that involve personal risk and/or demonstration of judgment, zeal, or ingenuity not normally involved in the performance of duties.

The Certificate of Valor Award Winners for 1999 are: Sergeant John A. Absalon, Police Officer First Class Scott D. Argiro, Police Officer First Class James J. Banachoski, Jr., Police Officer First Class Scott C. Bates, Police Officer First Class Westley Bevan, Assistant Shift Supervisor Sally A. Fitzpatrick, Police Officer First Class Thomas M. Holland, Police Officer First Class Stephen Keeney, Master Police Officer (retired) James M. Kenna, Police Officer First Class Stephen M. Shelby, Police Officer First Class James H. Urie, Jr., Deputy Sheriff Samuel S. Gonsalyes, Firefighter Charles J. Epps, Firefighter Ronald S. Hollister, Technician William S. Keller, Technician Michael D. Macario, Technician David W. Walker, Master Technician Claire O. Ducker, Jr. and Deputy Chief John J. Brown, Jr.

The Lifesaving Award is awarded for acts taken in life-threatening situations where an individual's life is in jeopardy, either medically or physically.

The Lifesaving Award winners for 1999 are: Police Officer First Class Timothy C. Benedict, Public Safety Communicator II Dana E. Branten, Public Safety Communicator II Roland F. Bolton, Public Safety Communicator II L. Jean Cahill, Police Officer First Class Robert A. Dalstrom, Auxiliary Police Officer Gary Gaal, Police Officer First Class John M. Harris, Public Safety Communicator III John L. Krivjansky, Sergeant Gunma S. Lee, Public Safety Communicator II Christopher S. Lehn (2 Lifesaving awards), Police Officer First Class Charles K. Owens, Sergeant Walter F. Smallwood III, Police Officer Deborah J. Stout, Deputy Sheriff Kenneth M. Cox, Deputy Sheriff Corporal Brian M. Johnston, Deputy Sheriff Private First Class Kathleen A. Miller, Deputy Sheriff Ronald E. Phillips, Master Deputy Sheriff James K. Pope, Master Deputy Sheriff Swight E. Shobe, Deputy Sheriff Eric S. Yi, Firefighter Walter A. Deihl and Lieutenant Wayne P. Wentzel.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to send my sincere gratitude and heartfelt appreciation to these distinguished public servants who are truly deserving of the title "hero."

TRIBUTE TO ROY WILKINS IN
CELEBRATION OF BLACK HIS-
TORY MONTH

HON. MARTIN OLAV SABO

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 1999

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to take part in the celebration of Black History Month this year by recognizing a distinguished civil rights leader from the state of Minnesota—Mr. Roy Wilkins, who led the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) from 1955 to 1977.

Roy Wilkins was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1901, but he grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota—raised by an aunt after his mother died when Wilkins was only four years old. He attended Whittier Grade School and graduated from the Mechanic Arts High School. Wilkins attended the University of Minnesota, and graduated from the University in 1923.

After serving as editor of the University of Minnesota's newspaper, the *Minnesota Daily*, Wilkins started his professional career in Kansas City, where he served as managing editor of the *Kansas City Call*, an African-American newspaper. He used his role on the newspaper staff to encourage fellow blacks to vote and take advantage of the opportunity to make their political concerns known.

Upon joining the NAACP in 1931, Wilkins set to work identifying and correcting examples of racial injustice. He investigated working conditions for blacks on Mississippi levees, targeting those cases in which blacks were unfairly treated like slaves.

As the years passed, the fruits of Wilkins' labors as a civil rights advocate grew more obvious, and now he is widely recognized as the "Father of Civil Rights." Perhaps his greatest victory in the NAACP included the United States Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, which overturned the "separate-but-equal" doctrine in the South's educational system. Furthermore, Wilkins is extensively credited for his role in helping to pass the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, and 1964, as well as the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

To recognize Wilkins' pivotal achievements, President Lyndon Johnson presented him with the country's highest civilian honor, the Medal of Freedom, in 1967.

Roy Wilkins served the NAACP for a total of 46 years. Although Wilkins passed away in 1981, his legacy lives on in an extraordinary piece of public artwork in St. Paul, Minnesota—the Roy Wilkins Memorial.

The Roy Wilkins Memorial was unveiled in 1995 on the Capitol Mall of the Minnesota State Capitol. The Memorial, with its intriguing symbolic features, serves as a fine reminder of the life and work of this revered man. The walls of the monument signify the obstacles and barriers created by racial segregation, while the spiral shape of the sculpture represents the cycle of Wilkins' achievements in the form of advancements for minority rights. This spiral extends above and through the walls of the monument to illustrate how racial equality can be met by means of effective legislative actions. Finally, the Memorial's obelisk,

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decorated with African relics, is a moving tribute to the ancestors of modern-day African Americans.

Mr. Speaker, today I challenge my colleagues—and all Americans—to become active participants in Black History Month and all that it represents. I encourage them to learn more about Roy Wilkins, and, if possible, to visit the Roy Wilkins Memorial in Minnesota and see this fine monument for themselves. This is just one example of the many ways we all can recognize, explore and honor the civil rights leaders who guided our nation toward racial equality and understanding.

1999—A CRITICAL YEAR FOR
BELARUS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 1999

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, last month, a Congress of Democratic Forces was held in Minsk, the capital of Belarus. The Congress demonstrated the resolve of the growing democratic opposition to authoritarian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka and the determination by the opposition to have free, democratic elections consistent with the legitimate 1994 constitution. Earlier last month, on January 10, members of the legitimate Belarusian parliament, disbanded by Lukashenka after the illegal 1996 constitutional referendum which extended his term of office by two years to 2001, set a date for the next presidential elections for May 16. According to the 1994 constitution, Lukashenka's term expires in July. Not surprisingly, Lukashenka rejects calls for a presidential election.

Local elections are currently being planned for April, although many of the opposition plan not to participate, arguing that elections should be held only under free, fair and transparent conditions, which do not exist at the present time. Indeed, the law on local elections leaves much to be desired and does not provide for a genuinely free and fair electoral process. The local elections and opposition efforts to hold presidential elections must be viewed against the backdrop of a deteriorating economic situation. One of the resolutions adopted by the Congress of Democratic Forces accuses Lukashenka of driving the country to "social tensions, international isolation and poverty." As an example of the heightening tensions, just last weekend, Andrei Sannikov, the former deputy minister of Belarus and a leader of the Charter '97 human rights group, was brutally assaulted by members of a Russian-based ultranationalist organization. Additionally, Lukashenka's moves to unite with Russia pose a threat to Belarus' very sovereignty. Thus, Mr. Speaker, this year promises to be a critical year for Belarus.

Recently, a staff delegation of the (Helsinki) Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which I chair, traveled to Belarus, raising human rights concerns with high-ranking officials, and meeting with leading members of the opposition, independent media and nongovernmental organizations.

The staff report concludes that the Belarusian Government continues to violate its

commitments under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) relating to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and that at the root of these violations lies the excessive power usurped by President Lukashenka since his election in 1994, especially following the illegitimate 1996 referendum. Although one can point to some limited areas of improvement, such as allowing some opposition demonstrations to occur relatively unhindered, overall OSCE compliance has not improved since the deployment of the OSCE's Advisory and Monitoring Group (AMG) almost one year ago. Freedoms of expression, association and assembly remain curtailed. The government hampers freedom of the media by tightly controlling the use of national TV and radio. Administrative and economic measures are used to cripple the independent media and NGOs. The political opposition has been targeted for repression, including imprisonment, detention, fines and harassment. The independence of the judiciary has been further eroded, and the President alone controls judicial appointments. Legislative power is decidedly concentrated in the executive branch of government.

The Commission staff report makes a number of recommendations, which I would like to share with my colleagues. The United States and OSCE community should continue to call upon the Belarusian Government to live up to its OSCE commitments and, in an effort to reduce the climate of fear which has developed in Belarus, should specifically encourage the Belarusian Government, inter alia, to: (1) Immediately release Alyaksandr Shydlauskii (sentenced in 1997 to 18 months imprisonment for allegedly spray painting anti-Lukashenka graffiti) and review the cases of those detained and imprisoned on politically motivated charges, particularly Andrei Klymov and Vladimir Koudinov; (2) cease and desist the harassment of opposition activists, NGOs and the independent media and permit them to function; (3) allow the opposition access to the electronic media and restore the constitutional right of the Belarusian people to free and impartial information; (4) create the conditions for free and fair elections in 1999, including a provision in the election regulations allowing party representation on the central and local election committees; and (5) strengthen the rule of law, beginning with the allowance for an independent judiciary and bar.

With Lukashenka's term in office under the legitimate 1994 Constitution expiring in July 1999, the international community should make clear that the legitimacy of Lukashenka's presidency will be undermined unless free and fair elections are held by July 21. The United States and the international community, specifically the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, should continue to recognize only the legitimate parliament—the 13th Supreme Soviet—abolished by Lukashenka in 1996, and not the post-referendum, Lukashenka-installed, National Assembly. At the time, the United States—and our European allies and partners—denounced the 1996 referendum as illegitimate and extra-constitutional. The West needs to stand firm on this point, as the 13th Supreme Soviet and the 1994 Constitution are the only legal authorities.