

May 14, 1999

HONORING KVEC RADIO

HON. LOIS CAPPS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 13, 1999

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to extend my congratulations to everyone at San Luis Obispo radio station KVEC, which recently marked its 62nd year on the air. KVEC is a locally-owned and operated station featuring local news and talk show hosts who provide a forum of lively discussion of local issues as well as interesting and useful information on a wide range of topics. As such, KVEC provides an invaluable service to its listeners from throughout San Luis Obispo County.

As a frequent guest on the Dave Congalton Show, I have enjoyed the opportunity to hear from KVEC's listeners on a wide array of issues. I know that for many of the station's regular listeners, on-air hosts like Dave Congalton and Bill Benica are considered almost members of the family. I appreciate the entire KVEC family for their community spirit and the important job they have done so well for more than six decades. I extend to them my sincerest congratulations and gratitude.

RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY
AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN LAOS

HON. BRUCE F. VENTO

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 13, 1999

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to introduce legislation that calls for democracy, free elections and basic human rights in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. This important resolution reaffirms and promotes our commitment to free and fair elections and basic human rights standards for the Lao people, especially the Lao-Hmong. While United States forces have departed Southeast Asia, the plight of the Lao-Hmong inside of Laos must not be forgotten.

The continuous allegations of persecution and abuse of the Lao people, especially the Lao-Hmong, must not be overlooked. The United States must investigate these allegations promptly. Lao-Hmong families are reported to be threatened daily under the Communist regime in Laos. We must focus public attention to address such allegations in attempt to finally bring a halt to this persecution.

I would like to remind my Colleagues that the service and contributions of the Lao-Hmong patriots had a major impact on achieving today's global order and the positive changes of the past decades. Extreme sacrifices were made by the Lao-Hmong in the jungles and in the highlands, whether in uniform or in the common clothing of the laborer. Thousands of U.S. soldier's lives were spared because of the Lao-Hmong patriots' support and help as they fought along side the United States forces in the Vietnam War. For their efforts, the Lao-Hmong deserve our thanks, our shelter and certainly fundamental human rights, freedoms, responsibility of democracy

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

and openly-contested free and fair elections that will establish the right to self-determination in Laos.

Despite frequent statements about its commitment to the enforcement of human rights standards in the country, the Laotian government's actual practices deviate from such important principles. The Government may have learned to "talk the talk" and make paper promises, but they must be held accountable to "walk the walk." On a daily basis, the government violates the civil and political rights of Laotian citizens by denying them the basic freedoms of speech, assembly, and association. According to the State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1998, the Laotian government has only slowly eased restrictions on basic freedoms and continues to significantly restrict the freedoms of speech, assembly and religion.

Moreover, Amnesty International reports that serious problems persist in the human rights record of the Government of Laos. Such reports include the continued detention of political prisoners and the treatment of such prisoners in a manner that is degrading, abusive and inhumane. In February of this year, one political prisoner, Thongsouk Saysanghi, died in a remote prison camp in Laos. In addition, an unknown number of other political prisoners still remain inside of Laotian prisons. Amnesty International has made repeated appeals to the Lao authorities to improve the conditions of the detentions of the prisoners. Such appeals have been ignored, resulting in this tragic death. That Thongsouk died and the unknown number of other prisoners still remain to be left in such critical conditions in the face of these many expressions of concern highlights not only the Lao Government's complete lack of care of its political prisoners, but its contempt for the opinion of the international community.

Specifically, my resolution calls upon the Laotian government to respect international norms of human rights and democratic freedoms as embodied in its constitution and international agreements; issue a public statement specifically reaffirming its commitment to protecting religious freedom and other basic human rights, fully institute a process of democracy, human rights openly and free and fair elections in Laos, and specifically ensures that the National Assembly elections, currently scheduled for 2002, are openly contested; and allow access for international human rights monitors, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and Amnesty International inside of Lao prisons and all regions of the country to investigate allegations of human rights abuse, especially those against the Lao-Hmong, when requested.

The United States must continue to ask the tough questions and not accept a blissful lack of knowledge as satisfactory. My resolution builds upon similar Senate action last Congress and amendments, which I have authored, that have been added to the State Department Authorization in previous House action, but have not been enacted into law due to other matters. Much more needs to be done in regards to this matter. U.S. policy and law must be changed if we expect results. Congress must ensure that the Lao Government is held accountable for their actions and inac-

9765

tions. Importantly, Laos is seeking normal trade and diplomatic relations with the United States and the global community. But, the policy and conduct of the Laotian government in regards to human rights must be transparent prior to putting in place such political and economic policy. We owe the people of Laos the moral obligation to remain diligent to their human rights circumstance and plight.

HONORING AND RECOGNIZING
SLAIN LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

SPEECH OF

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 11, 1999

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Police Memorial Week. It is a time when the citizens of the United States join the families, friends and colleagues of our Nation's slain peace officers, to honor and remember the sacrifices they have made.

On September 24, 1789, Congress created the first federal law enforcement officer, the United States Marshal. Five years later, on January 11th, 1794, U.S. Marshal Robert Forsyth became the first officer, in a long list of men and women who have given their lives to protect and serve the communities of their beloved Nation. Since then, over 14,000 officers have died in the line of duty, including over 1,000 from the State of New York. The city of New York has lost more officers than any other department in the Nation, with more than 500 deaths. These heroes must never be forgotten, and their sacrifice must serve as a reminder that the price of a safer America, an America based on law and order, is being paid for by the blood and lives of our police officers.

Although our Nation's crime rate is at its lowest level in years, on average, one law enforcement officer is killed somewhere in America nearly every other day. Over the past ten years, America has lost one police officer every 54 hours; over 1,500 men and women. Already in 1999, forty officers have given their lives in the line of duty, a poignant reminder that crime reduction comes at a stiff price.

Police Memorial Week is a time to remind us that when a police officer is killed, it is not a city that loses an officer, it is an entire nation. We must believe that the senseless murders and crimes against our Nation's bravest men and women will one day stop; until then we will do everything we can in order to remember and honor all of the law enforcement officers who have ever given their lives.

I would like to take this opportunity to recite the names of those fallen heroes from New York, who, in the name of duty, gave their lives over the past two years: Chief Constable Norman E. Carr Jr., Officer Robert McLellan, Officer Sean Carrington, Officer Gerard Carter, Officer Anthony Mosomillo, and Officer Matthew Dziergowski. I would also like us to remember an officer from my congressional district Vincent Guidice of Stony Point, NY., who died in the line of duty on May 22nd, 1996. To