Congressional Record—House July 18, 2001


Mr. DIAZ-BALART, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 107–146) on the resolution (H.Res. 199) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2506) making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2002, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

Special Orders

The Speaker pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 3, 2001, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

On the Freedom Ship Amistad

The Speaker pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. Simmons) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, a year ago the Mystic Seaport, which is located in my district, constructed and launched a replica of the freedom schooner Amistad. Today, I rise to salute some of the craftsmen and the contractors who participated in the construction of that craft and helped to make it seaworthy.

Most of us know the story of the ship and of its history, which was the subject of a movie by Steven Spielberg. The Amistad was a Spanish schooner traveling the coast of Cuba in 1839 with a cargo of 53 men and women on board, men and women of African origin who had been enslaved. Under the leadership of Joseph Cinque, they rose up against their captors, seized the ship, and attempted to sail back to Africa.

The ship eventually made landfall off of Long Island and was brought to new London, Connecticut, where the Africans were taken prisoner. They eventually went on trial and won their freedom after John Quincy Adams argued their case before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Today, a replica of the Amistad, constructed by the Mystic Seaport, is a living museum of this part of our Nation’s history; but we would not have this replica, we would not have this educational tool, if it were not for the hard work of many individuals who dedicated their time and resources to the building of this replica.

A notable example of this cooperation are the members of the South Eastern Connecticut chapter of the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Association who donated over $100,000 of time and resources to install the plumbing, heating and cooling systems as the ship was built at Mystic Seaport.

Under the leadership of Walter Woycik, more than 20 volunteers from 11 Connecticut firms made sure that all the heating, cooling and plumbing equipment was installed and up to the stringent Coast Guard standards. This, in turn, assured that the Amistad can put to sea as a living, working, sailing classroom to teach this important story of our people’s struggle for freedom.

What these individuals constructed is more than simply a replica of a ship. The Amistad is a symbol of the struggle for human rights and human dignity, and it is a reminder that all people deserve to be and want to be free.

Most notably after the Amistad incident, this replica is a symbol of America’s values, as spelled out in our Declaration of Independence and in our Constitution, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

As we celebrate our freedom, let us also thank those volunteers who made possible the construction of this replica of the freedom schooner Amistad.

Debt Relief

The Speaker pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. Cummings) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight to address the issue of debt relief for Africa, particularly as we are on the cusp of considering the fiscal year 2002 foreign operations appropriations bill.

There are many reasons why debt relief is important and critical to the United States. I believe we not only have a moral obligation but an economic imperative to ensure that we share a world that is economically prosperous, educated and healthy. As we have seen in recent years, health and financial problems are not constrained by regional boundaries. That is why I, and many of my colleagues, worked to increase funding in the foreign operations bill for HIV/AIDS and infectious disease programs, debt relief, basic education, child survival, and microenterprise programs, among others.

Although details have not been provided, I am pleased to note that President Bush is thinking about innovative ways to address the issue of poverty and debt relief. It was reported he intends to push the World Bank to extend more grants instead of loans to developing countries as a way to reduce their debt burden. I believe this effort is a step in the right direction.

However, it demands we remain committed in word and deed to ensuring