

in the country becomes even more severe. According to UNAIDS, the United Nations Agency responsible for addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, more than 5% of the adult population is HIV-positive, and some sectors of the population have infection rates of over 50%. In other human development categories, Haiti's record is just as lamentable. Half of Haitian adults are illiterate, and more than 1 in 4 children under the age of 5 are malnourished. Haiti ranks 152nd out of 174 on the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index, below such countries as Bangladesh and Sudan.

In previous years, the United States pursued a constructive relationship with Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Between FY 95 and FY 99, the United States provided \$884 million in critical development assistance funds to support agricultural development, democracy and governance, teacher training, health care, and many other programs. The United States also supported multilateral institutions that worked to improve the lives of ordinary Haitians. More recently, however, the United States has pursued a myopic policy towards Haiti and has used its veto power to prevent the disbursement of funds from multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The board of directors of the IDB has already approved \$146 million in social sector loans for Haiti, but because of United States policy, these funds have been blocked from improving the lives of 8 million Haitians. This policy must change.

In order for the living standards and life chances of ordinary Haitians to improve, international development assistance is critical. The United States must change its current policy towards Haiti so that it may receive multilateral funds for pressing development needs.

IN HONOR OF THE PUERTO RICAN ASSOCIATION FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, INC.

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to the Puerto Rican Association for Human Development, Inc. (PRAHD). PRAHD is a non-profit organization in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, dedicated to providing health, educational, and social services to low-income residents of Middlesex County, New Jersey.

Since 1974, PRAHD has emerged as one of the premier non-profit organizations in the State of New Jersey. This dynamic organization provides a wide range of social services essential to low-income and elderly residents of Middlesex County. PRAHD currently sponsors pre-school child care programs, HIV/AIDS educational services, substance abuse prevention classes, and health care services for homebound senior citizens.

The outstanding success and efficiency of this organization can be attributed to its committed staff, which is working tirelessly to ensure that adequate social services are pro-

vided for residents in Middlesex County. PRAHD, which is governed by a Board of Directors and is managed by an Executive Director, currently employs 38 full-time and 74 part-time staffers. It is also supported by the diligent efforts of numerous community leaders, who volunteer their skills and services.

As a result of its hard work, PRAHD has vastly improved the standard of living for thousands of New Jersey families.

Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring PRAHD for its service to the community of Perth Amboy and for its countless acts of kindness and compassion.

HONORING VERNE L. WIKERT

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Verne L. Wikert and his contributions to this country. Verne began his service to this nation in the 1940's, serving as a Merchant Marine in the Pacific theatre during World War II.

Mr. Wikert joined the Merchant Marines at the age of seventeen. Tasked with the position as oiler aboard the S.S. Coast Trader, Verne and his crew were responsible for supplying the Pacific theatre with troops and supplies throughout the war. On June 7, 1942, a Japanese submarine torpedoed his ship. Following the attack, Verne fought his way from below deck to escape the sinking ship. This event put the crew through a five-day ordeal, fighting for their survival off the coast of the state of Washington. Upon rescue, Wikert, in a coma, was near death.

Mr. Wikert recovered from this experience and continued his service to his country, surviving two more torpedo attacks before the end of the war. As is customary in the Merchant Marines, he received no awards or decorations for his contributions to the war effort, but is worthy of the praise of this body of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to honor Verne L. Wikert for his service to this country. He served selflessly during a time when the country was in great need. His actions have brought great credit to himself and his nation.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT PRESIDENT ISSUE PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING A NATIONAL LAO-HMONG RECOGNITION DAY

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 13, 2001

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 88, a resolution urging the President to issue a national proclamation recognizing the important contributions of Hmong and Laotians to our great nation.

Unfortunately, few Americans know that many Hmong and Lao people came to the United States as refugees fleeing genocide and persecution for fighting against the spread of communism in Laos, a country once part of the French colony known as Indochina, which also encompassed Cambodia and Vietnam.

Following the French rule over Indochina from 1863 until its withdrawal from the region in 1954, the United States became involved in the struggle for democracy and independence for Indochina from 1955 to 1975. During this period which became known as the Vietnam War, the United States recruited Hmong and Lao people to fight against the communist Vietnamese Army and the Pathet Lao. Hmong and Lao soldiers flew thousands of deadly combat missions in support of the U.S. Armed Forces and the Central Intelligence Agency, and fought in conventional and guerrilla combat clashes with extreme casualties against communist Vietnamese and Pathet Lao. More than 35,000 Hmong and Lao soldiers lost their lives in defense of democracy and many more were seriously injured and disabled.

After the United States pulled out of Vietnam in 1975, many of the Hmong and Lao soldiers and their families were forced to live in communist concentration camps known as "reeducation camps" by the Pathet Lao. While in these camps, thousands of Hmong and Lao people were subjected to chemical bombings, tortures, and genocidal murders. Many eventually escaped to refugee camps in Thailand and some refugees fled to the United States. It is estimated that between 1975 and 1995, the communist Pathet Lao government killed more than 300,000 people in Laos, including the Royal Lao family.

Only in recent years have we begun to recognize and commemorate the contributions thousands of Hmong and Lao Americans have made during the period of the Vietnam War. In the 106th Congress, Congress passed the Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act introduced by our esteemed former colleague the late Congressman Bruce Vento, which expedited naturalization procedures for Hmong and Lao refugees who fought in the special guerrilla units in Laos.

Today nearly 195,000 Hmong and 135,000 Lao Americans live in the United States. Large Hmong and Lao communities have been established in parts of California, Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Carolina and Colorado.

In closing, I would like to congratulate Congressman Tancredo for his work on this legislation and urge my colleagues to stand in strong support for the passage of H. Con. Res. 88.

68TH ANNIVERSARY OF FAMINE-GENOCIDE IN UKRAINE

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, as Co-Chair of the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus, I rise today to commemorate the memory of millions of innocent victims ruthlessly murdered at the tyrannical hands of Joseph Stalin and other