CONGRATULATING BANGLADESH ON ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I come to the House floor tonight to celebrate the anniversary of the struggle the Bengalis went through to become an independent nation 30 years ago on March 26, 1971.

I visited Bangladesh a year ago with President Clinton at this time and was impressed with the progress that the country has made. The people and the government received us very warmly as we visited the capital Dhaka and the surrounding cities.

Madam Speaker, the independence of Bangladesh was hard fought. In 1970, a strong opposition within the masses arose in east Pakistan against the injustices and discrimination levied on the Bengali people. In the early spring of 1971, Pakistani forces moved in and ruthlessly tried to suppress the uprising with death squads and indiscriminate killings. Indira Gandhi, the prime minister of India, became very vocal in her opposition to Pakistani oppression and in 1971 the Indian army was sent in to help the Bengali fighters.

In 12 days’ time, the Bengali liberation force, with the help of the Indian army, drove the Pakistani forces out of the region and Bangladesh was born. I salute the brave Bangla fighters, as well as the soldiers of the Indian Army who stood firm together to help the dream of a free Bengal nation become a reality.

Madam Speaker, U.S./Bangla relations have been developing positively since Bangladesh’s declaration of a free republic. Current U.S./Bangla relations are excellent as demonstrated in several visits to Washington by the Bangladeshi premiers over the last 20 years.

In 1995, First Lady Hillary Clinton visited Bangladesh. The current prime minister of Bangladesh, Ms. Sheikh Hasina, also visited the United States in 1996 and 1997.

Relations between Bangladesh and the United States have further strengthened since the participation of Bangla troops in the 1991 Gulf War Coalition. The Bangladeshi soldiers also served jointly with the 1994 multinational force in Haiti.

The current government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, elected in June 1996, has indicated that it will continue along the path of privatization and open market reforms but progress has been slow.

In the government’s first year, real GDP growth of 17 percent and inflation of 2.6 percent were the best figures in the 1990s. We must collaborate in many ways with Bangladesh and continue our aid package to Bangladesh, and I want to congratulate my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) for starting the Bangladesh aid package.

I have joined the same and hope to work with him for Bengali issues.

Under Madam Hasina, Bangladesh pursues a positive foreign policy based on friendship with all and malice towards none. Whilst relations between the United States and Bangladesh are good, clearly there is ample room for improvement. One such area I believe U.S./Bangla relations can be improved is trade.

Madam Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the African-Caribbean trade initiative that was introduced last year. The initiative gives only textile industries in Africa and the Caribbean duty free access to U.S. markets. As I understand that presently Bangladesh derives 76 percent of its foreign reserves from these exports. Taking this market away, most of which is the U.S. market, would deal a very heavy blow to the demography of Bangladesh as it struggles to improve the conditions of its people.

Another important area where we can help, and I think my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) again has drawn attention to this, is the arsenic poisoning occurring in the drinking water wells in the Nawab Ganj district in Bangladesh. In the early 1970s, UNICEF, in an attempt to bring clean drinking water to the Bangladeshi people, dug two wells to access shallow water ducts. At that time, arsenic testing was not conducted and arsenic’s inherent slow-working poisonous effects were not recognized.

I ask my colleagues to urge the current administration to work on a long-term solution to this problem affecting a great number of Bangladeshis.

Madam Speaker, on this historic occasion of Bangladesh’s 30th anniversary of independence, we must show our sincere appreciation for all that Bangladesh is doing to improve itself and express solidarity with its democratic principles of governments in progress. I ask my fellow colleagues to join me in celebrating this occasion in wishing Bangladesh, the very best of success in the years to come.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H. CON. RES. 83, CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET, FISCAL YEAR 2002

Mr. GOSS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 107-30) on the resolution (H. Con. Res. 83) providing for consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 83) establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2002, revising the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2001, and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2003 through 2011, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

NATIVE HAWAIIAN EDUCATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask for support of the Native Hawaiian Education Reauthorization Act, which I have today introduced with my colleague the Honorable NEIL ABERCROMBIE.

The Native Hawaiian Education Act has been in effect since 1988. Congress has recognized its special responsibilities to the native, indigenous peoples of the United States by creating education programs to meet the special needs of American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

Parliamentary support for modest appropriations provided under the Native Hawaiian Education Act have helped to improve educational opportunities for Native Hawaiian children, youth, and educators. Through the establishment of Native Hawaiian Education Councils, the Act has given Native Hawaiians a voice in deciding how to meet the critical education needs of their community.

Native Hawaiian students begin their school experience lagging behind other students in terms of readiness factors, such as vocabulary scores, and they score below national norms on standardized education achievement tests at all grade levels. In both public and private schools, Native Hawaiian students are over-represented among students qualifying for special education programs provided to students with learning disabilities. They have the highest rates of drug and alcohol use in the State of Hawaii. Native Hawaiian students are under-represented in institutions of higher education and among adults who have completed four or more years of college.

Why are Native Hawaiian students so disadvantaged? The poor showing of Native Hawaiian students is inconsistent with the high rates of literacy and integration of traditional culture and Western education historically achieved by Native Hawaiians through a Hawaiian language-based public school system established in 1840 by King Kamehameha III. But following the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii in 1893, by citizens and agents of the United States, middle schools were banned. After the United States annexed Hawaii, throughout the territorial and statehood period of Hawaii, and until 1986, use of the Hawaiian language as an instructional medium in education in public schools was declared unlawful.

This declaration caused incalculable harm to a culture that placed a very high value on the power of language, as exemplified in the traditional saying:

I ka ʻōlelo nō ke ola; I ka ʻōlelo nō ka maka.

In the language rests life, In the language rests death.
Our nation must make amends for the terrible damage that has been done to the Native Hawaiian people since the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy by military force in 1893. From 1826 until 1893, the United States had recognized the Kingdom of Hawaii as a sovereign, independent nation and accorded her full and complete diplomatic recognition. Treaties and trade agreements had been entered into between these two nations. In 1893, a powerful group of American businessmen engineered the overthrow with the use of U.S. naval forces.

Queen Liliuokalani was imprisoned and over 1.8 million acres of lands belonging to the crown, referred to as crown lands or ceded lands, were confiscated without compensation or due process.

A Presidential commission, led by Congressmen James Blount declared that the takeover was an illegal act by the U.S. government. In recent years, we have learned that in the vaults of the National Archives is a 556-page petition dated 1897–1898 protesting the annexation of Hawaii by the United States. The petition was signed by 21,259 Native Hawaiian people; a second petition was signed by more than 17,000 people. Historians advise that this number constitutes nearly 100 percent of the native population at the time. Their voice was totally ignored.

Since the overthrow of the Kingdom and up until the present, Native Hawaiians have suffered from high rates of poverty, poor health status, high mortality, and high rates of alcohol and drug abuse and incarceration. By 1919, the Native Hawaiian population had declined from an estimated 1,000,000 in 1778 to 22,600. In recognition of this severe decline and the desperate situation of the native people of Hawaii, Congress enacted the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, which returned 200,000 acres of land confiscated by the federal government (out of the total of 1.8 million acres stolen) to the Native Hawaiian people as an act of contrition.

Unfortunately, the lands that were returned were in no condition for young people or wanted to live. They were in the most remote areas of the islands. Relocated to isolation, without infrastructure, with no access to jobs, Native Hawaiians live today in segregated reservations, much like Indian tribes. Their current despair and conditions of poverty is due to this forced isolation.

Progress has been made over the years, even with the modest funding provided under the Native Hawaiian Education Act. One of the outstanding successes of the program is the dramatic increase in the number of young people who are fluent in the Native Hawaiian language. Once a dying language spoken only in isolated Native Hawaiian communities, primarily by elders, the Hawaiian language is now taught through a number of immersion programs, beginning in kindergarten and continuing through high school. The University of Hawaii at Hilo now has a program for a Masters' degree in Native Hawaiian Language and Literature—the first program in the United States focusing on a Native American Language.

It is important to note that Congress does not extend services to Native Hawaiians because of their race, but because of their unique status as the indigenous people of a once-sovereign nation with whom the United States has a trust relationship. The political status of Native Hawaiians is comparable to that of American Indians and Alaskan Natives. Justice requires that the United States fulfill its trust obligations to Native Hawaiians who lost everything at the time of their annexation. The $28 million authorized for Native Hawaiian education programs in the bill can't begin to make up for the loss of a nation.

I call upon my colleagues to support the reauthorization of the Native Hawaiian Education Act and justice for the Native Hawaiian people.