

forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. POE led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

#### MOTHER GIVES LIFE FOR HER CHILD

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, as Americans across this Nation celebrate Mother's Day this Sunday, there are five children in Crosby, Texas, who mourn the loss of theirs. Tina Davila was murdered as she gave her life to protect her youngest child.

On April 17, Tina left her 4-month-old in the back seat of her car as she quickly ran into a store to pay a bill. But as Tina approached the store, she saw a car pull up beside hers, and a bandit jumped out and tried to steal her vehicle. She fought the outlaw and screamed, "My baby! My baby!" But the carjacker stabbed her, murdering her in front of her child and fled with blood on his hands. All this was caught on video surveillance.

The killer is 22-year-old Timoteo Rios, an illegal trespasser from Mexico. In addition to murdering Tina, Rios and his fellow hijacker, Kennedy Escoto, carjacked four other people. Rios had spent time in jail last year but was never deported.

Rios remains at large. He's believed to be back in the safe sanctuary country for criminals, Mexico, basking in the sun and unaccountable for this murder, while Tina Davila's children are motherless this Mother's Day.

And that's just the way it is.

#### COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, May 2, 2008.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,  
*The Speaker, House of Representatives,*  
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on May 2, 2008, at 8:54 a.m.:

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 3522.

That the Senate agreed to without amendment H. Con. Res. 112.

That the Senate agreed to without amendment H. Con. Res. 340.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

LORRAINE C. MILLER,  
*Clerk of the House.*

#### COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, May 2, 2008.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,  
*The Speaker, House of Representatives,*  
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on May 2, 2008, at 12:54 p.m.:

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 5919.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

LORRAINE C. MILLER,  
*Clerk of the House.*

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken after 6:30 p.m. today.

□ 1415

#### FOREIGN SERVICE MEMBER REST

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3658) to amend the Foreign Service Act of 1980 to permit rest and recuperation travel to United States territories for members of the Foreign Service.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3658

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. INCLUSION OF UNITED STATES TERRITORIES AS ELIGIBLE FOR REST AND RECUPERATION TRAVEL FOR MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE.

The Foreign Service Act of 1980 is amended—

(1) in section 901(6)(B) (22 U.S.C. 4081(6)(B)), by inserting after "United States" the following: "or its territories, including American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the United States Virgin Islands"; and

(2) in section 903(b) (22 U.S.C. 4083(b)), by striking "its territories and possessions, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico" and inserting "or its territories, including American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the United States Virgin Islands".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from

California (Ms. WATSON) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution and yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I want to recognize our colleague from Puerto Rico (Mr. FORTUÑO) and the distinguished chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, for putting forward a very important measure.

H.R. 3658 amends the Foreign Service Act to give the Secretary of State needed authority to ensure that foreign service officers from U.S. territories, including Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands, are provided the same benefits as their colleagues from the 50 States.

Currently, the State Department provides air transportation home from overseas assignments for the purpose of rest and recuperation to all foreign service officers who reside in any of the 50 States. However, current law does not permit the department to provide the same benefit to foreign service officers who reside in any of the territories.

The State Department has informed us that they do not have any objection to this measure. The cost of implementing it would be very small as it would impact very few foreign service officers.

I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution that would rectify an inequity in the treatment of our dedicated foreign service officers.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3658, introduced by my good friend from Puerto Rico (Mr. FORTUÑO).

This bill will make a long overdue clarification to the Foreign Service Act that will allow American foreign service officers to take rest and recuperation travel, commonly referred to as R&R, in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and, of course, the United States Virgin Islands.

American diplomatic personnel who serve at hardship posts overseas are allowed to take State Department-funded R&R travel either at locations

abroad or locations in the United States. But the phrase "locations in the United States" has been interpreted by the State Department regulation to exclude U.S. territories for some reason. That interpretation has placed a distinctly unfair burden on foreign service officers from those territories who might wish to spend their R&R with families at home.

It also puts U.S. territories at a disadvantage compared to other destinations abroad or in the United States where our diplomatic personnel may want to travel to rest and recuperate.

I want to commend our colleagues who have sponsored this legislation to remove this inadvertent and unfair provision. H.R. 3658 is a worthy bill that deserves our unanimous support.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. FORTUÑO), the author of this bill.

Mr. FORTUÑO. I thank my colleague.

I want to begin by thanking Chairman BERMAN for ushering H.R. 3658 through the committee process. In his short time as chairman, Mr. BERMAN has shown intelligence, generosity and strong bipartisan spirit, the same leadership qualities displayed by his predecessor, the irreplaceable Tom Lantos.

I want to thank my good friend, Ranking Member ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, as well. I continue to marvel at her devotion to her constituents in south Florida and at her tireless efforts to help light the lantern of freedom in dark places around the world.

I also want to thank the representatives from the other U.S. territories, all of whom are original cosponsors of H.R. 3658. And I want to thank you, Ms. WATSON, and you, Judge POE, for your support for this bill. I note that Ms. WATSON served as a U.S. Ambassador to Micronesia and therefore brings a special expertise to this subject.

Mr. Speaker, the specific purpose of H.R. 3658 is to permit Foreign Servicemembers to take rest and recuperation travel, known as R&R, in the five U.S. territories. The broader objective of the bill is to ensure that Federal employees from the U.S. territories enjoy the same rights and privileges as their fellow citizens from the 50 States.

I am pleased that the American Foreign Service Association supports H.R. 3658, and that the State Department does not oppose its passage.

Mr. Speaker, the Foreign Service Act lists the instances in which the State Department may pay the travel-related costs of Foreign Servicemembers. One section of the FSA states that the Department may pay the travel costs incurred by Foreign Service personnel for what is known as home leave. The pur-

pose of the home leave is to ensure that Foreign Servicemembers who have been sent abroad undergo a period of reorientation to the United States. The FSA provides that home leave may be taken in the 50 States and the U.S. territories.

Another section of the FSA states that the Department may pay the costs incurred by Foreign Servicemembers for R&R travel. Unlike home leave, which is granted to all Foreign Servicemembers who serve abroad, R&R is granted only to those stationed at hardship posts. Under the current FSA, R&R may only be taken in locations in the United States. State Department regulations have interpreted this phrase to exclude U.S. territories.

Mr. Speaker, there is no principled basis for allowing Foreign Servicemembers to take home leave but not R&R in the U.S. territories, and H.R. 3658 amends the FSA to eliminate the distinction. Just as they proudly serve in our Nation's Armed Forces, residents of the U.S. territories also represent this great country abroad as diplomats. These men and women from the territories take the same risks and endure the same long absences from their families as their colleagues from the States. Making certain that our laws treat these public servants on equal terms is the only right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to consider the case of Mr. Ramon Negron. Mr. Negron is a U.S. citizen born and raised in Puerto Rico, a graduate of West Point, and a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve. Mr. Negron currently serves as a political economic officer at the U.S. Interests section in Havana, Cuba, which is a hardship post. Mr. Negron's next posting, to begin this summer, is as the Embassy Office Director in Basra, Iraq. It is neither sensible, nor fair, that under current law the State Department will not cover the cost of airfare so this U.S. citizen, U.S. soldier and U.S. diplomat can travel home to Puerto Rico to be with his family before leaving for the Middle East. H.R. 3658 will correct this disparity.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POE. I would inquire of the gentlewoman if she has any other speakers.

Ms. WATSON. I have no other speakers.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3658, to amend the Foreign Service Act of 1980 to permit rest and recuperation travel to United States territories for members of the Foreign Service, sponsored by my good friend and neighbor, Mr. FORTUÑO of Puerto Rico.

Mr. Speaker, the Foreign Service Act unfortunately is not consistent in the way it treats citizens from the mainland and those from the territories. While it allows for the State Department to pay for Foreign Service members to

return home, to any of the 50 states or U.S. territories, after being posted abroad, it only permits residents of the 50 states who are at hardship posts, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, to be granted R & R for a period of time while posted.

This bill, at its core, is about equal and fair treatment for residents of the U.S. territories. When most of us hear the word home, we have a clear picture in our head of where that is. But for these Foreign Service members, it is not that simple. Under current law, these diplomats must pay their own way if they want to visit their family and friends back home in the territories, while diplomats from the states have their travel costs covered.

Although these members are from a U.S. territory, they are our fellow citizens and commit their lives to the diplomatic causes. They join for the love of their country and risk their safety in dangerous posts.

The bill before us today would eliminate this unequal and unfair treatment between Foreign Service members who reside in the territories and those that reside in the states. I urge my colleagues to support passage of H.R. 3658.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3658.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL STRATEGY IN CHAD AND DARFUR

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1011) calling on the United States Government and the international community to promptly develop, fund, and implement a comprehensive regional strategy to protect civilians, facilitate humanitarian operations, contain and reduce violence, and contribute to conditions for sustainable peace and good governance in Chad, as well as in the wider region that includes the northern region of the Central African Republic and the Darfur region of Sudan, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows: