EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

KAZAKSTAN'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 16, 1999

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring to the attention of my colleagues concerns about the general prospects for democratization in Kazakstan, considering the disturbing news about the presidential elections in that country earlier this year. On January 10, 1999, Kazakstan held presidential elections, almost two years ahead of schedule. Incumbent President Nursultan Nazarbaev ran against three contenders, in the country's first nominally contested election. According to official results, Nazarbaev retained his office, garnering 81.7 percent of the vote. Communist Party leader Serokbolsyn Abdildin won 12 percent, Gani Kasymov 4.7 percent and Engels Gabbasov 0.7 percent. The Central Election Commission reported over 86 percent of eligible voters turned out to cast ballots.

Behind these facts—and by the way, none of the officially announced figures should be taken at face value—is a sobering story. Nazarbaev's victory was no surprise: the entire election was carefully orchestrated and the only real issue was whether his official vote tally would be in the 90s—typical for post-Soviet Central Asia dictatorships—or lower, which would have signaled some sensitivity to Western and OSCE sensibilities. Any suspense the election might have offered vanished when the Supreme Court in November upheld a lower court ruling barring the candidacy of Nazarbaev's sole possible challenger, former Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin, on whom many opposition activists have focused their hopes. The formal reason for his exclusion was both trivial and symptomatic: in October, Kazhegeldin had spoken at a meeting of an unregistered organization called ''For Free Elections.'' Addressing an unregistered organization is illegal in Kazakstan, and a presidential decree of May 1998 stipulated that individuals convicted of any crime or fined for administrative transgressions could not run for office for a year.

Of course, the snap election and the presidential decree deprived any real or potential challengers of the opportunity to organize a campaign. More important, most observers saw the decision as an indication of Nazarbaev's concerns about Kazakhstan's economic decline and his fears of running for reelection in 2000, when the situation will presumably be even much worse. Another reason to hold elections now was anxiety about uncertainties in Russia, where a new president, with whom Nazarbaev does not have long-established relations, will be elected in 2000 and may adopt a more aggressive attitude towards Kazakhstan than has Boris Yeltsin.

The exclusion of would-be candidates, along with the snap nature of the election, intimidation of voters, the ongoing attack on independent media and restrictions on freedom of assembly, moved the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to urge the election's postponement, as conditions for holding free and fair elections did not exist. Ultimately, ODIHR refused to send a full-fledged observer delegation, as it generally does, to monitor an election. Instead, ODIHR dispatched to Kazakhstan a small mission to follow and report on the process. The mission's assessment concluded that Kazakhstan's ''election process fell far short of the standards to which the Republic of Kazakhstan has committed itself as an OSCE participating State.'' That is an unusually strong statement for ODIHR.

Until the mid-1900s, even though President Nazarbaev dissolved two parliaments, tailored constitutions to his liking and was single-mindedly accumulating power, Kazakhstan still seemed a relatively reformist country, where various political parties could function and the media enjoyed some freedom. Moreover, considering the even more authoritarian regimes of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and the war and chaos in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan benefited by comparison.

In the last few years, however, the nature of Nazarbaev's regime has become ever more apparent. He has over the last decade concentrated all power in his hands, subordinating to himself all other branches and institutions of government. His determination to remain in office indefinitely, which could have been inferred by his actions, became explicit during the campaign, when he told a crowd, ''I would like to remain your president for the rest of my life.'' Not coincidentally, a constitutional amendment passed in early October conveniently removed the age limit of 65. Moreover, since 1996, Kazakhstan's authorities have co-opted, bought or crushed any independent media, effectively restoring censorship in the country. A crackdown on political parties and movements has accompanied the assault on the media, bringing Kazakhstan's overall level of repression closer to that of Uzbekistan and severely damaging Nazarbaev's reputation.

Despite significant U.S. strategic and economic interests in Kazakhstan, especially oil and pipeline issues, the State Department issued a series of critical statements after the announcement last October of pre-term elections. In fact, on November 23, Vice President Gore called President Nazarbaev to voice U.S. concerns about the election. The next day, the Supreme Court—which Nazarbaev controls completely—finally excluded Kazhegeldin. On January 12, the State Department echoed the ODIHR's harsh assessment of the election, adding that it had ''cast a shadow on bilateral relations.''

What's ahead? Probably more of the same. Parliamentary elections are expected in late 1999, although they may be held before schedule or put off another year. A new political party has been created as a vehicle for President Nazarbaev to tighten his grip on the legislature. Surprisingly, the Ministry of Justice on March 1 registered the Republican People's Party, headed by Akezhan Kazhegeldin, as well as another opposition party—probably in response to Western and especially American pressure. But even if they are allowed to compete for seats on an equal basis and even win some representation, parliament is sure to remain a very junior partner to the all-powerful executive.

Mr. Speaker, Kazakhstan's relative liberalism in the early 1990s had induced Central Asia watchers to hope that Uzbek and Turkmen-style repression was not inevitable for all countries in the region. Alas, the trends in Kazakhstan point the other way: Nursultan Nazarbaev is heading in the direction of his dictatorial counterparts in Tashkent and Ashgabat. He is clearly resolved to be president for life, to prevent any institutions or individuals from challenging his grip on power and to make sure that the trappings of democracy he has permitted remain just that. The Helsinki Commission, which I chair, plans to hold hearings on the situation in Kazakhstan and Central Asia to discuss what options the United States has to convey the Congress' disappointment and to encourage developments in Kazakhstan and the region toward genuine democratization.

HONORING ANGELA M. BARTHEN

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 16, 1999

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a local hero from western Wisconsin. I want to honor Angela M. Barthen who took courageous action to aid another citizen.

For the past three years the Eau Claire Fire Fighters Local Union 487, in conjunction with the Eau Claire Fire Department, have recognized area residents who acted bravely in emergency situations. The recipients of the Citizen Community Involvement Awards are citizens who put the safety and well being of their neighbors ahead of other concerns in a time of need.

Angela M. Barthen is one of those extraordinary citizens. It was about 6:50 a.m. on November 17, when Angela Barthen awoke to a man outside her window yelling for help. She looked outside and across the street she saw that the first floor of her neighbor Terry Olevson's house was on fire. Terry and his two sons, Ryan 11 and Tyler 9 were trapped on the second floor of the burning house. Angela quickly grabbed her cellular phone to call for help and then proceeded downstairs to her garage where she had an extension ladder. She grabbed the ladder and went across the street and extended it to reach the second floor. Terry Olevson helped his sons out of the window and on to the ladder to safety. Terry followed his sons down the ladder. Angela without hesitation was able to respond quickly to her neighbors' needs and as a result was able to assist in saving their lives.

On behalf of all the citizens of western Wisconsin I ask that the United States House of Representatives recognize Angela M. Barthen for her courage and thank her for being a concerned and giving community citizen.

A TRIBUTE TO REVEREND RODNEY ANNIS AND HIS CONGREGATION

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 16, 1999

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to congratulate Reverend Rodney Annis and his congregation at First Baptist Church on the upcoming expansion to their present facility.

First Baptist Church has been a prominent fixture in the Fosterburg community since its founding 142 years ago, when a group of German immigrants established this farming community. Today, a 14,000-square-foot addition is scheduled to be made to the present church, providing offices and a recreation center for a multigenerational congregation.

This addition will allow First Baptist Church to both continue and expand a tradition of service that started almost a century and a half ago.

Like you, I am pleased to witness First Baptist Church's leadership and growth in the Fosterburg community.

REPORT FROM INDIANA—ADAMS COUNTY

HON. DAVID M. McINTOSCH

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 16, 1999

Mr. MCINTOSCH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give my ''Report from Indiana'' where I honor distinguished fellow Hoosiers who are actively engaged in their communities helping others. Today, I want to mention a true gentleman from Adams County, Indiana who I had the privilege of meeting recently.

Mr. Speaker, it has always been my strong belief that individuals and communities can do a better job of caring for those who need help in our society than the Federal Government. The wonderfully kind and committed Hoosiers who I have met traveling around Indiana has not changed my view.

Ruthie and I have met hundreds of individuals who are committed to making our communities a better place in which to live and raise our children—we call them ''Hoosier Heroes.''

I met a genuine Hoosier Hero in Adams County, Indiana recently. He's Alan Converset, a sales manager at WZBD Adams County Radio. He and his wife of 32 years, Judy, have seven children.

Alan epitomizes a ''Hoosier Hero.'' He has worked tirelessly on behalf of the less-fortunate. Alan served as president of the Decatur rotary club, and Chairman of the United Way golf outing to raise money for those who need a helping hand from someone who cares. He also works on the March of Dimes Walk America Committee.

Alan's work has given so many people the most precious gift possible, hope. He doesn't do it for the pay, which is zilch; he does it for the smiles and laughter. He is a true hero in my book, doing good works for others with no other motive than Christian charity.

Alan deserves the gratitude of his county, state, and nation and I thank him here today on the floor of the House of Representatives.

DAKOTA WATER RESOURCES ACT OF 1999

HON. EARL POMEROY

OF NORTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 16, 1999

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Dakota Water Resources Act of 1999. My colleagues, Senator CONRAD and Senator DORGAN, are introducing a companion bill in the Senate today. This bill represents an unprecedented agreement among North Dakota's congressional delegation, the States' elected leaders and a variety of State organzations.

After years of negotiations, this legislation embodies a bipartisan effort to meet the comprehensive water needs of North Dakota, including the State's four Indian reservations. Without a dependable source of quality water the State's potential for economic development will be crippeld.

The Dakota Water Resources Act amends the Garrison Diversion Reformulation act of 1986 and would refocus the project from large-scale irrigation to the delivery of safe water. Throughout North Dakota, people realize that the project as outliend under the 1986 act will not happen, and they support the more affordable, realistic provisions that would meet the State's water needs.

Right now, much of the State lacks a supply of quality water. Many communities have unresolved Safe Drinking water Act compliance problems. Rural water systems and regional water supply systems have been formed to meed the water needs, but much more needs to be done to complete those systems.

To meet cities and towns' needs for safe water, the act authorizes $300 million for municiapal, rural, and industrial water systems (MR&I) projects. It allows the State to provide grants or loans to MR&I systems. This means the State could establish a revolving loan fund and continue to use funds from repaid loans for MR&I systems.

In conjunction with the State's need for MR&I, it is important to note the additional authorization of $200 million which would provide for MR&I on the four Indian reservations. Additionally, authorization for irrigation on the reservations is included in this legislation, along with a provision which gives tribes the flexibility to determine which sites to irrigate within the reservation. The Standing Rock, Fort Berthold, Turtle Mountain, and Fort Totten Indian Reservations would finally be able to meet their long overdue water needs with these provisions.

Another major feature of this legislation which has not been realized under the 1986 act is the ability to meet the water needs of the Red River Valley in North Dakota. This would provide $200 million for the State to choose the method of delivering Missouri River water to the Red River Valley. The communities of Fargo, and Grand Forks, as well as other towns up and down the valley would have a reliable source of water for continued growth in population and commercial activity.

Any project that would be completed under the act must comply with the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909. We fully intend, and are required, to comply with the 1909 treaty between the United States and Canada when considering completion of any component of the project.

In addition to meeting the State and the Indian reservation's comprehensive and future water needs, this act involves significant environmental achievements. As nature resources trust would receive $25 million to preserve, enhance, restore, and manage wetlands and associated wildlife habitat, grassland conservation and riparian areas in the State.

Other sections of the act include authorization for the State to develop water conservation programs using MR&I funding. A bank stabilization study along the Missouri River below the Garrison Dam would be authorized. Also, the current Lonetree Reservoir would be designated as a wildlife conservation area.

All of these provisions and the entire Dakota Water Resources Act have been worked out with painstaking detail among numerous groups. I would like to personally thank the Senators from North Dakota, Senator KENT CONRAD and Senator DORGAN and their very capable staff, as well as North Dakota's State engineer and counsel, for their tireless work on the extraordinary agreement.

HONORING MARY BETH CLARK AND NORMA STAFNE

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 16, 1999

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to two local heroes from western Wisconsin. I want to honor Mary Beth Clark and Norma Stafne who took courageous action to aid another citizen.

For the past three years the Eau Claire Fire Fighters Local Union 487, in conjunction with the Eau Claire Fire Department, have recognized area students who acted bravely in emergency situations. The recipients of the Citizen Community Involvement Awards are citizens who put the safety and well being of their neighbors ahead of other concerns in a time of need.

Mary Beth Clark and Norma Stafne are two of those extraordinary citizens. Mary Beth and Norma are nurses employed in the Operating Room of Luther Hospital in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. On September 29, 1998, these two women had the unfortunate chance of meeting when they both stopped to assist a man who had been in a motorcycle accident. Both women spotted the motorcycle driver lying on the side of the road. He was bleeding and not breathing well, so they rolled him onto his back and administered CPR. They remained with the driver, soothing him while they waited for help. When the paramedics arrived Mary Beth helped load him into the ambulance. She found it hard to separate herself from him but the rescue team reassured her that they would take good care of him. The calming influence