

to bring donated toys to RFK Stadium and receive a free set of signed player cards. The toy drive is just one of the United's four community outreach programs. Kicks for Kids provides 10,000 disadvantaged youth with free game tickets, meal vouchers and promotional items; United donates much-needed items such as youth soccer equipment and school supplies to area non-profit organizations; and team coaches and players run six free children's soccer clinics each year.

Mr. Speaker, I ask Congress to recognize D.C. United for its spirit and excellence on and off the field, as the nation's capital celebrates the Major League Soccer Champions.

COMMEMORATING THE CONSULATE GENERAL OF JAPAN AT KANSAS CITY

HON. KAREN MCCARTHY

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Ms. MCCARTHY of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commemorate the services of the Consulate General of Japan at Kansas City to the six-state region of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota and to note, with sadness, the closing of the Consulate as of December 31, 2004.

Since the Japanese Pavilion at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair first intrigued and delighted tens of thousands of visitors, the links between Japan and the heart of the American Midwest have grown in strength and diversity. As investment, trade and educational exchanges have increased over the last 50 years, so too have the number and scope of contacts and contracts between these six states and Japan.

The Japanese government has been proud to host Governors from the six-state region as honored guests, along with United States Senators and Representatives, business leaders and leading scholars. In return, Ambassadors, Diet members, and even the Emperor and Empress of Japan have visited the heart of America. But there is much more to the relationship than VIP visits and official statements. The Consulate General of Japan at Kansas City has served the six-state region for 25 years in promoting economic development, fostering cultural exchange and understanding, and in providing consular services to the Japanese citizens and U.S. citizens in this region.

More than one hundred Japanese companies have operations within the region and the Consulate has been a significant factor in facilitating and encouraging such investments to the economic benefit of the region through increased employment and economic activity. These companies employ over six thousand Americans. Exports out of the region to Japan exceed \$900 million per year.

The Consulate has actively promoted and sponsored cultural fairs and activities throughout the region to foster better cultural understanding and exchange. Examples of cultural activities are the Annual St. Louis Japanese Festival and the Greater Kansas City Japan Festival. The Consulate has assisted almost three hundred regional educators to experience Japan first hand through the Fulbright Memorial Teachers Program. Over eight hun-

dred Americans have participated in the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program. Nearly 100 university and graduate students have participated in scholarship programs provided by the Ministry of Education of Japan. Currently, almost 2,000 Japanese university students are enrolled in public and private universities throughout the 6-state region. In addition, the Consulate has coordinated cultural gifts in the form of gardens, gateways, and statuary to numerous local communities. The Consulate has supported and promoted 28 different sister cities and sister state relationships.

The Consulate has provided consular services to the 4,500 Japanese nationals living in the six-state region and, over the years, the Consulate has issued more than 30,000 visas to American citizens wishing to work, study, or live in Japan.

Over the last 25 years, the Consulate has been active in working to resolve trade issues specific to the region and, as an example, the current Consul General, Takao Shibata, has been actively involved in efforts to resolve beef trade limitations imposed out of concern for BSE exposure.

Since arriving in Kansas City in July 2002, Consul General Takao Shibata and his lovely wife Mieko Shibata have become a valuable part of our community. They will be missed by me and the citizens of Missouri's Fifth Congressional District.

The people of Kansas City and the six-state region regret the closing of the Consulate, but we look forward to a continuation of our close relationship with Japan, and the provision of consular services by the Consulate General of Japan at Chicago.

STAKES IN THE UKRAINIAN ELECTION

HON. JAMES A. LEACH

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, history unfolds at an unpredictable pace. While we've been preoccupied with "Iraq and our own elections at home, dramatic events have shaken Ukraine for the past fortnight. They must not be overlooked or their implications misunderstood.

Once again in the former Soviet empire, we are witnessing the courage of the human soul and the lengths to which oppressed people will go to seize freedom.

In Ukraine, a country besieged in the last century by two of mankind's greatest 'isms' of hate—fascism and communism—a populace has risen against another kind of 'ism'—corruptionism. We are now witness to the power of the individual standing up against forces of injustice and oppression. We are also witness to the continuing saga of a people aspiring to shape its own destiny, clear of the shadows cast for centuries by powerful neighbors.

At issue is the question of freedom and its transforming effects. Democracy implies more than elections. It implies integrity of process, and when that integrity is lacking, the charade of stolen elections can be more debilitating than unabashed authoritarian rule.

There are geostrategic as well as philosophical dimensions to the Ukraine situation that need to be understood in the broad context of the region and its history.

Geopolitically, Ukraine is a large expanse about the size of Texas, with a population of nearly 48 million people, stretching from the wheat fields along a line between Warsaw and Moscow to the palm trees of Yalta, on the Black Sea. The Ukraine was the breadbasket of the old Soviet Union; today, it is an economic and political hinge between the European Union and NATO on the one hand, and the Russian Federation and the Asian landmass, on the other. The western, Ukrainian-speaking half of the country looks to Warsaw and Berlin, Paris and Washington; eastern Ukraine, with its Russian-speaking population, looks more to Moscow. Language creates cultural divisions, but the forces of political cohesion are strong. Both population groups are committed to independence and undiluted Ukrainian sovereignty.

So, in addition to democracy, at issue is Russian imperialism. Instability in Ukraine can only strengthen the hand of an increasingly authoritarian Kremlin. By contrast, a genuinely free election in Ukraine would not only enhance national solidarity but encourage democratic forces in the rest of the former Soviet Union, not least within Russia itself.

Those committed to democracy anywhere in the world should not hesitate to identify with aspirations of the Ukrainian people. Ukraine may be on the distant side of Europe from the United States, but our countries are bound by a common heritage and an inalienable urge for freedom. As Taras Shevchenko, the 19th century Ukrainian poet, wrote: "It makes no difference to me / If I shall live or not in Ukraine / Or whether any one shall think / Of me mid' foreign snow and rain / It makes no difference to me . . . It makes great difference to me / That evil folk and wicked men / Attack our Ukraine, once so free / And rob and plunder at will / That makes great difference to me."

So far courageous Ukrainians have succeeded in halting a fraudulent election. Sensing political winds blowing from a new direction, the once docile supreme court has, startlingly, done an honest job, erasing an injustice and calling for a new election. But the outcome is still in doubt. There is plenty of opportunity before the court-ordered runoff for status quo authorities to attempt, once more, to subvert the democratic process. There can be little doubt they will try to do so. For the KGB alumni who dominate the Kremlin, Ukrainian democracy is more than an embarrassment. It is a threat to their power and wealth and, for some, to their dream of restoring the Russian empire.

No one wishes to poison relations with Russia, but free elections are not an issue on which the United States should or, indeed, can compromise without sully its principles. Nor need we respect the threat of those who are so fearful of losing power that they hint of promoting a division of Ukraine into western and eastern parts. Separatism mis-serves the Ukrainian people. It is a trend that Russia, grappling with Chechnya and other non-Russian regions, can only endorse at great risk.

Differing with Russia may be politically awkward, but once the flame of freedom is ignited, the U.S. and other western democracies have no ethical choice except to stand up in support of the people of Ukraine. The march to freedom in Poland, Czechoslovakia and other former communist-bloc countries has shown that the risk of an outbreak of destabilizing violence is far greater in situations where the