

awareness and knowledge of the traditions and values that have formed our Nation, and to enhance appreciation of our civic institutions.

Because contact with the humanities encourages individuals and our Nation to seek knowledge and wisdom, to reflect deeply on issues, and to make sense of and find meaning in our cultural heritage, the mission of the NEH continues to be a worthy national enterprise.

I extend my congratulations to the NEH for its 40 years of service to the American people.

REMARKS IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE  
RESOLUTION 388

**HON. DAN BURTON**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 29, 2005*

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the House of Representatives considered House Resolution 388, a resolution condemning the gross human rights violations committed by the Cuban regime, and expressing the support of this House for the right of the Cuban people to exercise their fundamental political and civil liberties. Unfortunately due to scheduled Committee hearings I was unable to be on the floor during debate on this extremely important resolution. As chairman of the International Relations Committee Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere—and a long-standing critic of the Castro regime—and co-sponsor of the resolution, I want to take this opportunity to express my strong support for H. Res. 388. I would also like to thank my colleague from Florida, Congressman LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART—a true champion for the Cuban people—for introducing this resolution and once again highlighting the atrocious human rights violations the Cuban people continue to suffer at the hands of Castro's oppressive regime.

Since Castro assumed control of Cuba on January 1, 1959, fundamental human rights and basic living conditions have deteriorated tremendously. Most Cuban people live every day in fear of their government, thousands of whom risk their lives every year to flee the communist regime by any means necessary—even attempting to brave the hazardous 90-mile crossing between the United States and Cuba on makeshift rafts.

For a time, they tried to pretend that Mr. Castro had changed his ways, but events in Cuba over the past two years have reopened the eyes of the world community to the true evil nature of the Castro Regime. For example, Castro created a constitutional amendment permanently making socialism the official form of state government, and positioning himself to remain in power until he is either forcibly removed or deceased. In addition to these totalitarian mandates, he has staged the most sweeping crackdown on peaceful advocates of change in the history of Cuba.

On March 18, 2003, Fidel Castro ordered the arrest of many writers, poets, librarians, and pro-democracy activists in a large-scale operation to stifle any movement against his regime. Subsequently, some of the targeted individuals were released, but 75 remained in jail to be tried for their "crimes" against the country, citing Article 91 of Cuba's Penal Code

that states, "(anyone) who in the interest of a foreign state, commits an act with the objective of damaging the independence or territorial integrity of the state of Cuba." The Cuban government accused the dissidents of engaging in activities that could be perceived as damaging to Cuba's internal order, and/or perceived as encouraging to United States embargoes against the country.

The list of Cuban detainees published by Amnesty International in their "Essential Measures" brief of 2003 reveals some striking information. Among the detained are 23 people over the age of 50, as well as 5 others who are more than 60 years of age. I wonder what dissenting activities they were engaging in that would earn them a collective 1,242 years in prison. These peaceful pro-democracy advocates, whom Mr. Castro likes to call dissidents or "enemies of the revolution," were convicted for activities such as: attending an assembly to promote civil society, possessing membership in the Committee on Cuban Human Rights, or publishing documents to be disseminated abroad that represent a clear means of implementing the measures established in Article IV of LIBERTAD, also known as the Helms-Burton Act, which would increase the United States sanctions and blockades against Cuba.

Three of the 75 activists rounded up during the regime's Spring 2003 crackdown on dissent are currently engaging in a hunger strike to protest the deplorable conditions of their confinement; contaminated food and water, excessive heat, filthy conditions and medical mistreatment.

Christian Liberation Movement member José Daniel Ferrer, who has not eaten for more than 22 days. He is serving a 25-year sentence for promoting the Varela Project, a constitutional petition calling for free elections, civil liberties and freedom for political prisoners. He recently was placed in a prison unit with dangerous common criminals, a tactic that Cuban authorities often use to harass and injure political prisoners.

Víctor Rolando Arroyo, an independent journalist and librarian, has been on a hunger strike for more than 16 days. In 2000 he spent 6 months in jail for giving out toys to children on Three Kings Day. Now he is serving a 26-year sentence. His wife says that he has been hospitalized. He has refused forced feeding and is severely dehydrated.

Félix Navarro, a democracy advocate and Varela Project activist, has shared the hunger strike in solidarity with Mr. Arroyo, who is in the same prison. Mr. Navarro is serving a 25-year term.

Just this past July, the Castro regime renewed its efforts to stamp out the pro-democracy movement.

On July 13, 2005, the Cuban Government detained 24 human rights activists who were participating in a solemn event in remembrance of the victims of the tugboat massacre of innocent civilians by the Cuban government on July 13, 1994. Human rights activists Rene Montes de Oca, Emilio Leiva Perez, Camilo Cairo Falcon, Manuel Perez Soira, Roberto Guerra Perez, and Lazaro Alonso Roman remain incarcerated from the July 13, 2005, event and face trumped up charges of "disorderly conduct."

On July 22, 2005, Members of the pro-democracy opposition in Cuba sought to demonstrate in a peaceful and orderly manner in

front of the French Embassy in Havana, on behalf of the liberation of all Cuban political prisoners, and to protest the current policy of the European Union toward the Cuban Government. The Cuban regime mobilized its repressive state security apparatus to intimidate and harass, and eventually arrest and detain many of those who were planning on attending the peaceful protest. These leaders in the struggle for freedom in Cuba continue to be detained without cause.

The Cuban regime has also arrested more than 400 young Cubans, from late 2004 through June of 2005, as a "measure of pre-delinquent security."

The facts are undeniable; the Castro regime is just as committed today to repressing attempts by the Cuban people to bring democratic change to the island and denying the Cuban people their universally recognized liberties, including freedom of speech, association, movement, and the press as it was in 1959. That is why H.R. 388 is so important; because it sends a strong message to the Castro regime that this House will not forget—and it will not let the world community forget—those people who are suffering and dying in Cuban prisons for the so-called crime of speaking out against the injustices perpetrated by Castro and his henchmen.

Mr. Speaker—although I am very concerned about the state of democracy throughout the Western Hemisphere—as it stands today, Cuba is the only nation in the hemisphere that is a complete dictatorship. As U.S. service men and women put their lives on the line to bring freedom and democracy to people around the world who have long suffered under the hand of tyranny, we only need to look at Cuba to see what can happen when any Nation shuns democracy and subjugates itself to the whims of dictatorship.

I believe that because of the ills inflicted upon Cuba by the Castro regime, the transition from economic stagnation and political oppression to a democratic society built around the principles of respect for the rule of law and basic human rights—with a free economy—will be a challenging process, but it is an attainable endeavor. I have hope that there will be a day when the light of democracy shines in Havana. Until that day, I say to Mr. Castro—we will never forget.

HONORING THE AUGUSTUS  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

**HON. JIM GERLACH**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 29, 2005*

Mr. GERLACH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Augustus Lutheran Church in Trappe, Pennsylvania on the occasion of their 275th anniversary.

The Augustus Lutheran Congregation was founded with its first baptism on May 8, 1730. From there, the first church was built. Originally described by an early Church press release as a "shrine of Lutheranism," the Augustus Lutheran Church has diligently served its community since 1743. The first church building was constructed by its first pastor, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg. Its construction, according to church documents, marks the beginning of the Lutheran movement in America.