

services to unemployed and underemployed women—to help them get decent jobs with a living wage.

This nonprofit organization provides an extremely valuable service to corporations and managers who are trying to develop and support successful skills-development strategies for African-American women. Working in partnership with executives, BCW has helped improve the lives of countless women from corporate executives to entrepreneurs.

Over the last two decades, more than 10,000 women have benefited from the service of Black Career Women.

Black Career Women has been helping the African-American women in the Cincinnati area and throughout the Nation achieve the goals of self-help and self-determination. They deserve the praise of all people who believe in diversity, economic progress, and independence for working people.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in extending our warmest congratulations on their 20th anniversary. They are making a big difference for the better in the life of the Cincinnati area and the entire nation.●

RECOGNITION OF HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

● Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I am proud to be able to speak today, as many of my colleagues have done recently, on the significance of Hispanic Heritage Month, being commemorated from September 15 through October 15. For almost 30 years, we as a nation have, in this way, formally acknowledged and celebrated the contributions Hispanic Americans have made and are making to our country.

Mr. President, in my home State of Texas, Hispanics are an intrinsic and dynamic part of our history, culture, economy, and civic life. From El Paso to Texarkana, and from Amarillo to Brownsville, over 6 million Latinos in Texas contribute immeasurably to making the Lone Star State the unique and wonderful place it is. Whether they trace their ancestry to the earliest Spanish settlers in Texas or have recently immigrated to this country, individually and collectively Hispanics have made our State and our Nation a richer place in which to live.

For at least 250 of the last 400 years, Hispanic heritage was synonymous with Texas heritage. Since the first Spanish landing at the mouth of the Rio Grande by Alonso Alvarez de Pineda in 1519, the Spanish, and later the Mexicans bravely began to colonize the vast and rugged land known as Texas. To this day, Hispanics continue to contribute their boundless determination and unique perspective to every facet of life in Texas and the Nation. Hispanic Americans enrich our lives in virtually every field of endeavor: politics, business, science, education, art, music, film, cuisine, and countless other fields.

In my home State, we recently lost two of our greatest native Texas His-

panics, Congressman Frank Tejeda and musical artist Selena Perez. In their own way, both of these individuals demonstrated astonishing determination, which in turn reflected the vibrancy and strength of the Hispanic community: Frank Tejeda, who dropped out of high school from the south side of San Antonio and went on to distinguish himself in military service in Vietnam, in higher education, in the business world, and as a dedicated public servant; and Selena who, at the young age of 23 became a pop icon, entertaining audiences in her hometown of Corpus Christi and throughout the world with her unique brand of "Tejano" music. Although the lives of these two great Texans ended far too soon, they will forever inspire the tens of thousands of young Hispanics who will look to them and to the many other Hispanic leaders in our country as symbols of what can be achieved through hard work, ambition, and the support of the community.

As a Texas and as a member of the Senate Republican Conference Task Force on Hispanic Affairs, I remain committed to ensuring that the American dream continues to exist and to come true for all Americans. Through my activities on this task force and in the Senate, as well as through daily contact with my constituents, I have worked hard to ensure that the needs and concerns of the Hispanic community are heard and responded to. While we all share the goal of improving our country and the opportunities for our children, there are economic and other concerns that disproportionately impact the Hispanic community. I believe we in Congress must continue to address those concerns by pursuing policies that promote education, health care, urban renewal, and a business environment that encourages entrepreneurial activity and risk taking.

There are certainly challenges ahead. With so many Hispanic-owned businesses starting up around the country, access to capital is a critical need. I have supported and continue to support lending and contracting programs that offer fledgling businesses the opportunity to launch themselves—and to continue to soar. I am also working to give small business people and other Americans relief from excessive levels of taxation and Federal regulation.

On the eve of a new millennium, it is vital that we remain a people united, respectful of the individual, the family, and our country as a whole. In this same spirit, it is also important to inform ourselves and our children of the sacrifices and contributions that have been made by our ancestors on our behalf. Hispanics have extremely good reason to be proud of that heritage and to rejoice in it.

Mr. President, I am pleased to be able to highlight today the contribution of Hispanics to the exquisite mosaic that is America the Beautiful, America la linda.●

PROTECTING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WORLDWIDE

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to draw the attention of my colleagues to an article I recently read on the subject of religious freedom. The author, Mr. Philip Peters, a senior fellow at the Alexis de Tocqueville Institution, offers a keen assessment of the tragedy that currently faces Christians who are being persecuted in their homelands. In his article, "Persecution and Redemption," Mr. Peters makes specific reference to the treatment of Christians and other victims of religious persecution living in the former Soviet Union.

It is unfortunate but true that tens of thousands of people in the former Soviet Union cannot practice their religion without encountering hostility from their government. As the author points out, "About one fourth of Russia's regional governments have laws restricting religious activity."

I agree with Mr. Peters' assessment that refugees from the former Soviet Union "deserve the support of anyone concerned about Christians and other victims of religious persecution around the world." I have joined with Senators KENNEDY, HATCH, and LEAHY in urging President Clinton to restore the refugee ceiling on refugees from the former Soviet Union in fiscal year 1998 to its level in fiscal year 1997.

Mr. President, I ask that Mr. Peters' article be printed in the RECORD.

The article follows:

[From the Washington Times, Sept. 25, 1997]

PERSECUTION AND REDEMPTION

(By Philip Peters)

This year, Washington has caught on to a fact that human rights activists have known for some time: Persecution of Christians is on the rise around the world. This issue was at the center of the debate on China's trade status, and the State Department issued a special report on it in July.

Now, the question is whether anything will be done about it.

New legislation introduced by Sen. Arlen Specter and Rep. Frank Wolf, the Freedom From Religious Persecution Act, is so laden with new economic sanctions and foreign policy prescriptions that it has drawn the opposition of the Clinton administration, business, and pro-trade groups, and is destined for prolonged debate.

While that debate goes on, four other senators have proposed a far more immediate and concrete way for the U.S. to help.

On Sept. 10, Sens. Spencer Abraham, Edward Kennedy, Orrin Hatch, and Patrick Leahy called on the administration to abandon its current plan to cut next year's admissions of refugees from the former Soviet Union. They deserve the support of anyone concerned about Christians and other victims of religious persecution around the world.

The State Department wants to cut admissions from the former Soviet Union to 21,000, even though 27,000 were admitted this year. The senators propose instead 30,000 admissions from the former Soviet Union, with no reductions in planned admissions from other regions.

This proposal is modest. The Clinton administration has driven refugee admissions down 40 percent, and if the senators' proposal is accepted, total 1998 admissions

would be 87,000, far lower than the 100,000-plus refugees admitted annually from 1989 to 1995.

The senators' letter has ignited a debate among administration aides, who must soon decide on the number of refugees to admit in 1998. They need look no further than the administration's own reports on religious persecution in the former Soviet Union. These reports document that:

Legislation passed last week by the lower house of Russia's parliament would require the registration of new religious groups, and would require these groups to wait up to 15 years to obtain full legal status. During this period, these groups would be barred from importing or distributing religious materials, and it would be difficult for them to own property or have bank accounts. This bill does not apply to Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism or Buddhism; instead, it would affect faiths newer to Russia, especially evangelical Christians. President Yeltsin vetoed the bill once but now seems prepared to sign it.

About one fourth of Russia's regional governments have laws restricting religious activity.

Russian authorities have made Christian missionary work difficult or impossible in some regions, and they have made recovery of property difficult for non-Orthodox faiths, including the Catholic church.

As a result, Pentecostals and other evangelical Christians now account for about half the refugees from the former Soviet Union.

The State Department argues against any increase in refugee admissions. In spite of conditions in the former Soviet Union, it claims that interest in the U.S. refugee program is declining, even though 6,000 more were admitted this year than it proposes to admit next year.

But even if less than 30,000 admissions slots for the former Soviet Union are needed in 1998, the increase in overall admissions would give the administration greater flexibility to address other crises. This year, the administration exceeded its planned admissions from the former Yugoslavia by 25 percent. If the implementation of the Dayton accords continues to prove difficult, the need to resettle refugees from this region will grow. And, following the historical pattern in other refugee crises, American action to resettle refugees from the former Yugoslavia will cause European and other countries to accept greater numbers of these refugees for resettlement.

Last year, the House and Senate defeated legislative attempts to slash refugee admissions. The senators' action is one more demonstration of the bipartisan consensus supporting American action to help refugees fleeing oppression. President Clinton should view their proposal as an opportunity to help victims of religious oppression, and to revitalize American humanitarian leadership around the globe.●

ENERGY AND WATER APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE REPORT

● Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, in the Energy and Water Appropriations Conference Report, which this body may consider as early as tomorrow, is a provision that encourages the Corps of Engineers to make a decision on permits for a 50-foot dock extension at the Port of Seattle.

Over the past several years the Port of Seattle, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, and Corps of Engineers have been involved in a debate over the replace-

ment of a 350-foot wood dock with a 400-foot concrete dock at the Port of Seattle. In an effort to move this process forward and break the deadlock between the parties, I included report language in the Energy and Water Appropriations Conference Report asking the Corps of Engineers promptly to consider the permit issue.

Due to the continued cooperation and hard work of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and Port of Seattle, an agreement was reached this past Friday evening over the dock extension. I would like to praise the judgment and cooperation of the Port of Seattle and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe both. Their willingness to work together has not only averted a protracted conflict but also provide a positive example for other local governments and tribal governments in reaching agreements under similar circumstances.

As a result of this agreement, the language which I included in the Energy and Water Appropriation Conference Report is redundant and no longer necessary. I have discussed this point with Congressman NORM DICKS in the House and would like the official record to show that both the House and Senate agree that this language is effectively voided by the agreement. Furthermore, I would like to request that the final version of the Energy and Water Conference Report that will be considered by the Senate not contain this language. In any event, that language should be treated as having no effect.●

JUDICIAL NOMINEES

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise this evening to say a few words in response to President Clinton's radio address over the weekend about the pace of the Senate's consideration of judicial nominees. In that address, the President chided Members of this body for what he described as "a vacancy crisis" in our Federal courts ostensibly resulting from politically motivated scrutiny of his nominees.

I will respond for a moment to the myths and distortions that the Clinton administration has engaged in; specifically the myth that there is a vacancy crisis in the Federal judiciary and the myth that there is a Republican slowdown of judicial confirmations.

There is no vacancy crisis. So far this year, the Senate has confirmed 18 of President Clinton's judges. This brings the total number of Clinton nominees on the Federal bench to 222—that is nearly 30 percent of the active Federal judiciary. There are more sitting Federal judges today than there were through virtually all of the Reagan and Bush administrations. As of September 26, 1997, just 3 days ago, there were 750 active Federal judges. Now, this figure excludes the approximately 79 senior status judges who continue to preside over and hear cases.

Yet at this point in the 101st Congress when George Bush was President

and in the 102d Congress when George Bush was President, by contrast, when President Bush's nominees were being processed by a Democrat-controlled Senate, there were only 711 and 716 active judges, respectively. We have 750 as we stand here today.

Keep in mind that the Clinton administration is on record as stating that 63 vacancies—a vacancy rate just over 7 percent—is considered virtual full employment of the Federal judiciary, and they were right. Ninety-four vacancies, the current vacancy rate, is a vacancy rate of about 11 percent. So ask yourselves this question, how can a 4-percent rise in the vacancy rate from 7 percent to 11 percent convert full employment into a crisis?

Moreover, let's compare today's vacancy level, 94, with those that existed during the early 1990's when George Bush was President and the Democrats controlled the Senate. In May 1997 there were 148 Federal judicial vacancies, and in May 1992 there were 117 Federal judicial vacancies. I remember those years. I don't recall one comment about it in the media. I don't recall one television show mentioning it. I don't recall one writer writing about it. Nobody seemed to care. But all of a sudden it has become a crisis today with less vacancies at this time than the Democrat-controlled Senate and Judiciary Committee at that time had.

I should also note that at the end of the Bush administration, there were 115 vacancies compared to the 65 at the end of the last Presidential election; 115 vacancies, for which 55 nominees were pending before the Judiciary Committee. None of these 55 nominees even received the courtesy of a hearing.

I have heard all the yelling and screaming here on the floor and in the public media today and by the President on Saturday. In short, I think it is unfair and frankly inaccurate to report that the Republican Congress has created a vacancy crisis in our courts.

Now, it is also incorrect when we suggest there is a deliberate Republican slowdown of the nominations process. The President pointed out on Saturday, correctly I might add, that he has sent up to the Senate nearly 70 nominees to fill vacant seats on the Federal bench, 68 to be exact. By way of comparison, he notes that the Senate has confirmed fewer than 20 of his nominees, suggesting undue Senate delay in the face of an abundance of qualified nominees.

But the picture the President paints is less than complete. Of the 68 judicial nominees submitted to the Judiciary Committee this year, nearly half of them, 30 in all, have been nominated just since July 1 of this year. So, factoring in the Senate's August recess, when we were gone for better than 30 days, the Judiciary Committee has had scarcely 2 months to consider virtually one-half of the President's nominees this year.

Perhaps, then, it is fair to say the delay has been a factor in the face of