

people who will be participating in the National Day of Conscience To End Child Labor and Sweatshop Abuses. On Saturday, October 4, 1997, people across our Nation and across the globe will join in a call to end child labor and sweatshops and to kick off the Holiday Shopping Season of Conscience.

As part of a 3-month national and international mobilization beginning on Saturday, October 4, 1997, thousands of organizations across our country will participate in vigils, rallies, walks for conscience, signing petitions, distributing of leaflets, demonstrations, and services. The National Day of Conscience will inaugurate the Holiday Shopping Season of Conscience—a national movement to encourage consumers to reward companies which turn away from sweatshops and labor exploitation and penalize those which continue to violate human rights.

Many people assume that the exploitation of children and the existence of sweatshops is a problem only in poorer countries or that it is a problem which does not exist in this country any longer. But many workers here in the United States still labor under exploitative conditions—long hours, subminimum wages, unsafe workplaces, and violations of child labor.

It will surprise many to learn that the United States ranks first among affluent nations in the rate of injury and death to working minors. Annually there are over 200,000 injuries of children and young people in our Nation's workplaces and 100 deaths among our working youth. In agriculture, 23,500 children are injured each year and more than 300 children die each year working in the fields. We cannot continue to allow our children's lives to be risked in hazardous, dangerous, or illegal work.

It will also surprise many to learn that sweatshops have returned in the United States in numbers and forms that are similar to the deplorable conditions that existed at the turn of the century. In 1995, American were shocked when investigators exposed the slave-like conditions of garment workers in El Monte, CA. Who can forget the young female immigrants from Thailand who were enslaved and forced to live in a compound encircled by razor wire? These women were forced to work 20-hour days in deplorable slave-like conditions for as little as \$1 per hour. The El Monte sweatshop, it was later revealed, made apparel for some of this country's top fashion labels.

Mr. Speaker, the El Monte case unfortunately is not an isolated instance. The GAO recently reported that 2,000 of 6,000 garment shops in New York City and most of the 5,000 shops in Los Angeles operate in violation of minimum wage, overtime, or child labor laws. The National Day of Conscience and the Holiday Shopping Season of Conscience are an effort to make consumers aware of companies which are the worst sweatshop and child labor violators.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that Americans knowingly purchase products made by children or by a worker who is forced to work under harsh and degrading sweatshop conditions. The great value of the National Day of Conscience and the Holiday Season of Conscience is that through wide participation and education consumers can be encouraged to avoid purchasing goods produced in sweatshops and by illegal child labor, and we can bring about an end to sweatshops and exploitation of our children.

Mr. Speaker, we can do much more to make our Nation's children's lives safer and more secure as they enter the work force. My good friend and colleague, TOM CAMPBELL, along with another 38 of our colleagues, have joined together in supporting comprehensive domestic child labor law reform. This legislation, H.R. 1870, the Young American Workers' Bill of Rights Act, sets new minimum standards for protecting children in the workplace and assuring time for academic achievement during the school year, while still allowing for beneficial work experience.

Mr. Speaker, this weekend will mark the beginning of a significant mobilization by consumers and grassroots organizations to end sweatshop abuses and child labor both here and abroad. It is my hope that we in the Congress will mobilize support here in the Congress to enact legislation which will ensure that the job opportunities for our youth are meaningful, safe, and healthy.

HONORING THE MASON DISTRICT  
NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM  
AND ALL OF ITS PARTICIPANTS

**HON. THOMAS M. DAVIS**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 1, 1997*

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a neighborhood organization that is making a difference in the quality of life in northern Virginia. The Fairfax County Mason District Police Department is honoring its neighborhood watch participants on Saturday, October 4, 1997. This day of appreciation celebrates the success of a program which has helped the general crime rate to decline steadily since 1988.

The neighborhood watch participants throughout the Mason District are dedicated individuals who selflessly offer their time to improve their community. The Mason District has the largest number of and most active volunteers in northern Virginia. As a former county supervisor from the Mason District, I can attest to the dedication of those involved in the neighborhood watch. All of those in the Mason District share a tremendous sense of pride in the accomplishments of our neighborhood watch.

The individuals who work in this program coordinate with the police so they may keep abreast of crime in or around their community. The time and energy they give in walking their neighborhoods, tracking suspicious activities, people, and cars helps the Fairfax County police deter would-be criminals. The savings to taxpayers through the years has been millions of dollars, and the savings in crime deterred has also been measurable. The neighborhood watch program in Mason District proudly shows its strength and its numbers every year at the national night out where most of the over 100 watch patrols participate. The participants in this program have truly proven that getting involved in your community does make a difference. Those who take the time to cast a watchful eye on their surroundings ensure that they have a safer and more friendly place to live. The Parklawn neighborhood watch discovered a fire at Glasgow intermediate school in its early stages. Their early detection meant

that firefighters arrived early and saved the school from serious damage. In other instances, leads established by the watch have led to solving burglaries and convicting car thieves.

The members and coordinators of the Mason District neighborhood watch work in one of the most diverse communities in the Washington area. They often bridge culture and language gaps to come together and build safer neighborhoods. Often, the Mason District neighborhood watch has led to a better understanding of different cultures and backgrounds as people recognize that they share the same community values. One of the greatest assets of the Mason District neighborhood watch program is the bonds it has built between individuals and neighborhoods. The neighborhood watch is a program that truly brings neighbors together. In one instance, a widow and a widower met when paired together on a watch patrol in Sleepy Hollow. Six months later they were married. I can't promise every single person who volunteers for the watch in Mason District will be guaranteed a spouse, but it is clear that the neighborhood watch has brought many of its diverse population closer together.

I know my colleagues will join me in saluting the Mason District neighborhood watch organization that has had so much success. The Mason District neighborhood watch participants have certainly earned a day of appreciation. Their work has made the Mason District one of the nicest communities on our Nation.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
EMANCIPATION OF ENSLAVED  
AFRICANS IN WHAT IS NOW THE  
VIRGIN ISLANDS

**HON. DONNA M. CHRISTIAN-GREEN**

OF VIRGIN ISLANDS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 1, 1997*

Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN. Mr. Speaker, last week I came to this floor to invite my colleagues and all Americans to join my constituents and I as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the emancipation of enslaved Africans in what is now the U.S. Virgin Islands, the district I proudly represent.

Many of my colleagues have agreed to co-sponsor the resolution I have submitted in recognition of this significant event in our history, and I thank them for their support.

Mr. Speaker, today, October 1, we remember and celebrate the "firebun," which represents a continuation on the part of the people of the Virgin Islands, to achieve a yet greater degree of self-determination.

For while the events of July 3, 1848, represented the end of physical slavery, the firebun which occurred 30 years later, was a victory over economic slavery.

You see, Mr. Speaker, 1 year after our emancipation in 1848, the Danish colonial government established the Provisional Labor Act to indenture workers for the continuation of the sugar cane industry on St. Croix.

A bare subsistence wage scale was established, fees were set to discourage off-island travel, and workers were restricted from changing jobs, or moving to another estate except on October 1 of each year.