CITIZENSHIP FOR CHONG HO KWAK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEKAS. Madam Speaker, to all who are within the sound of our voice this morning, I want to express my appreciation to a number of people for the moment that we are about to embrace here on the floor of the House.

Very shortly now we will be considering a special bill, a private bill in which the Congress of the United States will confer a benefit on one of our fellow citizens. I say one of our fellow citizens advisedly because that is exactly why the Congress has had to act in this extraordinary way, to pass a bill that confers a benefit directly on one individual.

Here is what happened. Chong Ho Kwak, a Korean immigrant, came to our country legally, worked and supported his family, did all of the things necessary to become an American citizen, focused on becoming an American citizen because that was the light of his life, to finally gain the status that everyone in the world yearns to have, the status of being a bona fide American citizen.

So he studied English, he studied the history of our country, he engaged in the special classes that are set for people who want to become citizens with all that that entails, and then, when the time came to take the test, nervous as he was, he went to the appointed place and presented himself for the purpose of undergoing the examinations that are necessary before one becomes a citizen. He passed them royally and was ecstatic, as was his family.

He passed the exams and he was ready now to take the oath of citizenship for the greatest honor that would ever be bestowed on him in his own mind, and in those of us who recognize how important that is for a person eager to become an American citizen.

Then, a tragic thing happened. About two months before the scheduled event for the naturalization ceremony in which he would take his oath, he, Mr. Kwak, while operating his small grocery store, was attacked and robbed, shot in the head, and rendered unconscious, of course, and was relegated to a hospital where he still lingers in a coma from which he has never been able to revive himself and which has engendered much sympathy and much newsprint, as it were, covering that tragic event and all of its consequences.

The young thugs who attacked him got very little reward, were sentenced, and even as we speak are probably finishing out their sentences as the court might have dealt out to them, but Mr. Kwak is sentenced for the rest of his life to a long-term care facility, barely able to exist, let alone live a normal life.

Well, now what has happened? He was not able to take the oath of naturalization because of his condition. We asked the Immigration and Naturalization Service to outline a special circumstance for this individual and to permit him to be conferred a citizen of the United States, even without taking the oath, because of the circumstances. He could not raise his arm and do the natural things that are required to undertake an oath of naturalization.

The INS refused to do this, saying that the book by which they conduct their naturalization actually requires, and there is no straying from it, according to them, no veering away from it, that he must take the oath. We pointed out that we have attended many naturalization services where an infant, a young child is held in the arms of a parent who is an American citizen and the citizenship is conferred on this youngster who could not know what the meaning of the oath of office that was undertaken by his parent. Is that not similar, we said. Here is an individual who, because he was shot in the head, would not be able to understand the oath of allegiance to the United States, but nevertheless all of us who know that he passed the examination and was that split second short of being able to become an American citizen.

Madam Speaker, we will conduct a bill at 10 o'clock this morning which will confer citizenship on Mr. Kwak.

U.S. CONTINUES TO IGNORE PLIGHT OF KURDISH PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. FURSE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 2 minutes.

Ms. FURSE. Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of 40 million people who have an identity, but do not have a country. The Kurdish people. Their land continues to be a setting for war and destruction that has lasted for decades.

The Kurds are a persecuted minority. It is a crime in Turkey to talk about Kurds or Kurdish issues. One cannot fly a Kurdish flag or even address another by his Kurdish name.

Madam Speaker, I am outraged wherever violations of human rights occur, but I am particularly enraged and distressed that our country continues to ignore the Kurdish people and their plight. For years, the U.S. has neglected reports and testimony from the Kurdish people about the human rights violations. Madam Speaker, our government must engage in and develop a Kurdish policy. We cannot continue to stand by as millions of their people suffer.

Now, Turkey is an important partner of the United States. It is a NATO member, gets huge amounts of money from us, but its abuses of the Kurdish people are unacceptable.

I would like to draw my colleagues' attention to Leyla Zana, who is an elected member of the Turkish Parliament. She is the first Kurdish woman to ever be elected. She is also a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize. But Leyla Zana was arrested and severely tortured by the Turkish police in 1988. What was her crime? She engaged in peaceful demonstrations on behalf of prisoners who were also being tortured, and for respect for human dignity and the universal declaration of human rights, Leyla Zana, a parliamentarian, is currently serving a 15-year sentence with 4 other Kurdish members of the Turkish Parliament.

Leyla Zana writes, and I quote, that she is determined ''to continue by peaceful means the struggle for peace between Kurds and Turkey, for democracy and for respect for human rights.'' She goes on to say, ''These are the universal values which must unite us.''

As elected officials here in the United States, we must speak out against abuses and develop a Kurdish U.S. policy.

HOME HEALTH CARE SYSTEM SUFFERING STATE OF EMERGENCY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam Speaker, I rise today to declare a state of emergency. Our home health care industry is suffering from drastic cuts to the Medicare reimbursement system that was done in last year's balanced budget agreement. Cuts were made to reduce fraud and abuse, but these cuts unfortunately have had unintended consequences.

To date, over 1,200 home health agencies have gone out of business, and that number is expected to triple by the end of September, and these are not the high-cost agencies. Families are suffering. The new payment system for home health is so restrictive that patients who require the most expensive care will be the first to lose their care. The sickest and most feeble will be left in the cold.

I have visited many families and have made many home visits over the years. I know how important it is for individuals to receive care in their own home whenever possible where they can be surrounded by family and friends who love them. We are not just talking about the elderly, we are talking about children, we are talking about the disabled, anyone who needs to be in their home and receive home health care.

Home health care is a critical element of our Nation's health care safety net and that safety net is quickly unraveling as more and more patients are unable to receive care and more and more home health care agencies shut their doors.