

Armenia is one of the oldest peoples with a recorded history. According to tradition anchored in the Bible, Armenia is the place where Noah's Ark set down on Mt. Ararat and where life was resurrected on earth. Ultimately, Armenia's is a documented history of one of the oldest nations that has retained distinct political entry for close to three thousand years. In the early 6th Century B.C., Prophet Jeremiah spoke about the "Kingdom of Ararat" as one of the key states that would challenge and ultimately break the dominance of the Babylonian Empire. In the 4th Century B.C., the great Greek commander Xenophon wrote about a distinct political entity called Armenia within the Persian sphere of influence through which he marched his troops on their way back to Greece.

Since the 2nd Century B.C., Armenia constituted the northern tier of imperial advances—initially of the Romans, the Selucids, and the Parthians; and then of all the successor empires. Throughout these times, Armenians have repeatedly tried to assert self-determination against repeated campaigns of empires determined to consolidate dominance over this most important geo-strategic asset. For the next two millennia, Armenia was destined to become a key battleground between the Empires of Eurasia for the control over the geo-strategic road junction between West (Europe) and East (Heart of Asia), North (Russia) and South (Middle East).

Armenia's acceptance of Christianity in the early 4th Century A.D. constitutes a turning point. Armenia was the first country to adopt the socio-political connotations of Christianity, leading King Tiridates to establish an independent state. However, given Armenia's geo-strategic importance, neither the Romans nor the Persians permitted the existence of an independent Armenia. Indeed, by the end of the 4th Century, Armenia was partitioned between the two leading empires of that era—Rome and Persia. Since then, and essentially until the end of the Cold War, Armenia repeatedly succumbed to bigger armies and bigger states or empires—all coveting the geo-strategic key locale that Armenia is.

By the 6th Century, despite Armenia's loss of independence, the Armenian Church separated itself from Rome in order to ensure the people's distinct and unique character. This distinction has since enabled Armenians to endure the prevail even as eastern Christendom succumbed to the advent of Islam and its civilization was lost forever. All this time, Armenian civilization and cultural legacy has been maintained by the Church through the countless invasions, occupations, destructions and mass killings that would impact Armenia until the late 20th Century.

The leit motif in this brief history is simple: a small people steadfastly holding to their land and heritage as their country is repeatedly subjected to occupations because of its unique geo-strategic importance. As Bismarck once said: "Of all the elements that make up history, geography is the one that never changes." We, the U.S. and the West, still need this geo-strategic road junction. But unlike empires of past, we must secure it not through occupation but through the empowerment and support of the true "owners" of this land—the Armenians. They have demonstrated throughout their history their determination to hold to independence against overwhelming odds. It is in our national inter-

est to help the Armenians safeguard their current freedom and independence.

Armenia is now independent as the consequence of the determination, commitment and sacrifices of its own people. Its geo-strategic location remains as important as ever before. And although the tenuous cease-fire with Azerbaijan is holding, Armenia's overall security posture is worsening. The entire Caucasus is now being set aflame by Islamist radicalism. The Islamist leaders of the insurrection in Dagastan have repeatedly vowed to "liberate" and "cleanse" the entire Caucasus of the presence of non-Muslims so that they can establish a unified Muslim state. Moreover, the flames of terrorism and radicalism not only affect Russia—now subject to Islamist terrorism and subversion—but also penetrate and profoundly affect Turkey, an ally and a NATO member. Further more, this eruption has a direct bearing on vital economic interests of the U.S. and its closest allies. The Caucasus is the West's primary gateway to the energy resources of the Caspian Sea basin and Central Asia—a region commonly known as the Persian Gulf of the 21st Century. An Islamist state in the Caucasus is bound to endanger the West's freedom of access to these energy resources.

Hence, it is imperative for the U.S. to have a bulwark of stability in this crucial geo-strategic road junction. The U.S. needs an ally in place that is not susceptible to the lure of, and/or vulnerable to the ruthlessness of, the rising Islamist militancy. Determined to remain a loyal member of the West without forsaking its distinct heritage and culture, independent Armenia is uniquely eligible to be as such a bulwark. Now, on the eve of the next millennium, it is imperative for us to ensure the growth, development and betterment of Armenia so that a strong and free Armenia continues to serve as a source of stability and Judeo-Christian civilization, as well as Western security and economic interests, in this most important and increasingly volatile region. It is therefore, in our national security interest to ensure that Armenia's eighth independence day is just one of many more to come.

THE CAPTIVE ELEPHANT
ACCIDENT PREVENTION ACT

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 23, 1999

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Captive Elephant Accident Prevention Act to make circuses more humane for the animals and safer for the spectators. I would like to make it clear that I am not interested in seeing the circus industry unduly hindered or encumbered. My bill is a practical, reasonable one that addresses a fundamental wrong in the entertainment industry.

When an elephant rampages it can injure and kill spectators, not to mention damage property. There is simply no stopping a rampaging elephant until the animal is dead, a tragedy which is obviously a symptom of a larger problem. Because of circuses and elephant rides, we've grown accustomed to seeing elephants perform tricks or being ridden as

if they are domesticated animals such as horses. But these are not domesticated creatures. Elephants are wild animals—animals for whom all the coaxing in the world will not encourage them to let you ride on their backs, or get them to stand on their heads, rear up on their hind legs, walk a balance beam, or any of the other unnatural stunts they perform in circuses.

To get a 5 ton, 10 foot tall animal to perform these stressful, often painful stunts 2 or 3 shows per day, animal trainers use fear and torture. In his arsenal, the elephant trainer has devices such as high-powered electric prods, ancuses, bull hooks (long sharpened metal hook at the end of a handle), and Martingales (heavy chains binding an elephant's tusks to his front feet). To get these giant, willful, wild animals to behave like trained dogs, elephants are brutalized. It is therefore understandable that when they get the chance, they kill people.

Since 1983, at least 28 people have been killed by captive elephants performing in circuses and elephant ride exhibits. More than 70 others have been seriously injured, including at least 50 members of the general public who were spectators at circuses and other elephant exhibits. In fact, 9 states have banned elephants from close contact with the public. This includes giving rides or even photo ops, because of the danger of rampages.

Why do we continue to use taxpayer dollars to murder endangered species in the middle of our major metropolitan areas when we could simply address the problem by removing elephants from these tragedies waiting to happen.

My bill proposes to exclude elephants from traveling shows and to eliminate elephant rides, not to close down circuses. I ask my colleagues to join me as a cosponsor on the Captive Elephant Accident Prevention Act. I also want to thank game show host Bob Barker for coming to Washington, D.C. to support this bill H.R. 2929.

A PROCLAMATION CONGRATULATING
DR. EDWARD L. FLORAK

HON. ROBERT W. NEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 23, 1999

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I commend the following proclamation to my colleagues:

Whereas, Dr. Florak served as the President of Jefferson Community College for 13½ years and under his leadership the College expanded its curriculum and aligned itself with major higher education institutions around the country; and,

Whereas, Dr. Florak has represented the College throughout the state in the Ohio Association of Community Colleges; and,

Whereas, Dr. Florak represented JCC and Jefferson County as one of America's Community Heros and carried the Olympic Torch during the ceremonies in June 1999; and,

Whereas, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating Dr. Florak on his lifetime of service to his community as well as the College. I am proud to call him a constituent.