

to himself all other branches and institutions of government. A constitutional amendment passed in October 1999 conveniently removed the age limit of 65 to be president. The OSCE judged last January's presidential elections, from which a leading opposition contender was barred as far short of OSCE standards. Last month's parliamentary election, according to the OSCE, was "severely marred by widespread, pervasive and illegal interference by executive authorities in the electoral process." In response, President Nazarbaev has attacked the OSCE, comparing it to the Soviet Communist Party's Politburo for trying to "tell Kazakhstan what to do."

Tajikistan has suffered the saddest fate of all the Central Asian countries; a civil war that killed scores of thousands. In 1997, the warring sides finally ceased hostilities and reached agreement about power-sharing, which permitted a bit of hopefulness about prospects for normal development and democratization. It seems, however, that the accord will not ensure stability. Tajikistan's Central Election Commission refused to register two opposition candidates for the November 6 presidential election. The sole alternative candidate registered has refused to accept the results of the election, which, according to official figures, current President Emomally Rakhmonov won with 97 percent of the vote, in a 98 percent turnout. Those numbers, Mr. Speaker, say it all. The OSCE properly declined to send observers.

Benighted Turkmenistan practically begs description. This country, which as been blessed with large quantities of natural gas, has a political system that combines the worst traits of Soviet communism with a personality cult seen today in countries like Iraq or North Korea. No dissidence of any kind is permitted and the population enjoys no human rights. While his impoverished people barely manage to get by, President Niyazov builds garish presidential palaces and monuments to himself. The only registered political party in Turkmenistan is the Democratic Party—headed by President Niyazov. In late October he said the people of his country would not be ready for the stresses and choices of a democratic society until 2010, adding that independent media are "disruptive." On December 12, Turkmenistan is holding parliamentary "elections," which the OSCE will not bother to observe.

Finally, we come to Uzbekistan. The Helsinki Commission, which I chair, held hearings on democratization and human rights in Uzbekistan on October 18. Despite the best efforts of Uzbekistan's Ambassador Safaev to convince us that democratization is proceeding apace in his country, the testimony of all the other witnesses confirmed the widely held view that after Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan is the most repressive country in Central Asia. No opposition political activity is allowed and media present only the government's point of view. Christian denominations have faced official harassment. Since 1997, a massive government campaign has been underway against independent Muslim believers. In February of this year, explosions rocked Tashkent, which the government described as an assassination attempt by Islamic radicals allied with an exiled opposition leader.

Apart from elections, a key indicator of progress towards democratization is the state of media freedom. On October 25–27, an

International Conference on Mass Media in Central Asia took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Not surprisingly, Turkmenistan did not allow anyone to attend. The other participants adopted a declaration noting that democratization has slowed in almost all Central Asian states, while authoritarian regimes have grown stronger, limiting the scope for genuine media freedom as governments influence the media through economic means.

I strongly agree with these sentiments. The concentration of media outlets in pro-regime hands, the ongoing assault on independent and opposition media and the circumscription of the media's legally-sanctioned subject matter pose a great danger to the development of democracy in Central Asia. Official statistics about how many media outlets have been privatized cover up an alarming tendency towards government monopolization of information sources. This effectively makes it impossible for citizens to receive unbiased information, which is vital if people are to hold their governments accountable.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that in Central Asia, the overall level of democratization and human rights observance is poor. Central Asian leaders make decisions in a region far from Western Europe, close to China, Iran and Afghanistan, and they often assert that "human rights are only for the West" or the building democracy "takes time." But delaying steps towards democracy is very risky in the multi-ethnic, multi-religious region of Central Asia, where many people are highly educated and have expectations of faster change. If it does not come, tensions and conflicts could emerge that could endanger security for everyone.

To lessen these risks, continuous pressure will be needed on these countries to move faster on democracy. Even as the United States pursues other interests, we should give top priority to democracy and respect for human rights, or we may live to regret not doing so.

REDUCING THE EFFECTS OF ABUSE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON YOUTH, THE READY ACT

HON. SUE W. KELLY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to introduce the Reducing the Effects of Abuse and Domestic Violence on Youth Act—also known as the READY Act. I am joined in introducing this legislation by Representatives CONNIE MORELLA, NANCY JOHNSON, CAROLYN MALONEY and JUDY BIGGERT. The READY Act is a first step toward addressing the multiple needs of children who witness or experience domestic violence.

In the past year, much has been done to find the cause of violence by our children. Tragic events like the ones at Columbine and Jonesborough have highlighted the violence faced by our Nation's youth. Working groups and commissions have been created across the Nation to study the cause of violence in our schools. Speaker HASTERT has created a bipartisan working group in the House, of which I am a member, to look at several aspects of our society and to identify which may influence the violent trend we have witnessed in our youth during the last several years.

However, as we know from study, one of the primary influences on socialization is the family. Over 3 million children witness violence in their own homes. It is here that my legislation focuses.

Witnessing domestic violence has a devastating impact on children, placing them at high risk for anxiety, depression, and suicide. These children also may exhibit more aggressive, anti-social, fearful and inhibited behaviors. It is estimated that between 20 and 40 percent of chronically violent children have witnessed extreme parental conflict. Another study found that boys who had witnessed their father battering their mother had a 1,000 percent higher battering rate than boys who did not.

Clearly, witnessing this type of violence in the home has a profound effect on children. In order to combat this trend, the READY Act gives grants to qualified nonprofit agencies in order to create multi-level interventions for child witnesses. This program would create a partnership between entities like the courts, schools, health care providers, child protective services and battered women's programs to provide a system of cooperation and collaboration between the professionals in a community in order to better support these child witnesses.

Examples of intervention partnerships could include: security for the child and his or her family; mental health treatment; counseling and advocacy for the family; and outreach and training to community professionals. While many facets of this support system are currently in place, there is a gap in coordination and cooperation.

In another step to encourage coordination between various agencies, a second provision in the READY Act would encourage collaborative efforts between nonprofit domestic violence community agencies and schools to create a curriculum for K–12 students, as well as provide training for education professionals on experiencing and witnessing domestic violence. Training would include teachers, administrators, counselors and other school personnel. I believe that this provision is especially important in light of the determination that one-third of all 16–19 year old girls experience violence from an intimate partner.

Domestic violence often escalates during separation and divorce, and visitation is often used as an opportunity for abuse. Under my legislation grants would be provided to qualified applicants on a competitive basis to create family visitation or visitation exchange centers. Use of such centers will minimize the potentially dangerous interactions between family members.

On July 3, 1996, 5-year-old Brandon and 4-year-old Alex were murdered by their father during an unsupervised visit. Their mother Angela was separated from Kurt Frank, the children's father. During her marriage, Angela was physically and emotionally abused by Frank. Brandon was once hit by his father and had his lip split when he stepped in front of his mother during a domestic violence incident. Angela had an Order of Protection against Frank, but her request for her husband to receive only supervised visits was dismissed during custody hearings. Kurt Frank murdered his two sons during an unsupervised visit. While it is too late for Brandon and Alex, a secure visitation center will help to prevent other children from meeting the same fate.

The READY Act also allows the use of private pensions to settle child abuse judgments. Private pensions are currently used for alimony or child support payments, however cannot be used to settle a child abuse judgment. This provision was originally submitted by my friend and colleague, CAROLYN MALONEY during the 105th Congress and I am happy to be able to include it in the READY Act. In addition, my legislation amends the Parental Kidnaping Prevention Act to provide a defense to women who flee across State lines to escape domestic violence or sexual assault, and ensures that a civil court can consider domestic violence and the parent and child's safety when determining which State should hear a custody dispute. This will pull the State and Federal laws regulating this area closer into line.

Finally, the READY Act includes a sense of the Congress stating that when determining child custody, it is not in the best interest of the child to force joint custody in cases where there is a history of domestic violence. This act also states, that it is also not in the best interest of the child to make so called "friendly parent" provisions a factor when there is abuse against a parent or a child. It is important for Congress to take the lead on this important issue.

In preparing to introduce this bill, I came upon a website that posted story after story from women who had been victims of domestic abuse. Of the dozens of stories that I read, one particular submission was especially poignant, by a 23-year-old woman named Lisa. Lisa had been married to her husband for 4 years, but altogether she has been with him for 6 years. He mentally and physically abused her and her children, just as her father had abused her and her mother. She is ready to leave him. She realized that her oldest child is 4 and, since he's a boy, she is afraid he will grow to be like her husband. Her youngest is 3 months, and she does not want her to end up where she is. Lisa ends her letter with the realization that she has to leave for the sake of her children. She writes of how she and her children have their whole lives ahead of them and it should not be a life full of fear.

Her letter was written over a month ago. Hopefully, since that time she has been able to flee her husband's abuse both to save herself and to save her children. Her lifetime has been testimony to the cycle of violence. For Lisa and her kids, it is time to break that cycle. While the road to healing begins with the knowledge that Lisa needs to save herself and her kids, more help is needed to repair the damage done during the years of abuse. Without it, chances are the cycle will continue.

As we all know, there are no easy answers or solutions to the violent acts of our youth. However, passage of the READY Act would be one solid step toward reducing the effects of abuse and domestic violence that is so clearly harming our youth.

TRIBUTE TO LA AGENCIA DE ORCI
& ASOCIADOS

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to pay tribute to La Agencia de Orci

& Asociados, one of the most successful, independent, Hispanic owned and operated full-service advertising and public relations agencies in the United States. As they celebrate their 13th anniversary, we salute them for their vision and commitment to serve the needs of our entire community, with special attention to our Hispanic/Latino constituents. Through insightful creative, targeted media and integrated marketing programs, La Agencia has established deep and lasting mutually beneficial relationships between their clients and the Latino consumer.

We honor today those individuals who exemplify leadership, professionalism, community service and dedication. La Agencia de Orci partners, Hector Orci and Norma Orci, founders and co-chairs, Roberto Orci, president and Marlene Garcia, executive vice president, are committed to dynamic leadership in their industry. La Agencia values and beliefs dictate that the most direct route to gaining Share of Market with the Hispanic consumer is to first capture Share of Heart.™

Our community and our country continue to benefit from award-winning La Agencia pro bono efforts on behalf of the Children's Bureau of Southern California, United Way, Los Angeles Unified School District, AIDS Project L. A., Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), Boy Scouts of America, and Census 1990 and 2000.

With the September 23rd opening of their Chicago offices, La Agencia is now one of the largest full-service independent advertising agencies in the Midwest dedicated to the national Hispanic market. Also announced was the establishment of Orci Public Relations, extending services to non-advertising clients.

Established in 1986, with headquarters in Los Angeles, annual billings exceeded 60 million dollars in 1998. Current valued clients include Allstate Insurance, American Honda, Bell Atlantic, Hormel Foods, Picosito.com, Shell Oil, Tropicana and Washington Mutual.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, please join me in paying tribute to La Agencia de Orci & Asociados, a "family" of 80 bilingual and bicultural staff who come together from 17 countries. La Agencia excels in the advertising business world and services as a leading role model in corporate citizenship. They have earned our recognition, praise and respect.

TRIBUTE TO MARY MEISNER

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize Mary Meisner, the director of public health for Garfield County, who has been awarded the "Florence Award."

Ms. Meisner was recognized by the Colorado County Nurse Association, Inc. for more than twenty years of faithful service and exceptional contributions to quality community health throughout Garfield County and across the entire state of Colorado. She has dedicated her entire nursing career to the promotion of public health.

After leaving a small farming community in Iowa to join two nursing colleagues on an ad-

venture out west, Ms. Meisner began her career in western Colorado. Ms. Meisner served as the sole nurse on the western end of the county in Rifle before taking over as the nursing director responsible for the Rifle and Glenwood Springs offices.

In 1997, Ms. Meisner became the Director of Public Health for Garfield County, overseeing nine public health nurses, the Healthy Beginnings director, a registered dietitian, three WIC educators, an outreach worker and five office personnel.

Ms. Meisner has proven the value of hard work and dedication through the satisfaction in the people she serves. She continues to provide an educational environment in which school nurses and administrators can effectively work. Ms. Meisner is an asset to the Third District of Colorado and deserves our highest gratitude and praise on receiving this great distinction.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON S. 900,
GRAMM-LEACH-BLILEY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. MELVIN L. WATT

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 4, 1999

Mr. WATT of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I supported the Financial Services Modernization bill (H.R. 10) when it was considered in the Housing Banking and Financial Services Committee and in the full House. I felt good about supporting the bill because the House Banking Committee had worked on a bipartisan basis to develop a consensus bill which was supported by the industry, federal regulators and many community and consumer groups. That bill overwhelmingly passed the House on July 1, 1999 by a vote of 343 to 86.

Unfortunately, the bipartisan deliberations and efforts which characterized the consideration of H.R. 10 in the House did not continue when the House-Senate Conference Committee on Financial Services Modernization convened. The Chairmen's print, which was used as the base text for consideration by the Conference Committee, was drafted by the three Republican Chairmen of the Committees of jurisdiction with no input from the Democratic conferees. The conferees were then given a very limited period of time to review the lengthy document before having to begin the amendment process. During the amendment process, consideration was abruptly terminated and some of the most important provisions of the bill (the CRA provisions) were brokered behind closed doors in the middle of the night. This important, complex and historic legislation should have been the subject of thoughtful, bipartisan review and input. Instead, the process was hijacked and corrupted by a few senior Republican members.

An unacceptable process, while objectionable, is not sufficient reason to oppose legislation designed to achieve important public policy objectives, if the flawed process results in a satisfactory substantive product. Unfortunately, the terrible, partisan process which was followed in this Conference resulted in serious substantive flaws. Some of these flaws include the following:

(1) The bill needs a section stating the public policy purposes the bill is designed to