VERMONT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT CONGRESSIONAL TOWN MEETING, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

HON. BERNARD SANDERS

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 2, 2001

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize the outstanding work done by participants in my Student Congressional Town Meeting held this summer. These participants were part of a group of high school students from around Vermont who testified about the concerns they have as teenagers, and about what they would like to see government do regarding these concerns.

I am asking that these statements be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, as I believe that the views of these young persons will benefit my colleagues.

ON BEHALF OF ETHAN CASAVANT AND JAIME SANTERRE—REGARDING EDUCATION IN VERMONT PRISONS, MAY 7, 2001

Jamie Santerre. Ethan and I visited the Chittenden Regional Correctional facility.

Ethan Casavant. We spoke with Mary Tripp, a teacher at the facility, one of three. There is her and John Long, who are both full-time teachers, and there is one who is based on independent study and special ed. I don't remember her name, though.

Jamie Santerre. The facility was built in the late 1970s. In the 1980s, the facility had an open library, where people who went there could only, get their GEDS. And the classes that they have now, which are like math, social studies, art, English and science, they started in 1998, where anyone under 22 without a high school diploma had to attend in an attempt to get their high school diploma.

Ethan Casavant. Just to touch up on that a little bit,, even if, say, you are 16 years old and you drop out of high school and end up going to the prison system, you have to go back to the schools to graduate or get your diploma. They won't let you just get off of it or get out of it. But, anyway, the classes are Monday through Friday, like any other school. There is independent study and regular class, like three, four people to a class. There is three classrooms, an art room, and one with science and social studies, that you can't do labs or like chemistry or physics or anything like that, because they can't trust the inmates with any of those materials. The materials are also supplied to them for free so that they can, you know, use them all and learn just like anybody else. They have a library that they can use. For resources, they have some computers, but they don't have Internet access for safety reasons, or any of that. Anything they need to download off the Net, the teachers do before the classes and go over it. The Vermont Correctional Facilities school system are the only schools in the state that require literacy competency before you graduate. Any other high school, you don't have to be fully literate to graduate. And Mary Trip, the teacher we talked to, said that about 20 percent of the population of the inmates attend class regularly. And if you get the diploma from their high school, you have just as good a chance of getting a job as you would from graduating from any other school. You know, you might just not like it for personal satisfaction.

ON BEHALF OF DEREK WONG, DREW ARNOLD, TERICIA SAVAGLIO, AND ALEX WHITTELSEUI REGARDING BROADCASTING EXECUTIONS TO THE PUBLIC, MAY 7, 2001

Alex Whittelseui. We are from Rice High School, obviously, and our topic was the issue of the morality and ethical viewpoint of broadcasting executions to the public, because we felt it was important, because the upcoming execution of Timothy McVeigh is actually going to be televised and shown on a closed-circuit in the Oklahoma City area. And we feel that that is not going to make justice, it is more going to just make—how do I say this?—just make it worse, because of the fact that it's going to almost glorify what Timothy McVeigh did, and how he is going to die a martyr. And we just feel it shouldn't be shown on TV, and that it is just wrong to do that.

Theresa Savaglio. To begin with, a little bit of background on the execution. He is dying by lethal injection, which is a series of three shots. First he is given a sedative. They are using sodium pentetate. And then they are going to inject pancurium bromide to stop his respiration, and then finally potassium chloride to stop the beating of his heart. That is actually one of the most common forms of capital punishment, because it is the least painful. According to Amnesty International, they believe that any form of execution violates basic human rights, which are stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and which the United Nations adopted this declaration in 1948. And so they believe that, since we are a member of the United Nations, we should also use this and ban executions. They think that any person sent to death should be able to appeal to a higher court, which we do allow. And Timothy McVeigh's execution is going to be the first capital punishment case for the federal government in, I believe, maybe 38 years. So it is a pretty big issue. Amnesty also believes that, no matter what reason the government uses to execute their prisoners in its custody, and no matter the form of execution, the death penalty can't be separated from human rights, because you are taking this person's life from them. And another interesting aspect of this is that the cost of executing a person and the process to lead up to that is more expensive than life imprisonment, because of all the appeals and court costs.

Congressman Sanders. Okay.

Alex Whittelseui. From a pool of randomly picked 2,621, 1,494 people said that they would not view the execution—which is 57 percent—and 1,127 said they would. And that is just kind of to throw out the fact that most Americans would not want to watch this execution.

Derrick Wong. Those who said they would not watch the execution said that they could not draw anything from seeing a death on television. And they said that an execution on TV would only act as entertainment for our society, which then becomes a pity. People against televised executions are concerned for the condemned's feelings, and of his or her family's feelings as well. They say that it is bad enough that a person has to die for their actions, and that televising it would not have a positive effect. Some say that Phil Donahue wants the execution to be televised because it is his sad attempt to be on primetime television, and those opposed are concerned with the issue of ethics and the morals. There is a huge controversial issue of whether the televised execution of Timothy McVeigh, which is coming up on May 16th, and there is a lot of arguments that his execution should be televised, even among those who oppose capital punishment. Even Timothy McVeigh wants his execution to be televised, because he hopes that he will become a martyr for the people with the same intentions as him, getting revenge against the government. Ashcroft approved a closed-circuit televising of the execution for the 250 to 300 survivors and families of the deceased, but there be no public viewing to the general population. Anti-death penalty activist, Sister Helen Prejean, said that the execution could happen, but she is against it. However, she does not feel it should be televised, and she is the author of Dead Man Walking, and believes that criminals being put to death would just grow if you have it televised. She is aware of assertions that the executions are good for the families of the killer's victims, but says that she does not believe that, and that she has watched the victim's families going through this, watching the person die, waiting for them to die, and being promised it was going to give them closure, and coming out with an empty chair at their dining table, but it hasn't done anything to bring back the life of their loved ones. Execution have been behind closed doors since the 1930s, and in a quote by Richard Tietzer, he supports televising executions because it used to be very public and not done behind prison walls, meaning the more people that know about the death penalty, the better they are going to be able to judge it, and the whole process is carried out in the people's name and they should know if those acting in their name are doing so carefully and humanely. Some view the media as vultures descending on the execution in Oklahoma City to feed on McVeigh's infamy. 1,400 journalists have registered for credentials with the Bureau of Prisons to cover the May 16 execution, at Terre Haute, Indiana, with more reporters in Oklahoma City. The media wants to feed off the fact that there hasn't been a federal execution since 1963. Walter Genic, a journalist professor from southern Illinois, at the University of Carbondale, said that McVeigh's execution is going to be another media orgasm. It is sensationalist lust. And the general feeling from a mother of a daughter who was murdered said that she doesn't feel that it is appropriate to execute someone, especially being televised, because it doesn't do anything except show that this person is dying, and you know that they're dying from witnesses there.

Drew Arnold. There were 23 electrocution executions recorded between 1983 and 1999 in Jackson, Georgia. They were aired on a New York radio program on WNYC, and they said that it was their journalistic responsibility to air the executions. VPR decided not to air them, because, just because it exists doesn't mean it has to be made public. And people don't need to see their taxes at work killing prisoners.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO JILL SOLOMON

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 2, 2001

Mr. ROGERS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jill Solomon on earning the prestigious Fulbright Award, which will allow her to teach and study in the United Kingdom during the upcoming academic year.

Established by Congress in 1946, the Fulbright Award program is the oldest U.S. Government sponsored academic exchange program. Recipients of Fulbright Awards are selected on the basis of academic and professional achievement as well as leadership potential in one's respective field. In receiving