

problems. Now, WorldCom, the nation's second-largest long distance telephone company has been charged with fraud by the Securities and Exchange Commission. Reports have revealed that WorldCom defrauded investors by improper accounting practices for \$3.9 billion in expenses during 2001.

We are discovering that publicly traded companies have contributed to bilking the American investors and taxpayers out of about \$4 trillion since 2000 due to unaccountable financial filings, accounting errors, misinformation, and mismanagement of funds that has caused the financial markets to become unstable. Where are our watchdogs? They were nowhere to be found when it comes to integrity.

In order to ensure corporate accountability, we need to establish under the jurisdiction of the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) ways to regulate accounting firms that audit SEC registrants (publicly trade firms). This type of structure could be empowered to charge registrants with annual fees to pay for the cost of staff to carry out the suggested plan of surveillance of auditors. This concept would intervene between a registrant and its auditor before, during and at the end of an audit, it would be more effective than the current regulatory system in achieving:

An early warning of potential financial disasters such as Enron and WorldCom;

Requiring a change in auditors when the SEC deems it appropriate;

Require pre-approval of consulting engagements for a registrant to be conducted by its auditor;

And, improve the format and content of financial and the auditor reports by including information about labor relations, research and development, marketing programs, and new products.

These are the kinds of things that must be done. Therefore, I have introduced on today a bill to establish an Office of Audit Review within the Securities and Exchange Commission to ensure the audits of certain public companies.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JAMES H. MALONEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 23, 2002

Mr. MALONEY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I was absent on Monday, July 22, 2002, and missed rollcall votes No. 324, and No. 325. Had I been present, I would have voted Aye on roll call No. 324, and Aye on roll call No. 325.

RECOGNIZING THE U.S.S. "SIERRA" VETERANS ASSOCIATION'S RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR OUR WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 23, 2002

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my gratitude to the U.S.S. *Sierra* Veterans Association for their patriotism and support of our President, the Congress, and our

armed forces as we wage our war against terrorism.

At the 14th Annual Reunion on September 28th 2001, the U.S.S. *Sierra* Veterans Association passed a Resolution expressing their anger at the terrorists attacks of September 11, 2001 and voicing their support of the President and Congress taking appropriate action in combating terrorism. In addition, the association expressed their condolences for the destruction and loss of so many innocent lives following those barbaric attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and over the skies of Pennsylvania.

It is important for us to recognize individuals and organizations that are expressing their patriotism, for just as we appreciate their support of our efforts to protect the American public, they must know that we appreciate their steadfast resolve towards fighting terror in their hearts and minds.

Accordingly, it is my privilege to present the house with the U.S.S. *Sierra* Veterans Association Resolution in support of our war against terrorism and assure them that their message has been received and that we will work diligently and act decisively to protect innocent American lives.

The Domain Of The Golden Dragon (Ruler Of The 180th Meridian) Invaded September 7, 1944

U.S.S. *Sierra* (AD 18) VETERANS ASSOCIATION

"THE SHIP WITH THE HELPING HANDS"

A RESOLUTION

Whereas: We of the U.S.S. *Sierra* [AD-18] Veterans' Association have gathered in Portsmouth, Virginia on September 28, 2001 for our 14th annual reunion.

Whereas: We, United States Veterans, are very angry and disturbed over the terrorists' attacks on the United States which occurred on September 11, 2001 with the resulting destruction and loss of so many innocent lives.

Be it resolved that we, U.S.S. *Sierra* Veterans, encourage and support our commander-in-chief, the United States Congress and those so delegated in all efforts to locate those individuals and groups responsible in any way for the tragic disruption of our security and freedom and to impose appropriate punishment in a timely and thorough manner.

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO

HON. ANÍBAL ACEVEDO-VILÁ

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 23, 2002

Mr. ACEVEDO-VILÁ. Mr. Speaker, this Thursday, July 25, Puerto Rico celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the adoption of its Constitution as a Commonwealth. This Constitution established a unique relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, which has enabled Puerto Ricans to preserve and promote our cultural identity, while guaranteeing our United States citizenship and protecting the values of liberty and justice that we share with all Americans.

This Constitution established a republican form of government, and provided for a broad Bill of Rights that followed both the U.S. Constitution and the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man. This Constitution also provided

for the election of all members of the legislature by the free will of the people. The ratification of the constitution by the people of Puerto Rico is the most significant democratic achievement for Puerto Rico in the 20th Century.

At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, Puerto Rico already had a strong sense of nationhood and had achieved a high degree of autonomy under Spanish colonial rule. However, the initial U.S. rule on the Island, did not automatically bring democracy and progress for Puerto Rico. For decades Puerto Ricans continued to strive for autonomy and democratic rights. In 1917, the United States granted Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship, but very little was provided to increase Puerto Rican participation in local government. In the 1940's, a new generation of Puerto Rican leaders sought a transformation in the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico, in order to provide the necessary democratic tools for the economic, social and political development of the Island.

Leaders like Luis Muñoz-Marín, Antonio Femos, Jaime Benitez, and others, worked to pave the way for a new relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States.

In 1950, the U.S. Congress responded to Puerto Rico's claim to autonomy, by approving Public Law 600, which recognized the right of the Puerto Rican people to write and adopt their own constitution as a compact between the two nations. A Puerto Rican Constitutional Convention drafted the new Constitution, which was signed into law by President Truman and subsequently ratified by the overwhelming majority of Puerto Rico.

The Commonwealth is the result of a great generation of Puerto Rican and American leaders driven by a progressive vision and commitment to democratic values. President Harry Truman said: "The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico will be a government which is truly by consent of the governed. No government can be invested with higher dignity and greater worth than one based upon the principle of consent. The people of the United States and Puerto Rico are entering into a new relationship that will serve as an inspiration to all who love freedom and hate tyranny."

The Commonwealth is based on the free will of the Puerto Rican people who have supported the commonwealth status in all 3 plebiscites celebrated on the issue to date. The majority of Puerto Ricans prefer commonwealth over statehood and independence because it is the only status that allows them to preserve and promote their cultural identity, while maintaining the benefits of their political relationship with the United States.

Commonwealth is the only political and legal arrangement that harmonizes two central aspirations of the Puerto Rican people. On the one hand, Puerto Ricans will to preserve their autonomy and promote their distinct national identity, and on the other, their desire to preserve their U.S. citizenship and ties with the United States. Both aspirations are realized under the commonwealth. Moreover, the pro-commonwealth movement represents the Puerto Rican center, accommodating two radically conflicting political forces: independence and statehood.

The Commonwealth is based on four pillars: (1) common U.S. citizenship, (2) common defense, (3) common currency and trade; and (4) fiscal and political autonomy.