

new Transitional Housing Program for homeless veterans, located at the Minnesota Veterans Home in Minneapolis. Today's celebration is an accumulation of hard work, dedication and determination, reflective of Minnesota's commitment to our nation's veterans and a testament to the spirit of the veterans' community in our great state.

Most Americans are not aware of the severity of our veterans' homeless problem. Nearly 25 percent of homeless people are veterans, and many veterans who live in poverty are at risk of becoming homeless. On any given night, 275,000 veterans of the United States armed forces—including thousands in Minnesota—are homeless, and many struggle with alcohol, drug, and mental challenges.

The goal of the new Transitional Housing Program is to provide and coordinate preventive transitional and permanent housing and supportive services for veterans who are experiencing homelessness or who are in danger of becoming homeless. This new program will help assist Minnesota's homeless veterans in gaining the necessary skills required to successfully transition back into mainstream society.

The most effective programs for homeless veterans feature transitional housing with the camaraderie of living in structured, substance-free environments with fellow veterans who are succeeding at bettering themselves. Minnesota's new Transitional Housing Program seeks to employ these methods and provides an important community partnership in improving the lives of those who sacrificed so much for our freedom and democracy.

As we celebrate this new program, I urge my colleagues to remember the thousands of homeless veterans across America that go without help each and every day. We must continue to support the efforts of those who seek to provide these honorable veterans with a better way of life.

NAGORNO KARABAKH LIBERATION MOVEMENT

HON. FRANK PALLONE JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want bring the attention of my colleagues to an anniversary that occurred this past Thursday, February 20th, 2003. That day marked the 15th anniversary of the modern day liberation movement of the people of the Nagorno Karabakh (NK). Fifteen years ago, in the twilight of the Soviet Union, the people of NK petitioned the Soviet government to correct historical injustices and reunite them with their brethren in Armenia.

The Armenians of NK were placed within the borders of Azerbaijan in 1921, as one of the many ethnic groups that were separated by Joseph Stalin through his "divide and conquer" strategy. Despite the fact that 96% of the population of NK were ethnically Armenian, and NK's stated wish to be part of Armenia—or even be represented as an autonomous region within Azerbaijan—the Armenians of NK were subjected to brutal Soviet Azerbaijani rule for 70 years.

During those seven decades, the Armenians of NK repeatedly stated to each successive Soviet regime their desire to be joined again with Armenia. These peaceful and legal maneuvers were met with violent repression and forced settlement of ethnic Azeris into NK.

Heydar Ailyev, current President of Azerbaijan, ran the Azeri spoke of these policies frankly to reporters on July 22, 2002. He said, "I tried to change Nagorno Karabakh's demography . . . Instead of sending Azeri workers to Baku, I sent a large number of them to Karabakh from surrounding Azerbaijani regions . . . With these and other measures, I was trying to make sure that Azerbaijani population grew in Karabakh while the Armenian population diminished. Those who used to work in Karabakh back then, know what I am talking about." This comment smacks of human rights abuses; working to directly change to demographics of the region while paying no mind to the Armenian or Azeri human condition.

In 1988, when the Armenians of NK heard of the Mikhail Gorbachev's democratization agenda, they began to again move peacefully for reunification with Armenia. At this time, the Soviet and Azeri armies would not stand even to entertain this request and immediately resorted to violence. Public expressions of determination by the Armenians of NK were met with a campaign of ethnic cleansing, deporting the Armenians of NK and Azerbaijan.

In 1991, as Armenia and Azerbaijan followed most soviet states in succession from the USSR, NK also voted to succeed. In an internationally monitored referendum, the NK population overwhelmingly voted to establish an independent Nagorno Karabakh Republic, currently known as NKR.

Following this referendum in which the country was established, the Azeri army began a full-scale war on the Armenians of NK, which took thousands of lives over three years, but eventually ended up with NKR repelling Azeri forces. This victory was gained with an army that was out-manned and out-gunned, but had desire and guile that proved to be overwhelming. This conflict had a terrific human cost, leaving 30,000 dead and over one million displaced. Thankfully, although small skirmishes have broken out from time to time, the peace has been kept since an agreement ceased hostilities in 1994.

Mr. Speaker, I have repeatedly come to the House floor to speak of the plight of the Armenians of NK. I can now speak from personal experience about NKR, having traveled there with Congressman DOGGET of Texas last August. We had the opportunity to travel to NKR to witness the Presidential elections there, where we served as official monitors. I am proud to say that all election observers that participated in this historic event gave an overwhelmingly positive response. One group in particular, headed by the Baroness Cox from England stated that, "Our overall conclusion is one of congratulations to all the people of Artsakh (NKR) for the spirit in which the elections have been conducted, their commitment to the democratic process and their pride in their progress towards the establishment of civil society."

This process is astounding considering that NKR is not recognized internationally; that they still must deal every day with Azeri ag-

gression, and that their economy is still devastated from the war. The elections were reported to have met, if not exceeded international standards. All this just 9 short years removed from all-out war.

Congress recognized this consistent move towards democracy, granting NKR 20 million dollars in humanitarian assistance in FY '97, and an additional 5 million dollars in FY '03. This assistance has not just been crucial for needs of the people of NKR, but has also fostered the beginnings of an excellent relationship between our two countries.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to end with a final example of what I saw in Armenia in August last year. During the elections, as I visited the capitol city and small villages alike, everyone I spoke to was incredibly excited about the prospect of voting. They viewed the vote not only as a choice of the leader of their country for the next five years, but a statewide referendum on the democratic process and independence of NKR.

I congratulate the people of NKR for the 15th anniversary of the Nagorno Karabakh Liberation movement and their incredible determination to establish a free and open democratic society.

RECOGNITION OF HEIDI TILLY

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Heidi Tilly, a very special young woman who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Girl Scouts of America, Troop 472, and in earning the most prestigious honor of the gold award.

The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest achievement attainable in girl scouting. To earn the gold award, a scout must complete five requirements, all of which promote community service, personal and spiritual growth, positive values, and leadership skills. The requirements include, 1. earning four interest project patches, each of which requires seven activities that center on skill building, technology, service projects, and career exploration, 2. earning the career exploration pin, which involves researching careers, writing resumes, and planning a career fair or trip, 3. earning the senior girl scout leadership award, which requires a minimum of 30 hours of work using leadership skills, 4. designing a self-development plan that requires assessment of ability to interact with others and prioritize values, participation for a minimum of 15 hours in a community service project, and development of a plan to promote girl scouting, and 5. spending a minimum of 50 hours planning and implementing a Girl Scout Gold Award project that has a positive lasting impact on the community.

For her gold award project, Heidi refurbished and painted a playground.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Heidi Tilly for her accomplishments with the Girl Scouts of America and for her efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of the gold award.