

served with distinction in Congress for 26 years.

From his enlistment in the Navy during World War II at the age of 16, to his extraordinary leadership as Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs and Armed Services Committees in the House of Representatives, Bob Stump was a true American hero. Chairman Stump used his influence to promote responsible legislation to assist and honor our Nation's veterans, past, present and future.

Under Bob Stump's leadership, Congress increased funding for veterans' health care; expanded access to long term care for aging veterans, including nonhospital alternative care; reformed eligibility standards for access to VA health care; extended the national cemetery system, including Arlington National Cemetery; increased assistance to disabled veterans and their survivors; and strengthened the Montgomery GI Bill that has helped millions of veterans fulfill their educational and career goals.

As his successor as Chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I particularly know and appreciate all that he did for our Nation's veterans, service members and their families. A modest man who preferred to shun the spotlight, Bob Stump's lifetime of service to America and our Nation's veterans left this country a better place. I am honored to include in this legislation a provision to name the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Prescott, Arizona as the "Bob Stump Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center." This memorial is a fitting tribute in his beloved home state of Arizona, and will ensure that his legacy will continue to shine brightly for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, the Veterans' Extended Health Care Services and Business Enhancements Act of 2003 is an important measure. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3260 and to work with me and my colleagues on the Committee to advance this legislation this year.

TRIBUTE TO BEVERLY COUNTS

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 8, 2003

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you to pay tribute to an outstanding citizen from my district. Beverly Counts of Craig, Colorado, has been working with needy families in the community for thirty years as a social service worker in Moffat County. I would like to thank Beverly for her hard work and dedication to the Craig community and recognize her efforts before this body of Congress here today.

Beverly began her career with the Moffat County Department of Social Services in 1973 as a case aide. Upon completion of her Bachelor's degree, and later her Master's degree, she rose steadily up the ranks in the Department to her current position as a supervisor. Today her work focuses on child welfare, as she oversees caseworkers in the field.

Beverly's accomplishments were recently acknowledged by her social services co-workers at a party in her honor. I join with them here today in honoring Beverly's years of selfless service. Everyday her work helps families become better prepared to effectively manage their lives in spite of hardships and insur-

mountable odds. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to pay tribute to Beverly before this body of Congress, and I thank her for all of her hard work. I wish her the best in the years to come.

STATEMENT OF SYLVIA G. IRIONDO

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 8, 2003

Mr. DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to direct the attention of Congress to a statement made by a great Cuban pro-democracy leader, Sylvia G. Iriondo, at the September 24th meeting "Americans for a Democratic Cuba" in the Rayburn House Office Building here in the U.S. Capitol.

Mrs. Iriondo is an inspiration to all freedom loving people because of her work as the President of Mothers and Women Against Repression (MAR). Originally founded in 1994, MAR gives a voice to the thousands of oppressed pro-democracy activists who live under Castro's totalitarian regime.

Mrs. Iriondo was also one of the brave souls in the sky on the fateful day of February 24, 1996 when the Castro dictatorship's fighter jets shot down two civilian aircraft, murdering three U.S. citizens and a resident of the United States, members of the Brothers to the Rescue organization.

Through her charity, experience and steadfast commitment to democratic ideals, Mrs. Iriondo has earned the right to be heard by the United States Congress and I hope my colleagues take the time to read her testimony.

Mr. Speaker, I would personally like to thank Mrs. Iriondo and the extraordinary women that are part of MAR for the great work they do to draw attention to the plight of the prisoners of conscience who suffer in Castro's gulag and for the exemplary leadership Mrs. Iriondo provides as the President of Mothers and Women Against Repression. I thank her for her efforts and I trust that one day very soon she and I will witness a free Cuba. I ask that her remarks be included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD at this time.

STATEMENT MADE BY SYLVIA G. IRIONDO, AMERICANS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CUBA—RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BLDG., WASHINGTON, D.C., SEPTEMBER 24, 2003

Good afternoon. I am most grateful for this opportunity to highlight the most recent wave of repression unleashed by Castro's regime that culminated in the arbitrary arrests, summary trials and long prison sentences of up to 28 years for more than 75 pro-democracy leaders, independent journalists and human rights' activists, as well as in the summary executions of three young Cuban men who attempted to flee the island in search of freedom.

This brutality did not go unnoticed. For the first time in more than four decades of systematic human rights violations in Cuba, other voices from around the world—aside from our voices—were vigorously raised in condemnation of these deplorable actions.

The international community could not believe that these peaceful activists were incarcerated and sentenced to more than 1,400 collective years in prison for speaking their minds; using faxes, cameras and typewriters; distributing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the Cuban people and for

openly meeting with foreign dignitaries and other activists.

The horrendous conditions under which these political prisoners serve their sentences in Castro's jails are well-documented: isolated cells infested by rats, contaminated water, rancid food, poor hygiene, no adequate sanitary facilities, absence of ventilation, and minimal medical assistance to many political prisoners.

This is nothing new. It has been happening 90 miles from U.S. shores for the last 44 years. The list of crimes and abuses is extensive and a continuation of a policy established since 1959 by a regime intent on remaining in power—at all costs—through repression.

Among those arrested and sentenced in the most recent wave of repression, there is a Cuban woman: Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello.

This 58-year old woman is an independent economist who helped establish the Independent Cuban Economists' Institute and who heads the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba, a coalition of more than 350 organizations representing a wide political spectrum that calls for the fundamental freedoms and rights of the Cuban people. Martha Beatriz was again arrested on March 20, 2003—(she had previously served a three and one half years' sentence for being the co-author of a document entitled "The Homeland Belongs to Us All").

At the time of her most recent arrest, Martha Beatriz was participating in a peaceful hunger strike calling for the liberation of Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet and all Cuban political prisoners. Martha Beatriz was sentenced to 20 years in prison after a "mock" trial and confined to the "Manto Negro" prison in the province of Havana.

In July, she was transferred to the Carlos J. Finlay Military Hospital in the capital of Cuba, with chest pains, high-blood pressure, numbness and disorientation, among other things. As of this date, she remains confined to this hospital/prison, where she does not receive the necessary independent medical attention that she urgently requires. We fear for her life, as we fear for the lives of many other Cuban political prisoners who are being denied medical attention. (It is a common practice for the Castro regime to withhold medical attention to political prisoners as a form of torture).

We have initiated an international campaign for the immediate liberation of Martha Beatriz and all Cuban political prisoners, and created a website under www.marthabeatriz.info.

In one of the last statements made by Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello prior to her recent incarceration she stated, "we exhort all governments of the civilized world not to prolong the agony of the Cuban people; not to finance the tyranny; not to support them; that they condemn the tourist apartheid; that they condemn the exploitation of the laborers, the prostitution of our youth, the traffic of stolen properties, the plundering of the Cuban nation. The solidarity that is required today with those in Cuba and in exile who advocate for freedom is very important to all".

Lifting the sanctions and restrictions now will provide a much-needed lifeline to finance Castro's regime that would help prolong its stay in power at the expense of the Cuban people.

On behalf of Martha Beatriz and the organization I represent, Mothers and Women Against Repression, I would like to thank those members of Congress who recently voted in solidarity with the democratic aspirations of the Cuban people by voting against the Flake amendment in the Treasury Postal Appropriations bill.