

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

INTRODUCING THE LABOR RECRUITER ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2003

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 19, 2003

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the "Labor Recruiter Accountability Act of 2003."

As has been well documented in the press, the abuse of recruited workers has become a very serious problem in many areas of our nation. Labor contractors lure workers to the U.S. by promising them a better life with decent wages and good jobs in exchange for thousands of dollars in fees. Instead, tens of thousands of workers arrive in the U.S. only to find that they were cruelly deceived. If they are paid at all, they earn unlivable wages for menial jobs to which they never agreed, with no insurance or health care. And in addition to earning little, they are bound deeply in debt to the recruiter for bringing them to their new home.

This is not employment opportunity: it is indentured servitude. It is modern slavery. Hard as it may seem to believe, this form of indentured servitude is the disturbing reality for thousands of workers, and it should not be occurring in the United States in 2003.

Today, I am introducing the "Labor Recruiter Accountability Act of 2003" to fight this cruel practice by providing for tighter accountability for foreign labor contractors and employers.

The "Labor Recruiter Accountability Act of 2003" holds recruiters and employers responsible for the promises they make to prospective employees, and discourages employers from using disreputable recruiters. The bill requires employers and foreign labor contractors to inform workers of the terms and conditions of their employment at the time they are recruited. It makes employers jointly liable for violations committed by recruiters in their employment. It imposes fines on employers and recruiters who do not live up to their promises and authorizes the Secretary of Labor to take additional legal action to enforce those commitments. Employers and recruiters are prohibited from requiring or requesting recruitment fees from workers and are required to pay the costs, including subsistence costs, of transporting the worker.

The bill discourages disreputable labor contractors by requiring the Secretary of Labor to maintain a public list of labor contractors who have been involved in violations of the Act and by providing additional penalties if employers use a contractor listed by the Secretary as having been involved in previous violations of this Act and that contractor contributes to a violation for which the employer may be liable. The remedies provided under the "Labor Recruiter Accountability Act" are not exclusive, but are in addition to any other remedies workers may have under law or contract.

Is it too much to ask that people who live on American soil, making products for American consumption, be treated like American workers? Even the most basic respect for human rights demands that we act now to protect these workers.

I am pleased that over 30 of our colleagues have joined me as original cosponsors of this bill. I am hopeful that all of our colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, will add their support to this critical legislation to end this kind of despicable exploitation of workers in the United States once and for all. This legislation is also supported by the AFL-CIO, the National Council of La Raza, and the Farmworker Justice Fund. Mr. Speaker, I urge Members of the House to join me and co-sponsor the "Labor Recruiter Accountability Act of 2003."

RECOGNIZING THE 5TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT OF 1998

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 19, 2003

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of H. Res. 423, recognizing the 5th anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, legislation that established the Office of International Religious Freedom within the Department of State.

This office is most often associated with its Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, which describes the status of religious freedom in each foreign country, government policies violating religious belief and practices, and U.S. policies to promote religious freedom around the world.

This document serves as an important tool for both Congress and the administration in making policy decisions regarding our relations with, and support for, countries around the world.

But in addition to the report, and frankly just as importantly, the Office develops strategies to promote religious freedom, both to attack the root causes of persecution and as a means of promoting other fundamental U.S. interests, such as protecting other core human rights, and encouraging the development of mature democracies.

The importance of this work cannot be overstated—the promotion of religious freedom is intimately connected to the promotion of other fundamental human and civil rights, as well as to the growth of democracy.

A government that acknowledges and protects freedom of religion and conscience is one that understands the inherent and inviolable dignity of the human person, and is more likely to protect, the other rights fundamental to human dignity, such as freedom from arbitrary arrest or seizure, or freedom from torture and murder.

But our interest in promoting religious freedom runs deeper than our support for democ-

racy and stability—it is, simply put, our most important core value, the very reason the 13 colonies were established. American support for religious freedom abroad certainly predates passage of this legislation in 1998. I am particularly proud of the role I played during my tenure as the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Helsinki Commission to raise awareness of religious persecution in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics, and the work of the Commission to promote the protection of religious minorities in the Eastern Bloc and elsewhere around the world.

Religious freedom is the first of the freedoms enumerated in the Bill of Rights—a reflection of the founders' belief that freedom of religion and conscience is the cornerstone of liberty.

As Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1803, "It behooves every man who values liberty of conscience for himself, to resist invasions of it in the case of others; or their case may, by change of circumstances, become his own."

I was an active supporter of the original legislation, I am proud of the work done by the office since its creation, and am pleased to help commemorate this important anniversary.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO CHERYL CHITTENDEN

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 19, 2003

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to rise and pay tribute to a remarkable woman from my district. Cheryl Chittenden has dedicated her life to ending domestic violence and assisting victims of domestic abuse. For her service, Cheryl was recently recognized as Advocate of the Year and it is my honor to rise and pay tribute to her contributions before this body of Congress today.

Cheryl has been battling the terrors of domestic violence for fifteen years. In 1985, she became the Director of the Latimer House Domestic Violence Shelter. During that time, Cheryl acted as chairperson of the Domestic Violence Task Force, and was one of the founders of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program.

Currently, Cheryl is a Victim Advocate in Mesa, Colorado. Each day, she goes beyond the call of duty for the betterment of domestic violence victims. Cheryl takes each victim's case to heart and treats him or her as though they were family. The Mesa community is truly a better place as the result of Cheryl's contributions.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to rise and pay tribute to Cheryl Chittenden before this body of Congress and this nation. Cheryl has dedicated her life to helping others while maintaining her devotion as a loving wife and caring mother. I am honored to join all of those Cheryl has helped in thanking her for her service.

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