

Ambassador Evans has given exemplary service to his country, and was a well-respected ambassador in a region of strategic importance to the United States. However, as it turns out, Evans was forced to vacate his post for publicly affirming the Armenian genocide.

Reports highly suggest that because Evans declared that "the Armenian genocide was the first genocide of the 20th Century," he is being unjustly penalized for speaking the truth.

However, by employing the proper term last year, the Ambassador was only building on previous statements by our leaders in Government, as well as the repeated declarations of numerous world-renowned scholars. Ambassador Evans did nothing more than succinctly repeat the conclusions enunciated by many before him.

Mr. Speaker, it is my fear that the Government of Turkey may have played a role in this unfortunate event. I strongly believe that they have expressed concern to the White House over Evans' remarks last year. In fact, immediately following his remarks, Evans issued a correction, all too seemingly at the behest of the administration.

And we must not allow a third party to interfere in U.S. diplomacy and refrain from declaring the truth in order to promote relations with Turkey. To this day, the Republic of Turkey refuses to acknowledge the fact that this massive crime against humanity took place under its control in the name of Turkish nationalism.

Unfortunately some 90 years later, the U.S. State Department continues to support Turkey's denials despite all evidence to the contrary. It is simply unacceptable for this administration to penalize Evans for his comments.

What he did was courageous and should be viewed as such, not punished. Ambassador Evans simply articulated the same message as that of the administration. However the only difference was his assigning a word to define the actions taken against Armenians.

Ambassador Evans is in fact an expert on the subject. He has studied the history of Armenia and based on his substantial studies he was willing to go on the record and define the systematic extermination of 1½ million Armenian men, women and children as genocide.

Mr. Speaker, in early March I wrote a letter to the State Department because I was outraged to see that Ambassador Evans was withdrawn from Armenia. Based on news reports the State Department recalled the Ambassador as retaliation for his statements.

Over 2 months have passed since I expressed my disappointment and I have yet to receive a response from the State Department. I specifically asked Secretary Rice for an explanation as to why Ambassador Evans was removed from his post. Not only was my inquiry ignored, but other Member's inquiries have also gone unanswered.

Now the White House has made an official announcement, but still has not

given an explanation. Mr. Speaker, I hope that the newly-appointed U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, Richard Hoagland, will not play the word games of the White House and comply with Turkey's campaign of genocide denial.

Mr. Speaker, the New York Times did an editorial on May 16 this year detailing the dangers to Turkey and to the world of that country's continued denial of the Armenian genocide. I just want to read the last paragraph of that insignificant editorial. It says, "the preponderance of serious scholarship outside Turkey accepts that more than a million Armenians perished between 1914 and 1915 in a regime-sponsored campaign. Turkey's continued refusal to countenance even a discussion of the issue stands as a major obstacle to restoring relations with neighboring Armenia and to claiming Turkey's rightful place in Europe and the west. It is time for the Turks to realize that the greater danger to them is denying history."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EMANUEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

GAS PRICES AND ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from Illinois.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, as the Memorial Day Weekend approaches, with the unofficial kickoff of the summer driving season, I rise this

evening to say a few words about the energy crisis in this country.

Specifically, I urge this Congress to take immediate action to crack down on price gouging of gasoline and develop alternative fuels to free Americans from the grip of foreign oil. Over the past several weeks and months, gas prices have skyrocketed across the country.

Middle class families who were already feeling economic pressure of the rising cost of health care and college expenses are getting squeezed tighter still due to the higher price of gasoline.

According to the AAA fuel gauge report, my North Carolina neighbors are paying nearly \$3 a gallon for gas. I know I paid that much when I stopped and got gas on Monday and filled my car up. Now, as a former full-time small businessman for almost 20 years, I take no back seat to anyone in support of free enterprise market capitalism.

But the gasoline price gouging of American citizens must stop. Unfortunately, the administration has chosen to turn a blind eye to this urgent problem. Just yesterday, the head of the Federal Trade Commission argued against a new Federal law against price gouging by the oil companies and suggested that they be allowed to continue to reap the profits of American consumer's pain at the pump.

I am proud that my colleagues and I have introduced the Federal Response to Energy Emergency or FREE Act. I am pleased this House has passed this important legislation. I hope the administration will end its opposition and the Senate will put this into law shortly.

Over the long term, Mr. Speaker, Congress must exercise visionary leadership to pass policies that are innovative to secure America's energy independence.

Last month I hosted a summit on biofuels in my Congressional district to explore policy options to grow our way out of this energy dependence we have. This event featured local, State and national experts on energy, biofuel producers and State government officials.

We examined the current state of the biofuel development and explored how North Carolina as the third largest agricultural producing state can become a leader in biofuel production.

What we found is that we have the technology to make our own fuel from the products we grow in our fields today. For example, soybeans are the largest crop in my State of North Carolina, making up about 25 percent of the total acreage in our State.

We have the answers to our fuel crisis growing in our fields across America. In addition to the biofuels summit, I recently discussed this topic with the Second District Youth Advisory Committee, a group of young people. And let me tell you that these young people get it. They inherently understand that the U.S. reliance on imported fossil fuels is unsustainable and leaves us

vulnerable to developments far from our borders and not under our control.

Mr. Speaker, as a Member of the House Agricultural Committee and co-chair of the House Democratic Rural Working Group, I know firsthand that rural Americans feel this pain when they go to the pumps. But rural America will benefit from legislation my colleagues and I have introduced to encourage biofuel production and the usage of it in the United States.

Specifically this legislation will, one, increase production of American-made biofuels. Double the percentage of renewable fuels sold in America in 6 years, make sure that biodiesel and cellulosic sources are the key parts of that increase, and extends tax credits for ethanol and biodiesel through 2015, and increases tax benefits to small ethanol producers.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, the bill will expand the market for and the distribution of biofuels, invest in research and development to improve the use of renewable energy. And, finally, the bill will encourage local domestic ownership through Federal incentives to small ethanol and biofuel plants so that independent locally-owned facilities that produce biofuels can grow and thrive, improving our rural communities and creating jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I hope when Congress returns from the Memorial Day district work period that this House will pass this legislation to invest in America's energy independence.

I hope the administration will put the power of the Federal Government to work for the American people suffering at the gas pump, rather than the big oil CEOs enjoying record profits at their expense.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BILIRAKIS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

□ 2300

FOSTERING OUR FUTURE ACT OF 2006

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, this week I introduced the Fostering our Future Act of 2006, along with my colleague, the distinguished gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HART).

This is a bill to help our Nation's foster youth by strengthening dependency courts and requiring accountability.

Foster care is a critical safety net for half a million abused and neglected American children. It is, however, a system in need of support and reform. 20 percent of all foster kids will be forced to wait over 5 years for a safe, permanent family. Even worse, almost

20,000 older youth age out of the system without the assistance of a permanent family every year.

Frequent foster home transfers create turbulence and insecurity that heighten the emotional, behavioral and educational challenges faced by these youth. The doubling of the foster care population since the early 1980s compounds this problem by creating enormous caseloads and taxing the capacity of foster homes.

The end result is that foster kids through no fault of their own are more likely to experience homelessness, unemployment and other life course problems despite their resilience and courage. Imagine what it is like to be 8 years old, neglected by your parents and then taken away from them. You are told that you must live with a family that is not your own. You would be confused by court proceedings that govern your future and frightened that you might be transferred to yet another home. You would certainly feel alienated from your peers who talk about mom and dad. Imagine what that must feel like.

These children deserve better. They should be guaranteed physical and emotional safety. They should have continuing relationships with caregivers and loved ones. They should have an informed voice in the legal decisions made about their lives. And they should enter adulthood prepared to live a happy, healthy and productive life. We have a responsibility to these children to meet these goals. Anything less is unacceptable.

Practitioners and policy experts have conducted thorough analyses and advanced proposals to overhaul the foster care system. The most prominent example, a comprehensive 2004 report by the bipartisan Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care identified several areas where the Federal Government could support these kids by strengthening the Nation's foster care systems.

The Pew Commission found that State dependency court systems were failing to sufficiently track cases and train personnel, because they do not receive Federal funds to do so. Inter-agency collaboration and performance measurement where they exist have been inconsistent both within and between States and tend to focus on bureaucratic needs rather than outcomes.

I was pleased earlier this year when under the leadership of the Ways and Means chairman of the subcommittee, Mr. HERGER, the committee passed legislation that included \$100 million in new funding to improve our foster care system. These funds have been allocated to improve juvenile and family courts, help track and analyze caseloads, train judges and other court personnel and bolster collaboration between State courts and State child welfare agencies. While this is a critical first step, it is time we implement the rest of the court-related provisions recommended by the Pew Commission,

and this legislation we introduced will do exactly that.

Our State foster care system struggled to retain qualified dependency attorneys who are often burdened by substantial debt. A recent survey found that one-third of practicing dependency attorneys graduated with over \$75,000 in outstanding loans, and 44 percent of them currently owe more than \$50,000. High turnover among dependency attorneys has led to a dearth of experienced lawyers who have a comprehensive understanding of the system and maintain valuable relationships with their young clients.

The Fostering Our Future Act that we are introducing responds to these shortcomings. It encourages Statewide interagency collaboration and data sharing. It ensures effective representation is available to children and families. It establishes a loan forgiveness program to attract and retain qualified child welfare attorneys. And most importantly, by focusing on child welfare outcomes, this legislation will keep the needs of children and families rather than the needs of bureaucracies front and center.

I commend the child welfare workers of America for the invaluable services they provide and for constantly struggling to get this issue the attention it deserves. Foster care plays a crucial role in the Nation's child welfare safety net, but it is in desperate need of change and support. I call on my colleagues to join us working for the day when all of our Nation's children are protected, nurtured and loved. And I invite you to join me in that quest by co-sponsoring the Fostering Our Future Act of 2006.

HONORING OUR VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, this week as we begin to go into this weekend to celebrate Memorial Day, it is most fitting that we take a moment to say a word about our soldiers, those who have fallen, who have given their lives in battle for the protection of this country and the enhancement of freedom around the world. And so it is with great pleasure and honor that I start this recognition off recognizing the great courage and work of our soldiers.

From the Revolutionary War, as we recall, many soldiers who gave their lives to start the foundation of this country, many of those soldiers whose portraits hang in this great Capitol, several of those soldiers who walked with bloody feet through Valley Forge through the winter because we could not get them the proper boots to wear. But they went on and they fought against the odds and brought freedom and started this country; to the War of 1812; all the way through the Civil War, where brother fought against brother; the greatest contests in war that