

that the same well-tested principles used in determining whether or not a complaint is valid for Federal employees and contractors (and some private sector employees) who blow the whistle is used for private sector workers.

Third, the Act establishes a new office within the Department of Labor, which will be dedicated solely to administering whistleblower complaints. Following an investigation by this office, the Act provides an opportunity for hearings before a Department of Labor administrative law judge and final review by the Office of the Secretary. Complainants would also have the right to take their cases to court.

Since the substantive whistleblower protections under OSHA and MSHA are well-established, the Act takes a different approach for those who blow the whistle on safety and health violations. Procedurally, the Miner Act functions at an acceptable level, but the procedures of the OSHA Act badly need an overhaul. So the Streamlining Act would provide complainants under the OSHA Act with the same hearing, final review, and court opportunities as for others. For practical reasons, it would leave the initial investigations to OSHA.

Finally, the bill requires the National Academies to study why some persons or communities are reluctant to step forward and report illegal violations.

We want to encourage workers to come forward and report violations of law. The Private Sector Whistleblower Streamlining Act of 2007 will make it easier for them to do so.

RECOGNIZING ANNIVERSARIES OF
MASS MOVEMENT FOR SOVIET
JEWISH FREEDOM AND FREE-
DOM SUNDAY RALLY FOR SO-
VIET JEWRY

SPEECH OF

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 30, 2007

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in support of H. Res. 759, which recognizes two of the most important events in the area of human rights in the twentieth century: Recognizing the 40th Anniversary of the Mass Movement for Soviet Jewish Freedom and the 20th Anniversary of the Freedom Sunday Rally on the Mall in Washington, DC.

I would like to specifically touch on one of the most important aspects of the Jewish struggle for freedom—the right to emigrate.

A few months ago, the travel plans of many Americans were disrupted when they were unable to acquire within a reasonable period of time U.S. passports that would allow them to travel abroad to certain regions. It was an inconvenience, but fortunately, the State Department with great effort cleared up the backlog and the waiting period is now back to around two months.

Now imagine waiting five, ten, or even fifteen years for a passport allowing you to leave the country.

Imagine not filling out an application and dropping it into the mail, but instead trudging from office to educational institution to police station seeking signatures from employers and various officials, without which the emigration office would not even consider the application to emigrate.

Imagine being told you can't leave, but not given any rational reason as to why not. Or being told that you cannot emigrate because of military service—in a construction unit!

Imagine taking to the streets with a sign demanding the right to reunify with one's family and loved ones abroad, as stipulated in the U.N. Convention on Civil and Political Rights, and being set upon by police and perhaps winding up in a forced labor camp or in internal exile in some tiny village in Siberia.

It may be hard to imagine, but this is what thousands of Soviet Jews faced when they wanted to emigrate to Israel from the former Soviet Union.

And why did Soviet Jews want to emigrate? Many of them were tired of the government anti-semitism that permeated the Soviet system, including a quota system for educational institutions. Understandably, they did not want their children to face these obstacles.

Many wished to practice their Jewish faith, to be able to attend a synagogue—if they could find one that hadn't been closed by the Communists—without having to worry that some Communist Party hack would see them and report them to their employers or teachers. Others were tired of the constant stream of anti-Semitic articles in the Soviet press parading as opposition to Zionism.

In 1967, with the Soviet press spewing tirades against Israel and alleged Zionist misdeeds in the wake of Israel's victory in the Six Day War, the Jewish emigration movement in the Soviet Union began in earnest. Many applicants, to be sure, were allowed to leave, but others were refused time and time again. The word "refusenik" was coined. Members of the Jewish community in the United States and throughout the world took up their cause. Others who cherished basic human rights, including Members of this body, joined in solidarity. Activists took part in demonstrations, wrote letters to Soviet officials, visited refuseniks in the Soviet Union, sent packages to imprisoned refuseniks, and never quit working on their behalf. It was an impressive demonstration of determination and unity.

And as this resolution notes, almost twenty years ago, on December 6, 1987, an estimated 250,000 persons demonstrated on the National Mall here in Washington on behalf of Soviet Jewish emigration as President Reagan prepared for a summit meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev. African Americans joined the rally in large numbers due in part to the active Jewish participation in the civil rights movement in the United States. One of these African American leaders eloquently expressed why so many non-Jews were there. He said, "As long as one Jew is kept against his will in the Soviet Union, we are all Jews."

A few years later, as the Soviet Union was collapsing and perestroika and glasnost became the watchwords, the barriers to Soviet Jewish emigration were lifted. Justice had at last prevailed.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution recognizes both the brave individuals who stood up to tyranny and demanded their right to freedom of movement, and those who vigorously campaigned on their behalf.

As Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, I am honored to stand with my colleague and good friend, HENRY WAXMAN, in support of this resolution, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA
RECOVERY FACILITATION ACT
OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 29, 2007

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3247, the Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Recovery Facilitation Act of 2007. This bill directs the President to increase to 90 percent the amount of Federal contributions for replacing any State or local government property damaged by the hurricanes. Enactment of this bill is critical if we are going to finally rebuild the historic and vital infrastructure in Mississippi and Louisiana.

This bill also addresses a variety of other issues of importance toward rebuilding communities in Mississippi and Louisiana including temporary housing for volunteers, debris removal program eligibility for Mississippi and Louisiana, providing for respectful care and interment of human remains damaged during the hurricanes, restoring certain public facilities and providing incentives for certain hazard mitigation projects. All of these are important steps toward rebuilding our vibrant Gulf Coast communities.

Madam Speaker, this bill is welcomed, as both Louisiana and Mississippi are still rebuilding from the damages caused by the storms. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported in August that some communities are still without basic needs—such as schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure. In addition to these basic community needs, many are still without jobs because the doors of many businesses remain closed. Estimates from the Congressional Budget Office put, capital losses resulting from both hurricanes in the range of \$70 to \$130 billion. The GAO report further found that a substantial portion of the billions of dollars in assistance to the Gulf Coast was directed to short-term needs, leaving a smaller portion for long-term rebuilding. To date, the Federal government has provided most long-term rebuilding assistance to the Gulf Coast states through two key programs: FEMA's Public Assistance Program and the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG). Both States allocated a bulk of their CDBG funds to homeowner assistance, thus, creating a need for supplemental public assistance funds to focus on rebuilding and restoring critical infrastructure, such as government facilities, which funding this bill provides.

The increased assistance from the Federal government to Louisiana and Mississippi to rebuild their infrastructure through FEMA's public assistance program will help with the financial burden they face and will allow the process, which has thus far been daunting, to proceed more rapidly. This legislation is a step forward because it increases Federal assistance toward the rebuilding process and provides needed changes to the Stafford Act.

And, as we focus on rebuilding infrastructure in Louisiana and Mississippi, we must not forget that many of the child care facilities were damaged and even destroyed, while parents struggled to find a safe place to leave