

Art in any form including, but not limited to dance, music, and poetry provides a mechanism where by people are able to express themselves, which ultimately represents their culture, identity, and voice. In addition to representing a culture, the selling of artistic goods provides a source of income for artists and substantially contributes to an economy, especially in the U.S.

The artists issue is part of the broader implications with the travel ban and trade embargo, which hurts the U.S. economically, politically, and socially. It is estimated that the U.S. economy loses millions of dollars annually due to the trade embargo. The lack of diplomatic relations prevents any effort to democratize Cuba. There is no way to quantify the cost paid by Cuban Americans who can't visit their loved ones freely.

The United States-Cuba policy is a failure, period. Change is needed now. I urge my colleagues to support my bills, H.R. 624 and H. R. 654, which would lift the embargo and travel ban.

U.S.-CUBA CULTURAL EXCHANGE,
Albuquerque, NM, November 27, 2007.

President GEORGE W. BUSH,
*The White House,
Washington, DC.*

DEAR PRESIDENT BUSH: We wish to bring to your attention the accompanying letter, dated October 26, 2007, received from Alicia Alonso, Prima Ballerina and Director of the Cuban National Ballet, and also Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Ms. Alonso has toured extensively in the United States and her work has long been admired by the American performing arts community, cultural critics and the public.

We are writing you as representatives of the cultural sphere in the United States. We write you as American citizens. We write to express our dismay at your administration's continuing hostility towards Cuba. We write to express our opposition to policies that keep us divided from our Cuban counterparts, preventing cultural interchange between our two countries. We believe the time has come to move towards cooperation and constructive relations with Cuba.

The present policies deny such possibilities of friendship and cultural sharing. We further note that cultural interchanges and relationships are also modes of communication and expression. In denying us the possibility of engaging in such exchanges and relationships, we are being denied our fundamental rights as guaranteed by the 1st, 5th and 14th Amendments of the U.S. Constitution.

This reality seems to run counter to other positions expressed by your Administration. In September 2006, for example, Laura Bush inaugurated your Administration's "Global Cultural Initiative," stating that "One of the best ways we can deepen our friendships with the people of all countries is for us to better understand each other's culture by enjoying each other's literature, music, films and visual arts."

As citizens, artists, scholars, educators and cultural workers from all artistic practices, academic disciplines, advocacy and service organizations in the arts, we hope you will read and consider the words of Alicia Alonso as we call upon your Administration to:

1. open a respectful dialogue with the government and people of Cuba in accord with established protocols supported by the community of nations;

2. end the travel ban that prevents U.S. citizens from visiting Cuba and allow for Cuban artists and scholars to visit the United States, thus eliminating the censorship of art and ideas, and

3. initiate, by working with appropriate members of Congress, a process that can result in the development of normal bilateral relations between our countries.

Supporters of Cultural Exchanges with Cuba:

Louis Head—Cuba Research and Analysis Group—Co-founder US-Cuba Cultural Exchange.

Bill Martinez—Martinez & Associates—Co-founder US-Cuba Cultural Exchange.

Cynthia Semon—Media consultant/music promoter—US-Cuba Cultural Exchange.

James Early—Cultural Policy Specialist—U.S.-Cuba Cultural Exchange.

Harry Belafonte—actor/singer.

Danny Glover—actor.

Sean Penn—actor.

Carlos Santana—musician.

(Plus more than 1,400 other signatories).

VETERANS GUARANTEED BONUS ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 17, 2007

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this bill that corrects a desperately ill-advised regulation hurting our Nation's heroic men and women in uniform. This Defense Department policy has resulted in several veterans being denied their full bonuses or being asked to repay funds they are entitled to, simply because their injuries prevented them from serving out their full term of service.

Unfortunately, this is not a new problem. Back in October of 2004, Brian Ross of ABC News reported that Army Specialist Tyson Johnson, who was injured by an exploding mortar round in Iraq, later received a letter demanding repayment of his enlistment bonus while he was still recuperating in the hospital.

Two months ago, National Public Radio highlighted the story of Army Specialist Ronald Hinkle, who suffered a traumatic brain injury after an IED explosion cut short his military career. Not only was Specialist Hinkle owed \$2,500 in back salary, but two months after NPR's story aired, he was notified that a \$3,000 enlistment bonus would not be paid because he "failed to fulfill his contract."

In yet another case, Tommy Guinn, who is a respected 14-year Army veteran, ended his term of service early when a helicopter accident in Pakistan left him paralyzed. Thank God he made it home safely to his family, but the military kept \$1,000 out of his re-enlistment bonus.

This is not the treatment our returning warriors deserve. I am proud to support this bill that finally changes this flawed policy. The Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act makes the bonus payments automatic and requires the Secretary to pay any remaining portion of bonus payments within 90 days of medical discharge. During this season of Peace on Earth and goodwill towards men, let us show goodwill to those on the frontlines protecting our peace. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

IN APPRECIATION OF DANIEL V.
KISH

HON. DON YOUNG

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2007

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Daniel V. Kish and the 28 years of service he has provided to the State of Alaska and the Nation.

In the summer of 1978, a young long-haired college student dressed in muddy work boots wandered into my office looking for an internship. Why he chose my office in particular, I do not know, though I suspect it had something to do with an attractive young lady working at the front desk, but he appeared willing and eager to work. Thus, after telling him to get a haircut and a pair of loafers, I put him to work.

My staff and I were immediately impressed by Dan's strong work ethic, his innate understanding of even the most complex issues, and his natural ability to communicate to my constituents—both in writing and in spoken word—the practical impacts of the various legislative proposals before the Congress.

In fact, when Dan returned to Indiana's Wabash College at the end of that summer to finish his studies, he left our office with an unexpected void to fill. The following year Dan had completed his undergraduate degree, and we had an open position to fill. Thanks to the good judgment and recommendation of the young woman who drew Dan into our office the previous summer, I tracked him down and asked him to come to work for me full-time. In the years since then, Dan has earned himself a well-deserved reputation as one of the most talented, dedicated, and knowledgeable staffers on the Hill.

Dan has stuck with me through thick and thin. He has always kept my best interests, and the best interests of the State of Alaska, at heart. His devotion to me, the State of Alaska, and the Nation has been unparalleled. Dan's unwavering commitment to and understanding of strong Republican ideals, free market policies, and responsible development of our Nation's resources have been an inspiration to hundreds of Hill staffers and Members alike, and he has served as the moral compass by which the Resources Committee has sailed throughout his tenure.

Dan's writing throughout the years has been equally inspiring. He is by far the single most impressive writer I've come across in 35 years. His talent and ability to get to the root of an issue in two or three eloquent sentences is unmatched. While Dan's use of words has always been powerful, it has often been humorous as well. A strong supporter of a free market economy, Dan once wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Treasury recommending that the \$1 coin bear the likeness of Dolly Arthur—the owner of a historic bordello in Ketchikan, Alaska—suggesting that unlike Susan B. Anthony, she "was truly a woman who knew the value of a dollar." This unique sense of humor has brought smiles to my face and many others for nearly three decades.

But most of all, Dan Kish will be remembered for the genuine respect and appreciation he has always had for what he called "the Working Man." Although his mind was often occupied in debates over esoteric federal policies, his heart has always belonged to the