

His funeral will be this Friday in Houston, Texas, and his fellow officers will wear their black cloth of sacrifice across their badges. Peace officers are the last strand of wire in the fence between the law and those that violate the law.

Officer Timothy Abernethy lived and died serving the people of Texas and the City of Houston.

And that's the just way it is.

THE AUTO INDUSTRY FINANCING AND RESTRUCTURING ACT

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to commend Chairman BARNEY FRANK, the House leadership, and the administration for working together to bring relief to the automobile industry and millions of workers. By passing the Auto Industry Financing and Restructuring Act, H.R. 7321, we took the monumental step of both saving jobs and setting the U.S. automotive industry on a path that will make it globally effective, efficient, and competitive. And equally important, we established a new standard of accountability that must be enforced for any institutions seeking government assistance.

For months, the Federal Government has been blindly throwing money at nearly every financial institution that blinks with no written requirements on how that money is to be used and with no written standards of transparency or accountability. In response, these institutions have taken hundreds of billion of taxpayer dollars and continued to do business as usual: the business of partying at the spa, getting their facials and manicures, getting millions in retention payments and spending hundreds of millions of dollars on sports sponsorships.

This type of mismanagement of taxpayer funds has left the American people suffering from bailout fatigue. I get that. I have been one of the most vocal critics of this distribution of top funds to date.

However, today's legislation is completely different. The automakers have been forced to leap over 5 million hurdles to even be considered to receive a loan. And with every demand we have made of them, these companies have willingly obliged.

We cannot have one standard for white collar employees and a different standard for blue collar employees. We need to have strict standards for every one.

The legislation passed today includes very important oversight provisions to protect taxpayer dollars, such as prohibiting golden parachutes and capping executive bonuses. It also establishes a "car czar" position to hold these companies accountable for developing and implementing viable long-term restructuring plans and ensuring compliance on financing efforts.

And yet despite these requirements, there are some who will still believe that assisting the Big Three is a continuation of throwing good money after bad. I strongly disagree. With one in ten American jobs tied to the auto industry, this should not be considered a waste of money. We're talking about 3 million jobs expecting to be lost within a year if the auto industry goes down. With men and women across America continuing to struggle to keep roofs over their heads, to make ends meet, we simply cannot afford to lose these jobs.

Lastly, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released a report showing the loss of 533,000 jobs in November, the highest single month loss in 34 years, and one of the most dismal reports in the Bureau's 124-year existence.

These figures were simply staggering, and we can and we must do better. And by passing this legislation today, we are taking a first step in doing so.

For this reason, I urge my colleagues in the Senate to quickly consider H.R. 7321 and enact this much-needed legislation as soon as possible. I ask them, and I hope they will have more faith in our automobile industry, and I encourage all of my colleagues to continue the strict standards of accountability as we move forward.

With that, I yield back.

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

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

ECUADOR FACING HUMANITARIAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I have just returned from a remarkable trip to Ecuador. From November 8 through 13, I traveled through northern Ecuador looking at the refugee crisis on its border with Colombia and on the effects of oil contamination on the land and people of the Amazon basin.

I saw firsthand the terrible human and environmental costs that have resulted from the decades-long failure to properly clean the contamination left by oil drilling and production. Specifically, the sites I visited were those that were under the control of Texaco, now Chevron. I visited oil pits that were poorly constructed, poorly remediated, or remediated not at all. This has left a toxic legacy for poor campesinos and indigenous peoples.

I also saw the infrastructure that Chevron/Texaco created that allowed for the wholesale dumping of formation water and other highly toxic materials directly into the Amazon and its waters.

As an American citizen, the degradation and contamination left behind in a poor part of the world by this U.S. company made me angry and ashamed.

The drinking water for thousands of poor people is horribly unfit, even deadly. Children are drinking and bathing in water that reeks of oil. In one village, San Carlos, I couldn't come across a family that hasn't been touched by cancer. Mothers brought their children to show me the terrible rashes and sores that covered their bodies.

A lawsuit has been filed against Chevron by 30,000 Amazon residents demanding that the company accept responsibility for substandard production practices and help with the clean-up efforts. Chevron, for its part, asserts it was released from responsibility in the 1990s, and the release remains in legal dispute.

Neither Congress nor the United States Government should get involved in a legal matter that will soon be decided in a court of law. But as the years pass and nothing is done, the situation on the ground has become more and more desperate for thousands of poor people, and the pollution spreads deeper into the soil, the water, and the Amazon basin.

I firmly believe these people and their environment need help and they need help now.

As I traveled further north towards the border frontier, I found a growing humanitarian and security crisis. Eight years ago, the United States started pouring military aid—\$4.8 billion of it—into Colombia, much of it focused on military operations in the violent coca growing zones just across the border from Ecuador.

The result has been an alarming spillover of violence into Ecuador's peaceful but impoverished borderlands. Over 200,000 Colombians—a number rivaling many refugee crises in Africa—have fled to Ecuador to escape the violence and intense fighting between guerrilla groups, the Colombian military, and Colombian paramilitary militias.

As the GAO recently reported, harsh U.S. counter-drug strategies have failed to halt cocaine production in Colombia or ease the violence that comes with this illegal economy. Instead, organized crime has been pushed across the border into Ecuador.

Mr. Speaker, I stood on the banks of the San Miguel River, which marks the border between Putumayo, Colombia, and Sucumbios, Ecuador. Only a few hundred yards of water separate the two.

Mr. Speaker, Colombia's war is literally bleeding, violently, into Ecuador, which has no history of illegal drug cultivation or insurgency from its own people. Tensions between the two nations are high and diplomatic relations remain cut off.

The refugee communities that I spoke with in Lago Agrio, Barranca Bermeja, and Puerto Mestanza feel abandoned and discriminated against.

They long to return to Colombia even as they describe the terror that forced them to seek safe haven in Ecuador.

□ 2115

They spoke of the need for community development projects but have no one to turn to to help them help bring their modest ideas into reality. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, is nearly the lone partner with the Ecuadorian government in dealing with the largest refugee crisis in the hemisphere, with some aid from the World Food Programme and the IOM. Where are the other NGOs and U.N. agencies that would normally be involved in a crisis of this magnitude?

These crises are not of the making of the government of President Rafael Correa. Ecuador needs and deserves the support of the international community and Congress to address these challenges. They cannot be allowed to remain invisible.

Mr. Speaker, I was deeply moved by my visit to Ecuador, and I will never forget the courageous people, Ecuadorians and Colombians, who told me their stories and asked for my help. They deserve to live a much better life. In the weeks ahead, I hope I can count on my House colleagues to help these communities in this effort.

[From the Christian Science Monitor, June 24, 2008]

TACKLING ECUADOR'S REFUGEE BUILDUP

LAGO AGRIO, Ecuador.—Less than a month ago, Rosalba Agredo González was given only a few minutes to leave her house in Colombia. She was woken up in the middle of the night by armed men who threatened her and took away her neighbor.

"They told me they wouldn't do anything to me because of my children. Otherwise they would have killed me," she says.

Agredo now lives with her elderly father and her three children in Lago Agrio, a small city in northern Ecuador, 15 miles from the Colombian border. They've made their temporary home alongside one wall of a small wooden house, with only a tin roof, concrete floor, and plastic sheets for walls. She doesn't have a job but sometimes prepares a local pastry at a neighbor's house which her eldest son sells on the street. Despite her precarious situation, she is happy to be in Ecuador. "I don't want to go back to Colombia, even if I have to maintain myself by selling empanadas," she says. "I feel very happy here because even if I don't own anything I know my children are safe." Agredo's story is not uncommon. Ecuador has more refugees than any other Latin American country—a consequence of the longstanding conflict in Colombia, which has received little international attention. Five to 10 refugees arrive in Ecuador every day, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), mainly, from two southern Colombian provinces bordering Ecuador, Putumayo and Nariño. Given the buildup of refugees, the Ecuadorean government and a few humanitarian agencies are taking measures to provide asylum and assistance. But the challenges remain large. Of the estimated 180,000 who have entered Ecuador escaping violence, 16,500 have received a refugee visa and 22,000 are awaiting a response.

TROUBLE SECURING ASYLUM

The remaining 80 percent have yet to apply—some fear becoming vulnerable to

further persecution, while others are unaware they might qualify for asylum. Asylum seekers are granted access to public health and education from the moment they set foot in Ecuador. However they often have trouble affording decent housing and supporting their families, as they are not allowed to work until granted a refugee visa. "Legalizing refugees is very important so that they come out of their invisibility, otherwise they can't get legal jobs and become very vulnerable," says Alfonso Morales, who heads the department for refugees at Ecuador's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "They become easy prey to illegal networks and often end up participating in illegal activities." On June 20, to coincide with World Refugee Day, the Ecuadorean Ministry of Foreign Affairs inaugurated a new office in Lago Agrio, an important step toward improving refugee registration. The new office will make registration faster for applicants, as documents will be processed directly instead of being sent to Quito, Ecuador's capital. Another new measure is an enhanced registration process that will start in September and will make it possible for refugees to apply for and receive their visas in one day. Right now the registration process takes about four months if applicants can go to Quito and between 18 and 24 months if they can't leave the north.

ISOLATED, POOR COMMUNITIES

But registration is just an initial step in the process of providing better living conditions for refugees. The northern province of Sucumbios, of which Lago Agrio is the capital, faces the largest influx of refugees. A jungle area separated from Colombia by two rivers, the area also presents many logistical and security challenges for humanitarian work. Border communities here are difficult to access and often lack basic infrastructure such as roads, drinking water, and health facilities. Though Sucumbios is rich in oil, the province is among the least developed in Ecuador, with high levels of unemployment and an informal economy that relies on illegal activity such as drug trafficking, weapons smuggling, and human trafficking. It was in this province that Colombia's cross-border raid on March 1 took place, leaving FARC commander Raul Reyes—and another 25 people—dead and creating a regional diplomatic crisis. "In small communities the solidarity is amazing. They are willing to share everything, but it's important to intervene quickly so as not to allow tensions to develop," says Xavier Creach, head of the UNHCR field office in Lago Agrio. UNHCR has prioritized reaching those isolated communities along the border.

"We have serious economic and institutional limits when it comes to taking care of the huge quantity of Colombian refugees that have come to our country," says Mr. Morales, the government official. "The international community hasn't yet recognized the magnitude of the problem. We need foreign support."

[From UNHCR—The UN Refugee Agency, June 24, 2008]

ECUADOR OPENS FIRST REFUGEE OFFICE ALONG BORDER WITH COLOMBIA

LAGO AGRIO.—Ecuador's Directorate General for Refugees has just opened an office in the border province of Sucumbios, the first state-run facility of its kind to be established outside the national capital, Quito.

President Rafael Correa presided over the opening ceremony in the provincial capital of Lago Agrio last Friday, World Refugee Day. Lago Agrio is located just a few kilometres from northeast Ecuador's border with Colombia.

Foreign Minister Maria Isabel Salvador told guests that the office would help Ecu-

dor fulfill its obligations to refugees and others in need of international protection. Ecuador has the largest refugee population in Latin America, coming mostly from Colombia.

"This is in agreement with Ecuador's commitment to all human rights, a commitment that calls us to welcome any person forced to leave their home country in search of safety and a secure life," Salvador said, adding that the government hoped to soon open more refugee offices along the border.

The new refugee office will provide advice and orientation to registered refugees and other people of concern. Its staff will also conduct interviews to assess the applications of asylum seekers as well as issue documentation.

It will be fully operational as of next month, allowing the UN refugee agency to focus its activities on border monitoring and local integration of refugees, with projects that help both refugees and their host communities.

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

(Mr. WOLF 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 gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BRIDGE LOAN FOR THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, it's a particular joy this evening to have Congressman NICK LAMPSON in the Chair as Speaker Pro Tem and thank him for his remarkable and exemplary service to the people of the United States.

Tonight, I would like to address the subject of the fact that a majority of House Members today voted for a bridge loan, a very tightly structured bridge loan, to throw a lifeline to American workers, American communities, American manufacturing, to save American jobs, in fact, one of every 10 jobs in our country. They're jobs not just in the so-called automotive assembly plants, but twice as many jobs in the automotive parts plants, the steel industry, the plastic industry, the semi-conductor industry, even the textile industry. Nearly half of that production is used in automotive products. It is simply staggering the way in which this integrated set of production occurs in our country.

What was passed was a bridge loan to the auto industry, and I underline the word "loan." It has to be paid back. It has to be paid back in 7 years, and it has to be paid back with interest, 5 percent interest over the first 5 years, and 9 percent interest over the last 2 years.