

Act for Fiscal Year 2008 to authorize the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) to exercise certain employment and employment-related authorities currently permitted for the heads of temporary organizations established by law or executive order.

As a member of the Homeland Security Committee, and Co-Chair of the US-Afghan Caucus, I am deeply concerned about this matter and want to ensure that the Inspector General's staffing needs are fulfilled in order for him to successfully carry out the responsibilities of his position. In order to be successful in Afghanistan and defeat the insurgents, we must make sure that we have a fully staffed SIGAR who is able to complete the duties of his position in a timely and accurate manner. The security of our troops and the success of our mission in Afghanistan depends upon it.

Since 2001, the U.S. has provided approximately \$32 billion in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan. In addition, the international community has provided a further \$25.3 billion for the rebuilding of Afghanistan. Since its inception in 2001, the SIGAR's mission has been to enhance oversight of programs for the reconstruction of Afghanistan by conducting independent and objective audits, inspections, and investigations on the use of taxpayer dollars and related funds by keeping the Congress, as well as the Secretaries of State and Defense, currently informed of reconstruction progress and weaknesses.

Amending this defense bill reflects our commitment to support the men and women who fight to secure not only our citizen's freedom but the freedom of others. This bill will provide the necessary resources to protect the American people and our national interests at home and abroad. With this extended personnel authority, the SIGAR has now become a formidable and compelling instrument to make oversight of reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan a reality.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I yield back my time.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. I yield my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 615.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES TO ITALIAN EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 430) expressing condolences to the citizens of Italy and support for the Government of Italy in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that struck the Abruzzo region of central Italy, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 430

Whereas, in the early morning hours of April 6, 2009, a 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck the Abruzzo region of central Italy, killing over 250 people, damaging or destroying up to 15,000 buildings, and leaving tens of thousands homeless;

Whereas the epicenter of the quake was the town of L'Aquila, located 60 miles northeast of Rome, and massive destruction was reported in 26 surrounding cities, towns, and villages;

Whereas rescue workers, who heroically pulled over 100 survivors from the rubble, continued to find survivors amongst the wreckage days after the quake struck;

Whereas strong aftershocks continued to rock the region and created hazardous conditions for residents and rescue workers;

Whereas this was Italy's deadliest quake since 1980;

Whereas the earthquake damaged centuries old landmarks including churches and castles;

Whereas humanitarian aid agencies in the United States and around the world mobilized to provide much needed assistance to the relief and recovery efforts;

Whereas President Barack Obama expressed his condolences, and those of the people of the United States, to families that have lost loved ones and assured Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi that the United States stood ready to help Italy at this time of need; and

Whereas Prime Minister Berlusconi said that Italy would accept the support offered by President Obama and would devote it to preserving the region's cultural and artistic heritage and educational institutions: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) mourns the loss of life and expresses its deepest condolences to the families of those killed and injured in the earthquake;

(2) recognizes the deep ties between the United States and Italy and expresses continued solidarity with the people of Italy during this time of crisis;

(3) applauds the courageous response of Italian rescue workers;

(4) supports President Obama's offer of United States assistance to Italy in response to this catastrophic event;

(5) urges the people of the United States to generously support those humanitarian aid agencies working to assist the people of Italy in this time of need;

(6) commends the many United States organizations, including the National Italian-American Foundation, working to demonstrate support and solidarity with the Italian people and raising funds to provide needed help; and

(7) expresses gratitude to the people of the United States who have generously supported those humanitarian aid agencies working to assist the people of Italy in this time of need.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from American Samoa.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and in-

clude extraneous material in the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from American Samoa?

There was no objection.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution which expresses condolences to the citizens and the Government of Italy in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in the Abruzzo region.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my good friend and my colleague, Mr. PASCRELL from the great State of New Jersey, for introducing this important resolution that allows the House to add its voice to the international outpouring of sympathy for the Italian people in the wake of this natural disaster.

On April 6, the Abruzzo region of central Italy was struck by a 6.3 magnitude on the Richter scale earthquake. Nearly 300 people were killed while tens of thousands were left homeless. In addition to the terrible loss of life and livelihood, the earthquake damaged nearly 15,000 buildings, including hundreds of churches, castles, and heritage sites.

The U.S. Embassy in Rome immediately provided \$50,000 in emergency relief funding while President Obama expressed his condolences and offered additional American assistance. Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi, the host of the next G-8 meeting, has relocated the July summit to the town of L'Aquila that was at the center of the devastation. As he explained, "The G-8 in L'Aquila represents the message of hope for the entire region struck by the earthquake."

It is appropriate that the House pauses today, Mr. Speaker, as Prime Minister Berlusconi is in Washington, DC, to express its deepest condolences to the families killed and injured in the earthquake. We also reaffirm the deep ties shared between our people and two countries. I strongly support this resolution, and I urge all of my colleagues to do likewise.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of this resolution which expresses our condolences and sympathy for the people of Italy following the terrible loss of life which occurred in the central Abruzzo region last April which was struck by a powerful earthquake. Tragically, the 6.3 magnitude earthquake, which struck in the early morning of April 6, killed over 250 people. Tens of thousands more were left homeless as their family properties were destroyed. Over 15,000 buildings rich in culture and history were obliterated in just moments by the powerful shocks.

I note that despite the danger from the strong aftershocks after the earthquake, heroic Italian rescue workers

nevertheless entered the unstable buildings at risk to themselves and pulled hundreds of survivors to safety.

Mr. Speaker, when we think of Italy, our first thoughts are of the beauty, the history, the culture, and especially the warmth and kindness of its people. As a Nation, America also has a tremendous affinity for Italy since our country has been greatly enriched by those Italian immigrants who came to our shores, became part of our American Nation, and contributed so much to our culture and economic prosperity. And so in the wake of that immense disaster, Americans mourned in sympathy with the people in Italy over their tremendous loss and committed to stand with them as they work to rebuild and recover.

I'm pleased to support this resolution which expresses our deepest condolences to the Italian people and note that with the support of American citizens, humanitarian organizations are continuing to provide assistance in the rebuilding of those cities that were affected by the earthquake. I urge my colleagues to support passage of this resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, how much time do we have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 18½ minutes.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. At this time, I yield all of the time that he may want to consume to my good friend and colleague and the author of this legislation, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL).

Mr. PASCRELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, just a short while ago I returned from Afghanistan. The fifth largest contingency in NATO is from Italy, so we have many reminders through history and specifically now of what our relationship is between the United States and Italy. So we rise to support this resolution, H. Res. 430, expressing our deepest sympathies to the citizens of Italy.

This earthquake was devastating, Mr. Speaker. It ruined a large part of the Abruzzo part of Italy. The magnitude of this earthquake is understood by many Americans. The university town of L'Aquila, along with 26 other surrounding cities, towns, and villages, suffered massive destruction. You already have heard of how many people were killed; 15,000 buildings destroyed. They were historic. They were cultural landmarks. Seventy thousand people were displaced. So we extend our deepest sympathies. The homes and churches can be rebuilt, but we can never replace loved ones.

Despite the aftershocks that continued to devastate the region for days after, rescue workers demonstrated true heroism by pulling over 100 survivors from the wreckage. Their efforts, along with those of humanitarian aid organizations around the globe who continue to work tirelessly to return people to their homes and rebuild the

region, deserve commendation. After traveling to Italy earlier this year, I can attest to the resiliency and the strength of the Italian people. And I remind us again of the 2,350 troops that fight alongside our brave men and women in Afghanistan.

It is trying times like these that allow us to recognize the deep and binding ties between our nations, the United States of America and Italy. This tragedy only brings our two nations closer together.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the many organizations in the United States, including the National Italian American Foundation, NIAF, who are continuously working to raise funds to aid the rebuilding efforts in Abruzzo. The Italian American community's support and solidarity with the nation of Italy has only increased in the aftermath of this natural disaster.

I also want to commend the Italian Ambassador, Giovanni Castellaneta, for his leadership and commitment to the Italian American community.

I urge my colleagues to join me in passing this resolution to offer our sincere condolences to the nation of Italy for its tremendous loss as well as pledge our continued support to the Italian Government. I will do so also this afternoon when I greet President Berlusconi.

The G-8 summit is being held July 8, 9, and 10, and that has been moved to L'Aquila in the Abruzzo region to redirect funding to that region to help with the general reconstruction. Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, of course, and our President, President Obama, will be there with our Italian friends.

I urge the passage of this legislation. I want to thank the chairman and the Speaker. I want to thank the ranking member for all of your courtesies. This is something we need to get involved in, to commend American organizations for reaching out to our brothers and sisters.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, today the Congress expresses its deepest condolences for those who suffered because of the earthquake in Abruzzo in April, and the Congress expresses its strongest support for Italy as it rebuilds from this crisis.

Soon after this disaster struck, I called Prime Minister Berlusconi on behalf of my colleagues in the Congress to express our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those lost. President Obama and other leaders from around the world have offered assistance to those affected. Prime Minister Berlusconi and the Italian government have the steadfast support of the American people as they help the people of Abruzzo rebuild.

As someone who can trace my family's roots back to Venice, Genoa, Campobasso, Sicily, and Abruzzo, I am personally committed to ensuring that the United States provides all possible assistance.

In 1980, I had the opportunity to visit Southern Italy in the aftermath of another earth-

quake as part of a U.S. delegation. I saw firsthand the courage of the Italian people in the face of a similar tragedy. The world saw Italy emerge from this crisis stronger than before.

America is a land discovered by an Italian, named for an Italian, and built by millions of Italian Americans.

The bond between the United States and Italy is uniquely strong because of the vital role daughters and sons of Italy have played in the United States from its discovery to today.

Today, we mourn those lost in Abruzzo and those struggling to rebuild their lives. And today, as in times of both crisis and calm, we stand beside each other as allies and friends.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 430, "Expressing condolences to the citizens of Italy and support for the Government of Italy in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that struck the Abruzzo region of central Italy," which was introduced by my distinguished colleague Representative PASCRELL. This legislation is important to ensure that we remember those who lost their lives in this tragic natural disaster.

On April 6, 2009, an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.3 shook central Italy, causing serious damage in the mountainous Abruzzo region east of Rome. This is the worst earthquake in Italy since a 6.9-magnitude earthquake struck Eboli, south of Naples, in 1980, killing more than 2,700 people.

The earthquake caused damage to between 3,000 and 11,000 buildings, the majority of which are in the medieval city of L'Aquila and the surrounding villages. 297 people were killed by the earthquake, 20 of which were children, and approximately 1,000 people were injured. 66,000 people were made homeless. Nearly 11,700 rescue workers provided emergency relief.

Texas is no stranger to the effects of a natural disaster. In 2008, Hurricane Ike, which was the third most destructive hurricane to ever make landfall in the United States, caused the deaths of 37 people while dozens are still missing. In Houston, eight deaths have been blamed on Hurricane Ike.

Texas sustained major damage due to Hurricane Ike: an estimated 100,000 homes were flooded; many trees were uprooted; bus stop shelters were mangled; Houston's theater district was flooded; flights in and out of Houston's two major airports were suspended; most of Houston's roads were clogged for nearly two weeks; and many residents remained without power for several weeks after the hurricane. As the representative from Houston, I can truly sympathize with the Italian people and express my sincere sympathy to every life that was touched by this tragedy.

Additionally, this legislation mourns the loss of life and expresses condolences to the families of those killed and injured in the earthquake that struck the Abruzzo region of Italy. It also applauds the response of Italian rescue workers, recognizes the deep ties between the United States and Italy and expresses continued solidarity with the people of Italy during this time of crisis.

Furthermore, this legislation supports President Obama's offer of U.S. assistance to Italy in response to this event and expresses gratitude to the people of the United States who have supported those humanitarian aid agencies working to assist the people of Italy in this

time of need. The U.S. Embassy in Rome has provided \$50,000 in emergency relief funding and President Obama has pledged to devote resources to preserving the region's cultural and artistic heritage. Additionally, as part of the U.S. effort to support the Italian people, the U.S. Department of State and the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) formed a public-private partnership to respond to the educational needs of the University of L'Aquila, and will strive to help the students and other human resource needs. The students are key to the future of the region, and the University is the economic lifeblood of the city of L'Aquila. It is therefore vital to help this sector recover in this time of need.

The Abruzzo earthquake is a tragedy that has affected lives all over the world, the least we can do as a Congress, and as a nation, is to recognize those involved in this tragedy and those who are helping Italy to rebuild. We cannot withhold this honor from those victims that perished in the tragedy. As honored Members of Congress, we have the opportunity to ensure that proper recognition is given to those involved in the earthquake.

I firmly believe that we must pass this legislation in order to demonstrate our support of those people who lost their lives and those people who lost their loved ones, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I also yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 430, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1430

#### CALLING ON NORTH KOREA TO END HOSTILE RHETORIC AND ACTIVITY TOWARD SOUTH KOREA

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 309) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that North Korea should immediately stop any hostile rhetoric and activity towards the Republic of Korea and engage in mutual dialogue to enhance inter-Korean relations, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 309

Whereas North Korea's nuclear tests and missile activities, and their suspected pro-

liferation, are threatening peace and stability in Northeast Asia and beyond;

Whereas the North Korean leadership continues to pursue its nuclear ambitions while up to 2,000,000 North Koreans reportedly starved to death during the late 1990s and hundreds of thousands fled North Korea in search of freedom and food;

Whereas, on October 18, 2004, H.R. 4011, the North Korean Human Rights Act, became Public Law 108-333, bringing attention to the human rights conditions in North Korea and to provide United States support for North Korean refugees;

Whereas, on October 9, 2006, North Korea detonated a nuclear explosive device prompting the United Nations Security Council to adopt military and economic sanctions against North Korea through Resolution 1718;

Whereas, on June 30, 2008, H.R. 2642, the Supplemental Appropriations Act, became Public Law 110-252, granting the President the authority to waive the Glenn Amendment sanctions in order to facilitate North Korea's denuclearization process and to provide heavy fuel oil energy assistance to North Korea in support of the Six-Party Talks;

Whereas, on October 7, 2008, the North Korean Human Rights Reauthorization Act became Public Law 110-346;

Whereas, on October 11, 2008, North Korea was removed from the United States list of state sponsors of terrorism;

Whereas, on October 15, 2008, the Naval Vessel Transfer Act became Public Law 110-429 and included provisions to upgrade the Republic of Korea's foreign military sales status to that of "NATO plus three";

Whereas, on January 30, 2009, North Korea announced that it would nullify all inter-Korean agreements that are in pursuit of putting an end to the state of political and military confrontations and abrogate the agreements on the Sea Demarcation Line, known as the "Northern Limit Line";

Whereas, on February 3, 2009, President Barack Obama stated, in a call with the Republic of Korea's President Lee Myung-bak, that recent events underscore the need for the United States and the Republic of Korea to work together even more closely to achieve complete and verifiable denuclearization of North Korea;

Whereas, on February 10, 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated that North Korea must understand that all of the countries in East Asia have made it clear that North Korea's recent behavior is viewed as unacceptable;

Whereas, on February 20, 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated, in a joint press conference with the Republic of Korea's Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan, that the United States and the Republic of Korea maintain a joint resolve to bring about the complete and verifiable denuclearization of North Korea through the Six-Party Talks and that North Korea is not going to get a different relationship with the United States while insulting and refusing dialogue with the Republic of Korea;

Whereas for more than a year, North Korea has refused proposals from the Republic of Korea for mutual dialogue and also has refused to fully implement the Six-Party agreements on denuclearization;

Whereas, on April 5, 2009, North Korea launched a missile in clear violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718 prompting a statement by President Obama condemning the launch;

Whereas, on April 13, 2009, the United Nations Security Council adopted a Presidential Statement condemning the launch;

Whereas, on April 14, 2009, North Korea declared that it would withdraw from the Six-

Party Talks and resume its nuclear program, and subsequently expelled International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors at the Yongbyon facility;

Whereas, on April 29, 2009, North Korea announced that unless the United Nations Security Council promptly apologize for infringing the sovereignty of North Korea, and withdraw resolutions and decisions adopted against North Korea, it would conduct nuclear tests and test-firings of intercontinental ballistic missiles, and build a light water reactor plant and start the technological development for ensuring self-production of nuclear fuel;

Whereas, on May 25, 2009, North Korea announced that it has conducted a second nuclear test and in successive days, North Korea has launched six short-range missiles and threatened to abrogate the July 27, 1953, armistice ending the Korean War;

Whereas, on May 29, 2009, North Korea announced that it would "take additional self-defense measures" if the United Nations Security Council takes any further actions against North Korea;

Whereas, on June 12, 2009, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1874, which condemns North Korea in the strongest terms, and imposes stronger sanctions on North Korea by introducing measures to conduct cargo inspections, to restrict North Korea's Weapons of Mass Destruction-related financial transactions, and to strengthen the arms embargo; and

Whereas in face of serious security challenges on the Korean Peninsula, including the recent North Korean hostilities towards the Republic of Korea, the alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea remains resilient and firm, based on shared values, mutual trust, and common interests: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(1) North Korea should immediately stop any hostile rhetoric and activity towards the Republic of Korea and engage in mutual dialogue to enhance inter-Korean relations;

(2) North Korea should fully implement the Six-Party joint statement of September 19, 2005, verifiably abandon all of its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs, and return to the Non-Proliferation Treaty at an early date;

(3) North Korea should comply with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1718 of 2006 and 1874 of 2009;

(4) the United States remains committed to the promotion of inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation; and

(5) the strategic importance of the strong alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea, in promoting peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia, should be recognized.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from American Samoa.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that North Korea should immediately stop its hostile activities and instead return to dialogue.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier of my strong support of H. Res. 309, it is a