

then are we about to give Permanent Normal Trading Treatment to the dictatorship in Vietnam, a cabal of gangsters and thugs that mercilessly prohibits in Vietnam and Laos any democracy, freedom of law, freedom of the press, and human and religious rights? The Vietnamese government has never come clean on the whereabouts of over 600 American soldiers who were left behind in Vietnam after the war. I'm not talking about granting us permission to dig for American remains, I'm talking about their refusal to hand over the prison documents of those men who we know were alive when we left Vietnam thirty years ago.

Mr. Speaker, the same political party that forced us to cut and run from Vietnam has stubbornly refused to acknowledge the complete lack of freedom there and in Laos. It doesn't care if we retreat from Iraq just like we did from Vietnam, before the job is done. But what truly disturbs me is how the majority can go along with this and reward the thugs in Hanoi for what they did and continue to do to their own people and to the relatives of our veterans who never returned. Have we completely lost our moral compass? Is cheap labor so much more important than democracy, freedom of religion and supporting our soldiers and their families? Do we care anymore about freedom?

Accordingly, I strongly urge my colleagues to reject this misconceived initiative that insults our troops and ignores the wishes of good people of Vietnam who want to live free from the thugs in Hanoi.

Mr. RAMSTAD. Mr. Speaker, I have long been an ardent supporter of trade expansion because the bottom line is jobs. Fully 95 percent of the world's population lives outside the United States, and the global economy is projected to grow at three times the rate of the U.S. economy. We must continue to take steps to make sure American farmers, manufacturers and service providers remain leaders in the international marketplace and our products have fair access to foreign markets.

Vietnam is the fastest growing economy in Southeast Asia and continues to grow in significance as a U.S. trading partner. By our granting Vietnam PNTR status, U.S. businesses will be able to take advantage of the increased market-access opportunities the Vietnamese have offered in return. And increased market access to Vietnam will also help provide U.S. companies a competitive sourcing counterbalance to China in the region.

Without passage of this legislation, U.S. companies will not be able to take advantage of the Vietnamese concessions. And in addition, the United States will not be able to engage in dispute-settlement cases with Vietnam in the World Trade Organization.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairmen THOMAS and SHAW for their leadership on bringing forward this important legislation, and I would also like to thank Ranking Member RANGEL and Representative THOMPSON for their support of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support passage of H.R. 5602.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to granting permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) to Vietnam.

Just two months ago, the Vietnamese government arrested my constituent, a U.S. cit-

izen, Cong Thanh Do. Mr. Do had posted comments on the Internet while at home in San Jose, California advocating that Vietnam undergo a peaceful transition to a multi-party democracy. For exercising his U.S. Constitutional right of free speech, the Vietnamese arrested him and held him in prison for 38 days in Vietnam without charges.

Other U.S. citizens have been imprisoned in Vietnam for what appear to be political reasons, including the sister of another one of my constituents, Thuong Nguyen "Cuc" Foshee.

Although both are free today and back in America, I am concerned about hundreds of Vietnamese nationals as well as other U.S. citizens imprisoned in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese government has repeatedly violated human rights. Hundreds of Vietnamese have been imprisoned, put under house arrest, or placed under intense surveillance for simply practicing their religion or speaking out about democracy and human rights in Vietnam.

Following his return to the U.S., Mr. Do provided me a disturbing list of over 130 Vietnamese nationals and U.S. citizens he believes are currently imprisoned in Vietnam as prisoners of conscience or harassed by the government for simply speaking about democracy and human rights.

In addition, groups such as the Human Rights Watch have published reports of 355 Montagnard prisoners of conscience currently imprisoned in Vietnam.

I am not alone in my concerns about Vietnam's human rights record. The Department of State, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and various Vietnamese-American groups have documented egregious violations of religious freedom, human rights, and free speech in Vietnam.

I have been a supporter of international trade. But I also know that the Vietnamese Government would correct their behavior in order to perfect a trading relationship with the United States. Given the alarming human rights violations currently underway in Vietnam, it seems a mistake for our country to grant PNTR to Vietnam without requiring that the Vietnamese Government make significant improvements in respecting human rights, free speech, and freedom of religion.

The United States of America has a long and honorable tradition of safeguarding freedom and human rights throughout the world, especially with our trading partners. We should not make an exception for Vietnam.

At a time when we are spending 8 to 10 billion dollars a month and shedding the blood of our American servicemen and women proclaiming the cause to be democracy for Iraq, how is it that we can fail to use our mere economic leverage to try to achieve human rights in Vietnam?

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill which would grant permanent normal trade relations for the government of Vietnam.

Why are we here today ready to give Vietnam—a country with an abysmal human rights record, which continues to abuse and oppress its own people—favorable trade status?

I am strongly opposed to this action and urge defeat of this legislation.

There are people in Vietnam right now, as we debate this bill, in jail for their support of

religious freedom, democracy, and freedom of speech—universal freedoms on which our country was built. If someone says they are for you, but do not want to be identified with you, how much are they really for you? Are we for democracy and religious freedom in Vietnam or are we more interested in promoting trade?

The answer to that question may lie in the incredible news just announced today that the State Department has conveniently removed Vietnam from its list of Countries of Particular Concern—a designation stamped on countries with egregious violations of human rights and religious freedom. Vietnam had been on the list in the company of China, Eritrea, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Saudi Arabia and Sudan.

I stand with the dissidents who remain in jails across Vietnam because they spoke out against human rights abuses being committed and condoned by their own government. Mr. Speaker, I call on this House to stand with the people of Vietnam who deserve our support as they seek democracy and freedom from oppression.

Later this week the President will make a historic trip to Vietnam. I have called on him to meet with Vietnamese human rights activists here in the United States, and I have asked that he meet with dissidents in Vietnam. I have asked President Bush to stand with the dissidents in the way that the Reagan administration did with regard to the Soviet Union. It is unacceptable for the United States to encourage democracy and respect for human rights and then fail to hold Vietnam to this standard before granting them PNTR.

Earlier today there was a groundbreaking ceremony on the National Mall to launch the memorial for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I ask my colleagues to think about Dr. King's words before voting on the legislation before us: "In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends."

If the Bush administration and this Congress want to be friends with those fighting for democracy, religious freedom and an end to human rights abuses, the silence should be broken. I call on the President and our ambassador in Vietnam to meet with dissidents and to break the silence about human rights abuses in Vietnam.

Mr. Speaker, our actions today are more than how much the U.S. will trade with Vietnam. The decisions we make will reach the 83 million Vietnamese people who are struggling to live in freedom. What will our answer be for them?

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5602, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those voting have responded in the affirmative.

Mr. KUCINICH. 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