

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, today, March 16th, I was detained in my district and therefore missed the three rollcall votes of the day. Had I been present I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 125 on agreeing to the resolution H.R. 987—to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 601 8th Street in Freedom, Pennsylvania, as the "John Scott Challis, Jr. Post Office". Had I been present I would have also voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 126 on agreeing to the resolution H.R. 1217—to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 15455 Manchester Road in Ballwin, Missouri, as the "Specialist Peter J. Navarro Post Office Building." Lastly, had I been present I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 127 on agreeing to the resolution H.R. 1284—to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 103 West Main Street in McLain, Mississippi, as the "Major Ed W. Freeman Post Office."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent from this Chamber today. I would like the RECORD to show that, had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall votes 125, 126, and 127.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, today, I was unexpectedly detained in my district due to a flight delay and missed three votes. If present, I would have voted: "yea" on H.R. 987; "yea" on H.R. 1217; and "yea" on H.R. 1284.

SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON WILL LEAD ROBUST HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, on Friday, Secretary Clinton called the President of Sri Lanka to express deep concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in northern Sri Lanka. She stated clearly that the army should not fire on civilians, that international organizations should have full access to the thousands of people trapped inside the conflict area, and she condemned the Tamil Tigers for their atrocities. It was a strong human rights statement.

Last Wednesday, Secretary Clinton stood up for the rights of women when she hosted the 2009 International Women of Courage Awards. She noted those women whose governments kept them from traveling to Washington to receive this honor.

She also met with the Chinese Foreign Minister. She told him that every nation seeking to lead in the inter-

national community must live by the global rules that determine whether people enjoy the right to live freely and participate fully, including the freedom to speak out, to worship, and to live and work with dignity.

Secretary Clinton is committed to a strong human rights agenda, and I look forward to working with her and promoting human rights in U.S. foreign policy.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
OFFICE OF THE SPOKESMAN,
MARCH 13, 2009.

STATEMENT BY GORDON DUGUID, ACTING
DEPUTY SPOKESMAN

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN SRI LANKA

On March 13, Secretary Clinton called Sri Lankan President Rajapaksa to express the United States' deep concern over the deteriorating conditions and increasing loss of life occurring in the Government of Sri Lanka-designated "safe zone" in northern Sri Lanka. The Secretary stated that the Sri Lankan Army should not fire into the civilian areas of the conflict zone. The Secretary offered immediate and post-conflict reconstruction assistance and she extended condolences to the victims of the March 10 bombing outside a mosque in southern Sri Lanka. She condemned the actions of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who are reported to be holding civilians as human shields, and to have shot at civilians leaving LTTE areas of control.

Secretary Clinton called on President Rajapaksa to devise a political solution to the ongoing conflict. She urged the President to give international humanitarian relief organizations full access to the conflict area and displaced persons camps, including screening centers.

The United States believes that a durable and lasting peace will only be achieved through a political solution that addresses the legitimate aspirations of all of Sri Lanka's communities. We call on the Sri Lankan Government to put forward a proposal now to engage Tamils who do not espouse violence or terrorism, and to develop power sharing arrangements so that lasting peace and reconciliation can be achieved.

(March 11, 2009)

2009 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE
AWARDS

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, SECRETARY OF
STATE, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ROOM, WASH-
INGTON, DC

Secretary Clinton: Well, this is such an exciting occasion, and there were so many people who wanted to come today, but unfortunately, there is a limit to how many people we can let into this magnificent room. So there are people watching on closed-circuit TV all over this building, and beyond.

And it is my pleasure to welcome you to the State Department to celebrate International Women's Day with a very special event and a very special guest. The event is the International Women of Courage Awards, and in a minute, you will meet these remarkable women and learn more about their lives and their work. And I am especially delighted to thank one person in particular whose presence here means a great deal to all of us—our First Lady, Michelle Obama. (Applause.)

Now, I know a little bit about the role that—(laughter)—Michelle Obama is filling now. And I have to say that in a very short time, she has, through her grace and her wisdom, become an inspiration to women and girls not only in the United States, but around the world. And it is so fitting that

she would join us here at the State Department to celebrate the achievements of other extraordinary women, and to show her commitment to supporting women and girls around the globe.

She understands, as we all do here at the State Department, that the status of women and girls is a key indicator of whether or not progress is possible in a society. And so I am very grateful to her and to President Obama, who earlier today announced the creation of the White House Interagency Council on Women and Girls. That will—(applause). That office will help us collaborate across every department and agency in our government.

President Obama has also designated an ambassador-at-large to consolidate our work on women's global issues here at the State Department. Now, this is a position that has never existed before, and I am very pleased that someone you all know, if you have ever worked on women's issues—know and appreciate a longtime colleague and friend, Melanne Verwee, who's been nominated to fill that post. (Applause.)

And I also want to thank Ambassador Susan Rice and our excellent U.S. delegation to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, which is in the middle of its annual meetings now, for the work that they are doing and for the engagement that they demonstrate.

Today, we're focusing on the International Women of Courage Awards. It's a fairly new tradition here at the State Department, but it's already become a cherished institution. For the past three years, our embassies have sent us stories of extraordinary women who work every day, often against great odds to advance the rights of all human beings to fulfill their God-given potential. Today, we recognize eight of those women. Each is one of a kind, but together they represent countless women and men who strive daily for justice and opportunity in every country and on every continent, usually without recognition or reward.

And I want to say a special word about someone who could not join us, who we honor today—Reem Al Numery, who was forced to marry her older cousin when she was just 12 years old. She is now fighting to obtain a divorce for herself and end child marriage in Yemen. She was not able to be here, but we honor her strength and we pledge our support to end child marriage everywhere, once and for all. (Applause.)

We also express our solidarity with women whose governments have forbidden them from joining us, especially Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been kept under house arrest in Burma for most of the past two decades, but continues to be a beacon of hope and strength to people around the world. Her example has been especially important to other women in Burma who have been imprisoned for their political beliefs, driven into exile, or subjected to sexual violence by the military.

Our honorees and the hundreds of millions of women they represent not only deserve our respect, they deserve our full support. When we talk about human rights, what I think of are faces like these. What I am committed to is doing everything in my power as Secretary of State to further the work on the ground in countries like those represented here to make changes in peoples' lives. That doesn't happen always in the halls of government. It happens day to day in the towns and cities, the villages and countryside where the work of human rights goes on.

We simply cannot solve the global problems confronting us, from a worldwide financial crisis to the risks of climate change to chronic hunger, disease, and poverty that sap the energies and talents of hundreds of

millions of people when half the world's population is left behind. The rights of women—really, of all people—are at the core of these challenges, and human rights will always be central to our foreign policy.

Earlier today I met with Foreign Minister Yang of China and conveyed to him, as I do in my meetings with all other leaders, that it is our view in the Obama Administration that every nation seeking to lead in the international community must not only live by, but help shape the global rules that will determine whether people do enjoy the rights to live freely and participate fully. The peace, prosperity and progress that we know are best served and best serve human beings come when there is freedom to speak out, to worship, to go to school, enjoy access to health care, live and work with dignity.

The United States is grounded in these ideals, and our foreign policy must be guided by them. Indeed, our own country must continually strive to live up to these ideals ourselves. Not only does smart power require us to demand more of ourselves when it comes to human rights, but to express those views to others and to actually assist those who are on the frontlines of human rights struggles everywhere.

It is important that we focus on human rights because I know what inspiration it has given to me over many years. The people I have met, they have constantly reminded me of how much work lies ahead if we are to be the world of peace, prosperity and progress that we all seek.

I've met a lot of people, particularly women, who have risked their lives—from women being oppressed by the Taliban in Afghanistan, to mothers seeking to end the violence in Northern Ireland, to citizens working for freedom of religion in Uzbekistan, and NGOs struggling to build civil society in Slovakia, to grassroots advocates working to end human trafficking in Asia and Africa, and local women in India and Bangladesh, Chile, Nicaragua, Vietnam and many other places who are leading movements for economic independence and empowerment.

These personal experiences have informed my work. And I will continue to fight for human rights as Secretary of State in traditional and especially non-traditional ways and venues.

All of you gathered here represent the kind of broad coalition that we need—business leaders, NGO leaders, ambassadors, experts, people from every corner of our government, citizens who are moved and touched by the stories of courage that we will be hearing some more of today.

And it is exciting that we have now in our own country someone who is standing up for the best of America, a woman who understands the multiple roles that women play during the course of our lives, and fulfills each one with grace. An example of leadership, service, and strength. It is my great pleasure and honor to introduce the First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama. (Applause.)

(The First Lady makes remarks.)

(Applause.)

Secretary Clinton: Thank you so much, Mrs. Obama, and it's exciting to have your leadership and example for not only girls and women in our country, but those around the world.

Now, we're going to start with the extraordinary women who we honor today. The first woman, Wazhma Frogh, from Afghanistan, is being recognized for her courageous efforts to combat sexual and domestic violence and child and marital rape throughout Afghanistan, despite facing dangerous conditions. She has come a long way, and we stand in solidarity with her and the people of Afghanistan. (Applause.)

Next, from Guatemala, Norma Cruz. We are recognizing her for her unyielding efforts to end the culture of impunity surrounding the murder and other forms of violence against women in Guatemala. At great risk to her personal safety, Norma Cruz has been outspoken and extraordinarily brave, and we are honored to have her with us today. Norma Cruz. (Applause.)

Suaad Allami, from Iraq. I told Suaad when we were waiting to come out how pleased I was to see her, and how grateful we are for the progress that we've seen, but we know how much more needs to be done in her country. And we honor her for bravely promoting the legal rights, the health, the social well-being and the economic and political empowerment of women in Iraq, despite threats to her own safety. Thank you so much, Suaad. (Applause.)

Veronika Marchenko, from Russia. We honor her for her stalwart leadership in seeking justice for the families of bereaved service members, young men conscripted into the Russian Army. For her commitment to seeking the truth and in promoting improved human rights conditions for those who serve in the Russian army, and being a networking presence to bring together those who served and their families to find answers to so many of the questions that no one had ever, ever bothered to answer before. Thank you so much. (Applause.)

Our next honoree is from Uzbekistan, Mutabar Tadjibayeva, for her courage, her conviction, her perseverance in promoting human rights, the rule of law, and good governance in Uzbekistan, and for standing up for justice at great personal risk. Mutabar is someone who has been in prison for quite some time, and she still has a big smile on her face, and I salute her courage and her persistence. (Applause.)

From Niger, Hadizatou Mani. Hadizatou is such an inspiring person. Enslaved by being sold at a very young age, she never gave up on herself or on her deep reservoir of human dignity. When she finally escaped from slavery, she didn't forget those who were still enslaved. For her inspiring courage in successfully challenging an entrenched system of caste-based slavery, and securing a legal precedent that will help countless others seek freedom and justice, we honor and salute her. (Applause.)

You know, before I introduce our final honoree, who will respond on behalf of all of the honorees, I just want to say that over the course of many years of doing human rights work, and particularly on behalf of girls and women, I'm sometimes asked, well, do ceremonies like this really matter; is that just not something, you know, that you do and it's a nice feeling, and then you go back to wherever you came from?

I know that these kinds of recognitions and moments of honor by both governments and NGOs and other institutions and individuals are extremely important. They provide a recognition of an individual's struggle and courage that stands for so much more. They provide a degree of awareness about the problems that the individual is fighting to remedy. They serve notice on governments that the first and highest duty is for every government to protect the human rights of every individual within that jurisdiction. And they provide a degree of protection.

And so I salute those in the State Department who have recognized the importance of this and kept it going, and we are proud to continue that tradition.

Our final speaker, Ambiga Sreenevasan, has a remarkable record of accomplishment in Malaysia. She has pursued judicial reform and good governance, she has stood up for religious tolerance, and she has been a resolute advocate of women's equality and their full

political participation. She is someone who is not only working in her own country, but whose influence is felt beyond the borders of Malaysia. And it is a great honor to recognize her and invite her to the podium. (Applause.)

Ms. Sreenevasan: The First Lady Mrs. Obama, Madame Secretary Hillary Clinton, ladies and gentlemen, I am humbled to be in the company of seven extraordinary women receiving this award for courage, and I am deeply honored to now speak on their behalf and on mine.

We accept this award in all humility, remembering that we have been fortunate in being singled out from among countless courageous women in our countries who are dedicated to the cause of equality and justice.

It is also timely for us to remember all the women in other conflict-ridden territories, like Palestine and other countries, who have to show courage every single day in their struggle to survive and to keep their families together.

Each of us fights causes that promote equality and justice, and by presenting us with this award you honor those causes and all the people who work tirelessly for them with unflinching dedication.

This award will help to bring to the international stage our voices and our advocacy on these important issues. This occasion gives us an opportunity to reflect on the importance of the rule of law in promoting the rights of women around the world. When the rule of law is upheld, equality is upheld, the cause of justice is upheld, and human rights are upheld.

Today, we are witnessing a struggle for the souls of our nations, taking place between the forces of the old and the forces of change. We see our commitment to the rule of law, fundamental liberties, and the independence of our institutions being tested. The strength of our nations will depend on how well they withstand this test.

There are those who claim that democracy is a Western concept and is unsuitable elsewhere. There are yet others who perpetrate injustices behind a veneer of democracy. We say that democracy is universal, and a true democracy and the rule of law will prevail when the collective voices of the people are raised in its support.

On my part, I have for the past two years had the privilege to lead and serve the Malaysian Bar, a professional organization consisting of approximately 13,000 lawyers. History will bear testament to the fact that the Malaysian Bar has always been true to its first article of faith, to uphold the cause of justice without regard to its own interests or that of its members uninfluenced by fear or favor. In a sense, I was merely stepping into the shoes of the many other brave leaders of the bar who came before me, whereas many of the awardees today are pioneers in their struggle for justice.

This award has given us the opportunity which we would not otherwise have had, to share our stories, our successes, our failures, to reach out across our borders and to establish a base upon which we can build a meaningful network of support. These stories must be told in all our countries. By this experience, we are both enriched and enraged; enriched by what we have shared, and enraged that so many of our sisters endure intimidation and suffering in their countries. Nevertheless, ours is a message of hope that something has been achieved, despite the odds.

Martin Luther King said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." This means that although we may come from different walks of life, our struggle is common. And each success is a success for all,

just as each failure is a failure for all. When we unite on a human rights platform, whether domestically or internationally, above politics and political alliances, we create more enduring partnerships and relationships. When we pursue freedom and empowerment for others, we reaffirm and protect our own.

In my interaction with the other awardees present here today, it was evident that the passion we feel for our causes is driven by the love of our homelands and our people. That, in turn, drives our passion for what is right and what is just. Our people deserve nothing less. We all believe in striving for ideals that are—if I may borrow the words—self-evident; namely, the ideals of truth, justice, goodness, and universal love and understanding. Our stories are a testament to the universality of these ideals.

We are truly and deeply honored by this award, more so, when it comes from you, Madame Secretary, yourself a woman of courage, who has inspired women around the world to reach great heights. Your untiring efforts in championing women's rights worldwide are well known. Your immortal words that, "Human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights," resonate with all of us here.

We would also like to express our deep admiration for the First Lady Mrs. Obama, and we would also like to express our appreciation for your sharing this moment with us. Madame Secretary, on behalf of all the awardees, I thank you. And we accept the honor with humility and pride. Thank you. (Applause.)

Secretary Clinton: Thank you. These women of courage will serve to remind us every day as we do our work in this venerable building—here we are in the Benjamin Franklin Room, and I'm about to invite you to join our reception in the Thomas Jefferson Room—that our own country has a lot to live up to. But we derive inspiration from those who are struggling so hard just to realize the basic rights that we sometimes take for granted. And it is our responsibility not only to continue to do what we must here at home to realize the dream that America represents, but to use our talents and our abilities and resources to help others as well.

It is such a great privilege to be here with all of you, to be the Secretary of State at this moment of history in an administration represented by Mrs. Obama today, led by President Obama, who means so much already to so many around the world. Now, it's our job to realize the promise that that represents. Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

[From the Washington Post, Mar. 12, 2009]

CLINTON REITERATES U.S. COMMITMENT TO 'ROBUST' RIGHTS AGENDA

(By Glenn Kessler)

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, under fire for some of her recent remarks on human rights, insisted yesterday that the Obama administration regards the issue at the same level as economics and international security.

"A mutual and collective commitment to human rights is [as] important to bettering our world as our efforts on security, global economics, energy, climate change and other pressing issues," Clinton told reporters after meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi at the State Department. She said she had raised with Yang the issue of Tibet and a resumption of a U.S.-China human rights dialogue.

"The Obama administration is absolutely committed to a robust, comprehensive human rights agenda," she said. "We're going to look for ways where we can be effective, where we can actually produce outcomes that will matter in the lives of people who are struggling for their rights to be full participants in their societies."

Last month, during her first trip as chief U.S. diplomat to Asia, Clinton provoked human rights activists by saying that pressing China on that issue "can't interfere with the global economic crisis, the global climate change crisis and the security crisis." On matters such as greater freedom for Tibetans, Clinton said, "We pretty much know what [Beijing is] going to say."

Then, while traveling in the Middle East last week, Clinton appeared to play down human rights issues in Egypt and Turkey that had been raised in recent State Department reports, earning her further criticism. "She has missed unique opportunities," said Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.), one of the leading congressional voices on human rights. Secretary of State Condoleezza "Rice started out strong and ended weak," he said. "But Secretary Clinton is starting out weak."

Human rights activists were further upset Tuesday by the State Department releasing a statement on Tibet in the name of spokesman Robert A. Wood, after Wood had announced hours earlier that it would be issued in Clinton's name, on the eve of her meeting with Yang. Foreign governments tend to give greater weight to statements issued in the name of the secretary of state or the president, rather than spokesmen or press secretaries.

Wood refused yesterday to discuss "internal deliberations" of the State Department and said: "The statement that we issued last night has the full weight of the secretary. It was cleared by the secretary, and it represents the secretary's views."

Department officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were discussing internal deliberations, said the original announcement was an error. They noted that State had never issued a statement on the anniversary of Tibet's failed uprising against Chinese rule but that on the 50th anniversary, Clinton wanted such a statement despite the awkward timing of the Yang meeting. The meeting was scheduled mostly to discuss planning for the April 2 Group of 20 summit, which will focus on the world economic crisis.

The statement was issued in Wood's name because Clinton decided to address the media herself after the session with Yang, officials said.

Some sources said a draft statement on Tibet was more detailed and explicit, urging, for instance, the release of Tibetan prisoners. But other officials disagreed, saying that those elements were not in the statement when it reached Clinton's office and that she personally strengthened parts of it. Wang is scheduled to meet today with President Obama at the White House, officials said yesterday.

SOMEbody ELSE'S MONEY

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Uncle Sam keeps giving away taxpayer money to businesses that claim they are too important to fail. Some of these irresponsible corporations helped bring on this economic crisis.

Our government seems to be just as irresponsible in the way that it spends America's money. AIG received \$85 billion in bailout money from our gra-

cious government, but the Feds put little or no restrictions on that money. So, AIG is giving \$165 million of that money in bonuses to its own employees. You know, those are the same people that put AIG in this economic turmoil.

To make matters worse, since \$85 billion wasn't enough, irresponsible Uncle Sam is promising to fork over \$30 billion more of somebody else's money to AIG. Now we learn AIG is sending some of that taxpayer money to Europe, including French banks.

Normally the government should not tell private businesses how to operate, but when 80 percent of the business is run by the government, as AIG is, the government has the duty to protect taxpayer money. Thus far, Uncle Sam has had a reckless disregard for the way it throws citizen money around.

And that's just the way it is.

□ 1915

CONGRATULATING JACK YATES HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL TEAM

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate and congratulate my constituents' Jack Yates High School basketball team that won the State of Texas' championship.

It is important to emphasize when young people are committed to excellence, and I want to congratulate this school for never giving up, never giving out, and never giving in, as I have heard so often from my good friend and colleague.

It is important to note that this school was challenged to be closed some 3 years ago. But yet not only have they excelled academically, they excelled on the basketball court, having lost some of their star players in the last school year.

Congratulations to their great coach. Congratulations to those students who were persevering. And isn't it exciting to win their first championship since the 1940s?

Go Jack Yates, a great basketball team. We're excited, and we are proud of you.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain Special Order speeches without prejudice to the possible resumption of legislative business.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.