

VETERANS ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AND SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
ACT OF 1999

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased and proud to join the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT), the ranking member, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and many other members of the Committee on Small Business who are dedicated to providing critical services to the countless men and women who have fought to preserve and protect our Nation.

As we approach the 4th of July holiday to celebrate this Nation's independence, we recognize our veterans and the tremendous sacrifices and contributions they have made to this country. In their honor we are here today to pass legislation that ensures veterans that once their service is complete they can continue to apply their hard-working ethics, strong leadership skills, and determination to succeed in small businesses.

Currently out of a total business population of 23.2 million people 5.5 million are veterans. In addition, there are 104,000 disabled veterans. It is estimated that veterans constitute almost a quarter of the business population today. However, many veterans face tremendous barriers when trying to create and grow their businesses, particularly when their military service has caused them to leave their businesses.

Specifically, the obstacles facing our veterans can range from a lack of training to difficulty in securing adequate capital to launch their small business. The obstacles are even greater for service disabled veterans who may have additional handicaps that prevent them from securing employment or starting their own business.

Mr. Speaker, the Veterans Entrepreneurial and Small Business Development Act creates a number of new programs designed specifically to help these veterans and service disabled veterans to join the ranks of entrepreneurs. I would like to commend the Small Business Administration for creating the Small Business Administration Veterans Affairs Task Force for entrepreneurship in July 1998. This task force examined SBA programs to determine how SBA might deliver services to America's veterans more effectively. In October of 1998, it made recommendations to SBA, many of which have been included in this bill. The Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act designates a position onto SBA of veterans business development to be the advocate for veterans and to ensure that veterans needs and concerns are represented and being addressed.

In addition to this new position, this bill creates a public private partner-

ship called the National Veterans Business Development Corporation to provide access to technical assistance and an advisory committee on veterans' business affairs to serve as an independent source of advice for Congress and the President and to increase outcome and outreach to veterans. This bill also directs the SBA administrator to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Service Corps of Retired Executives called SCORE, an organization that provides advice and technical assistance to small businesses free of charge through a nationwide network of volunteers.

Finally, this bill establishes a 5 percent government procurement goal for veteran-owned business and authorizes SBA to make loans to self-employed individuals or owners of small businesses who are called to active duty to assist them with potential losses and disruption caused by their return to active duty.

I encourage all of my colleagues when this bill comes to the floor to come together during this historic time of year and vote for legislation that provides our veterans with the opportunities they need and deserve to succeed. The Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act is a comprehensive approach to ensuring that the backbone of our Nation no longer shuts off but hence forward embraces and reaches out to America's service men and women.

CUBAN RAFTERS TREATED WORSE
THAN CATTLE BY U.S. COAST
GUARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, the inscription on the Statue of Liberty refers to this great country of ours as the mother of exiles which requests: Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses of your teeming shore; send these tempest tossed to me.

But, Mr. Speaker, today I find myself asking if the torch of freedom no longer shines for those who risk life and limb in search of liberty in this great country. As the vanguard of democracy, our country, the United States of America, must set the standards to be emulated. Today, however, the actions reportedly taken by the U.S. Coast Guard in south Florida against Cuban rafters could cast a solemn shadow over this country and could stain our proud history as defenders of the oppressed and protectors of human rights worldwide.

According to the video footage obtained by news sources in Miami, six Cuban refugees reached U.S. territorial waters today in the early afternoon and were subsequently approached by U.S. Coast Guard boats. These Coast Guard vessels opened water cannons on the rafters causing some of them to fall overboard. As the rafters started to

swim to safety, the smaller Coast Guard vessels pursued them and pushed them against the sand, corralling them like cattle. Actually in this country we afford animals much better treatment than that.

It is reported that only after Coast Guard officers had completed their attack on these defenseless freedom seekers did they proceed to take them into custody. This is something we expect from oppressive regimes who care little, if anything, for human life, but this is not what we expect from our fine United States Coast Guard. Members of the Coast Guard are valiant men and women who proudly serve their country and who have saved hundreds and indeed thousands of lives off of our south Florida shores. I am sure that they did not welcome this tragic order today. We expect the United States Coast Guard to enforce the laws, but we do not and should not tolerate violations of the basic human rights of those seeking refuge from persecution.

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We expect the United States Coast Guard to protect U.S. territory against all enemies, but we do not and will not tolerate attacks on defenseless victims such as the survivors of Castro's brutal dictatorship. If there is one entity which survivors of Castro's oppression have looked to with respect and admiration, if there was one entity which Cuban refugees trusted and confided in, it is the U.S. Coast Guard.

Has their trust been misplaced? I hope not. It is unconscionable for an entity of the U.S. Government charged with the responsibility of enforcing our laws to violate them and employ excessive force, including the use of water cannons and mace, against those who present no threat to the personal security of our men and women in uniform nor to the security of our great country.

These actions merit an immediate and comprehensive investigation. I have asked the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Coast Guard Commandant and other senior officials to take action regarding these Coast Guard officers who gave the orders violating the rights of those refugees and that appears to have violated U.S. guidelines on how to deal with such situations.

I ask my colleagues to join me in this request and express their indignation over this display of aggression. This is not what America stands for.

I have sent this letter to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright this afternoon and a similar letter, as I have said, to President Bill Clinton, Vice President AL GORE, Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater and Coast Guard Commandant Admiral James Lloyd.

I say, your personal attention to this matter is greatly appreciated to ensure due diligence in the investigation and resolution of this case. This is a matter of grave concern; and to enlist their cooperation for an immediate investigation of the events which unfolded off