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U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

NEWS
FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER



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CHORNOBYL DISASTER

SENATE PASSES DOLE-LAUTENBERG RESOLUTION COMMEMORATING TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF CHORNOBYL DISASTER

I am pleased to join Senator Lautenberg in offering legislation to remember the tenth anniversary of the terrible nuclear accident at Chornobyl. While ten years have passed since that tragic day, the health and economic consequences of Chornobyl continue to be borne by the Ukrainian people.

I recall quite well how the Chornobyl accident on April 26, 1986 signaled the inhumanity of the totalitarian system of government. At first the Soviet government feebly attempted to deny the incident -- with the effect of causing further harm to those who lived in its vicinity. Ultimately the full scale of the disaster became known, but only after millions in Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and Poland had been exposed to radioactive fallout.

That a government could be so brutal to its people is no surprise to those of us who worked for many years to confront and defeat the totalitarian system. That the Soviet government could be so brutal to the people of Ukraine was no surprise to a people who endured the forced starvation, massacres and genocidal policies of Joseph Stalin in the 1930s. The radioactive wasteland around Chornobyl will, unfortunately, serve as a lasting and hideous monument to refute those who would defend such a system, or whose historical memory has faded sufficiently to allow them to forget its evil.

Within the catastrophe at Chornobyl were sown the seeds of the downfall of the Soviet system. A fiercely independent people such as the Ukrainians cannot be subjected forever to such abuse. I am proud of the role that I was able to fulfill in the Congress, in full support of Presidents Reagan and Bush, as the United States prevailed, the Soviet Union collapsed, and Ukraine again became an independent state in the momentous year of 1991. I was proud to sponsor legislation which called for direct U.S. aid to the republics, rather than through Moscow in 1990. The goal of defeating communism and achieving independence for Ukraine was not easily achieved, it was one that required the combined efforts of many nations and many people, including the Ukrainian-American community, who simply refused to accept that Communism would prevail over the spirit of Ukrainians.

Democracy is prevailing in Ukraine today, but the Ukrainian people and government continue to shoulder the burden of the Chornobyl disaster. Just as the United States joined with the Ukrainian people to defeat communism, we must work in partnership to overcome the tragic consequences of Chornobyl. I was pleased to support the Republican initiative in Congress to provide Ukraine with \$225 million in assistance this year, including specific assistance for nuclear safety, the development of alternatives to nuclear power and to address the ongoing health problems due to the Chornobyl disaster. I am certain that working together we can bring peace, prosperity and a better quality of life to the people of Ukraine.

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