

Washington, DC – Congressman Mike Honda (D-CA), Members of the Congressional Ethiopian American Caucus celebrate the release today of 38 Ethiopian political opposition leaders, most recently sentenced to life in prison, and now fully pardoned. This news comes after H.R.2003 the Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act (Payne) House mark up on Wednesday, July 18th. Caucus Members have traditionally supported legislation that reaffirms Ethiopia's role on the world stage. From H.R.935 Free and Fair Elections in Ethiopia Act (Honda), to monitoring negotiations between Starbucks and the Ethiopian Intellectual Property Office (EIPO), the Ethiopia Caucus is based on the principle that if given the necessary tools, Ethiopia can truly be a lighthouse for Africa. Rep. Honda, Founder and Chair of the Ethiopia Caucus stated that, "It is important, now more than ever, to celebrate Ethiopia with vigilance and genuine partnership."

On the decision to pardon prominent political opposition leaders, Rep. Honda stated, "In the spirit of new beginnings, it is my hope that the Ethiopian Government and members of the political opposition take every necessary step toward true reconciliation." This week, Rep. Honda (CA-15) introduced H.Res.550 congratulating the people of Ethiopia on the second Millennium of Ethiopia, co-authored by Rep. Payne (NJ-10). Ethiopia's calendar is based on the Orthodox Tewahedo Calendar which is derived from the Julian calendar – the west follows the Gregorian calendar. H.RES. demonstrates Congress support for the Ethiopian American community, and Congressman Honda plans to use the attention surrounding the Millennium to highlight priority issues including reconciliation. He stated that, "True reconciliation includes the speedy release of political prisoners, and granting them the right to participate in a democratic society. The Ethiopian Government has taken an important step forward today that will set the tone for celebrations of the Millennium. "

Members of the Congressional Ethiopian American Caucus are eager to use the Millennium as an opportunity to bring national attention to Ethiopia, the original home of hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian Americans. Mr. Honda stated that, "In the wake of a tumultuous period in Ethiopian history, it was important for us to do more to increase visibility around this country that has meant so much to an important, but largely overlooked, minority constituency. We want to do more to show our appreciation to the Ethiopian American community for all that they continue to contribute to our society, and more importantly, to support their efforts to bring national attention to the issues that matter to them." Ethiopian Americans make up the second largest African immigrant community in the United States, with US-Ethiopia relations initiated in 1903. Recognizing Ethiopia's role in the formation of a Pan-African movement, and defeating colonial rule are key points in the resolution, and a significant aspect of Ethiopian identity. The Resolution also recognizes the efforts of all those who are organizing Millennium celebrations. The African Union has already declared the Ethiopia Millennium as the African Millennium, and acknowledges the critical role Ethiopia plays in keeping peace on the Continent.

s/ Rep. Michael Honda  
s/ Rep. Donald Payne  
s/ Rep. Diane Watson  
s/ Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee  
s/ Rep. Jim Clyburn  
s/ Rep. Robert C. Scott  
s/ Rep. Thelma D. Drake  
s/ Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson  
s/ Rep. Julia Carson  
s/ Rep. Vic Snyder  
s/ Rep. Zoe Lofgren  
s/ Rep. Michael E. Capuano  
s/ Rep. Jim Moran  
s/ Rep. Barbara Lee  
s/ Rep. Chris Van Hollen  
s/ Rep. William Lacy Clay  
s/ Rep. Gregory W. Meeks  
s/ Rep. Elijah Cummings  
s/ Rep. Albert Russell Wynn  
s/ Rep. Carolyn Maloney  
s/ Rep. Joe Wilson