COMMENDING ROGER TILLES' LEADERSHIP ON THE NEA

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to commend Mr. Roger Tilles on his insightful and provocative op-ed piece on the National Endowment for the Arts, which was recently published in the New York Times. Mr. Tilles, who is the former President of Temple Beth-el of Great Neck, has worked from the private sector to further the cultural enrichment of the Long Island community. With generous support from the Tilles family, Long Island University created the Tilles Center which has been vital in educating students about the arts, and bringing world class cultural exhibits and performances to Long Island. His following op-ed piece recognizes the unique partnership that exists between the private sector and the NEA. When voting on the NEA, we should look to Mr. Tilles' example, and recognize that public funding for the arts, and private sector philanthropy go hand in hand.

[From the New York Times, June 29, 1997]

TIME TO FIGHT TO SAVE THE N.E.A.

(By Roger Tilles)

As efforts are mounted to scrap the National Endowment for the Arts, there is no small irony that among the reasons why Long Island is now among the top 20 places to live in the nation is its quality of life, best reflected in the broad scope of cultural and performing arts programs that are now at serious risk.

In the global battle for economic investment, local corporations seeking to entice new industries, jobs and capital to our region offset our high taxes and congested highways by using the arts as an attractive inducement. And with the bicounty region now deeply dependent on tourism, some 25 million people who visit Long Island annually now seek out our 12 dance companies, 40 arts organizations, 46 museums, 80 music companies, 30 theater companies and countless art galleries.

Far more than the loss of artistic outlets, shutting down the N.E.A. would have a direct, profound and negative impact on Long Island's economy. Without the small stipend many of these artistic programs receive from the National Endowment for the Arts, the vast majority of these cultural attractions would whither and disappear.

The battle over the N.E.A. has its roots in the fierce partisan battles that have erupted in Congress over the last several years. Whether it is dollars earmarked for Ernie the Muppet or Ernie the Artist, N.E.A. support is now considered a political litmus by the Congressional leadership. It is as if a performance of Mozart, an exhibit of de Kooning or a performance of ''Swan Lake'' are now battlegrounds for the hearts and minds of the electorate. This is treacherous ground because, for those with a sense of history, there is a faint echo from a not so distant past when a fascist government used the arts to sanitize their murderous regime.

To prevent plans from moving ahead to dismantle the National Endowment of the Arts, Long Island, with its population of nearly three million people, is going to have to become far more millitant on behalf of the arts. It should not be unfamiliar territory. As we shifted public policy on issues relating to breast cancer and the environment, we need to take those lessons and apply them to this equally crucial task.

Our first step should be the mobilization of those individuals who have served in the past as potent financial and ideological supporters of either major political parties. It will be a powerful message indeed if both Republican and Democratic standard-bearers discover that their core constituencies are united behind a common theme—protection of the arts. We need to condition our support based on where public officials stand as it relates to the arts and their support for the National Endowment.

In addition, because of Long Island's financial depth, many of us are targeted by political action committees and campaigns far outside Long Island. We need to include the arts as part of our personal platform for contributions.

Elected officials from Maine to California need to know that their support of N.E.A. programs is a critical factor in our determination of whether they are worthy of our dollars. We also need to network with those cultural and performing arts organizations working in Congressional districts where opponents of the arts endowment are located so that our message is carried far beyond the Long Island Expressway. That can be accomplished by becoming more involved with the artistic organizations that currently exist in the bicounty region.

As the Long Island Congressional delegation once led the charge to fund locally built weapons systems that defeated our Cold War opponents, let them now use their debating skills to protect the performances, programs and exhibits that now nurture the human spirit and enhance our region's economic and social quality of life.

We need only demonstrate our personal leadership to insure that our elected officials pretend that Chopin is a weapons system and vote accordingly.

H.R. 849—CORRECTIONS DAY CALENDAR SUCCESS

HON. RON PACKARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend this House for instituting a way Congress can quickly correct illogical and sometimes absurd quirks in our laws. Just this week, the Corrections Day Calendar was used to pass a bill I introduced, H.R. 849, that will save the taxpayers millions.

This past February, I was shocked to hear that because of a small loophole in the law, an illegal immigrant living in my own hometown was paid $12,000 in taxpayer dollars to move her home. I then discovered that potentially millions were being handed out in this same way across the country. Mr. Speaker, the folks back home were outraged. My office received literally hundreds of letters and phone calls. They demanded that this practice be stopped.

Because of the Corrections Day Calendar, my bill to close that loophole was able to bypass the long process of hearings that accompany legislation, and go virtually straight to the floor for a vote. After only a short discussion, H.R. 849 passed without any opposition, 399 to 0.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents are not satisfied with tough talk and no action. The folks in my district, much like folks all across the country, want to see results from Washington. Using the Corrections Day Calendar to pass H.R. 849 shows America that this Congress is serious about cleaning up our laws and saving the taxpayer's money.

THE FAMILY FARM CREDIT OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 1997

HON. CHARLES W. "CHIP" PICKERING

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Family Farm Credit Opportunity Act of 1997, a bill that will correct an inequity in the Farm Service Agency's [FSA] Guaranteed Loan Program. Currently, this program has upper limits on the amounts that can be guaranteed by the FSA. Specifically, the two types of loans administered under this program—farm ownership loans and operating loans—have caps of $300,000 and $400,000, respectively. The farm ownership loan cap was adjusted to its current level in 1978, while the operating loan cap was last raised in 1984. At these times, farm ownership and operating costs could be adequately financed within both of these cap limits.

However, given today's larger and more capital-intensive farming operations, the limits must be raised in order to meet the needs of those seeking financing through the Guaranteed Loan Program. For example, in my home State of Mississippi, poultry is a growing industry. In the early 1980's a typical poultry house cost approximately $65,000. Today the same poultry house can cost up to $125,000. Also, more volume is necessary to compete on the world market. In fact, most banks will not finance a beginning poultry farm with less than four poultry houses. It is easy to see that a minimum of four poultry houses at a cost of $125,000 per house exceeds the farm ownership cap level of $300,000 in the Guaranteed Loan Program. This is just one example of how the upper limits on loans can take qualified applicants out of the market. This problem exists throughout the entire agricultural sector, not just the poultry industry.

To address this problem, I am introducing the Family Farm Credit Opportunity Act of 1997 which would raise the cap limits on both the farm ownership loan and the operating loan to $600,000. The poultry example displays how much agriculture has changed since the caps were last amended in 1978 and 1984. In fact, while the increase in the cap limits may seem substantial at first, neither increase reflects the increase in inflation. Shouldn't we at least keep up with inflation for a program that has served as a consistent vehicle of opportunity for the small family farmer? In today's budget-minded era, I believe we must find solutions that will not only correct problems that have been developing over the years, but also do them at a relatively low cost to the taxpayer with a long-term solution in mind. That is why my bill increases the cap limits to specific amounts, $600,000 for the coming year, but also includes a provision to index both caps for inflation beginning in year 2. This last provision will allow the caps to automatically adjust for inflation, which will provide a long-term fix to the problem and assure that the family farm does not outgrow the upper limits of the farm ownership loan or the