be denied forever. There is general agreement, however, that without Mr. de Klerk the transition to democracy would have been a much longer, much more painful, and certainly a much bloodier process.

It is exceedingly rare that a political leader helps dismantle the system within which he has risen to power. And yet that is exactly what F.W. de Klerk did. He grew up in the world of apartheid, and he was tremendously successful in that world. But in spite of all the connections linking him to the status quo, he came to the realization that apartheid had to end. For a man so steeped in the old system and its ways of thinking, that realization represented an extraordinary conceptual leap. And, I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that leap occurred at least in part because of experiences and insights gathered by Mr. de Klerk during a trip to the United States. What he saw here helped him envisage a new and better path for South Africa.

Mr. de Klerk and his wife visited our country in 1976 thanks to the U.S. Information Agency's International Visitor Program. That program—in place since 1940—gives carefully selected individuals from foreign countries a chance to come to the United States and confer with professional counterparts and experience firsthand our institutions and society. Participants in the program are up-and-coming figures in key fields such as government, politics, the media, and education. More than 130 of them—including Mr. de Klerk—have eventually achieved positions of chief of state or head of government, and some 600 have been named to cabinet-level jobs. Margaret Thatcher, Anwar Sadat, and Willy Brandt were all participants in the program before they rose to leadership positions. The same is true of the new Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair.

In many cases, participants may think they already know our country based on the flood of images they have received from the mass media and popular culture. But in almost every instance, they discover that those images provide an incomplete or even distorted sense of who we are. The 3- to 4-week tours of the United States provided by the International Visitor Program—a carefully structured blend of briefings, meetings, discussion sessions, and hands-on experience—give participants a much richer and more nuanced view of our Nation.

This experience makes an indelible impression on most participants. That certainly was the case with Mr. de Klerk. In 1991—15 years after his trip—he stated:

> [My wife and I] toured the United States in 1976 on an International Visitor Exchange Program. We saw the vibrant magnificence of New York City, nature's artistry in the majestic formations of the Grand Canyon in Arizona, the cultural diversity of New Orleans, Louisiana; Miami, Florida; the excitement of Las Vegas, Nevada; the serene beauty of San Francisco, California; but most of all, we experienced the vitality and warmth of the American people.

The International Visitor Program not only affected Mr. de Klerk's view of the United States, it also had a profound impact on the way he regarded his own country and its future. A profile of Mr. de Klerk published in the New York Times Sunday Magazine of November 19, 1989, includes the following statement: ''As de Klerk tells it, a 1976 visit to the United States as a guest of the United States Information Agency convinced him that race relations could not be left to run their course.''

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, that was a vitally important moment in the development of Mr. de Klerk's thinking—and we as Americans can be proud that we helped make it possible. It is no exaggeration to say that the insights that F.W. de Klerk achieved while visiting the United States as a participant in the International Visitor Program were an important factor in his decision to break with the past and help his nation in its movement toward justice and democracy.

Mr. Speaker, it is significant that our country's exchange programs may be just as important a weapon in the fight to encourage democratic development as other more traditional diplomatic weapons that we use. The International Visitors Program may have been as important in bringing about the transformation of South Africa as the economic sanctions that were imposed by the Congress, over the veto and strenuous objections of then-President Ronald Reagan.

I invite my colleagues in the Congress to join me in paying tribute to the former President of South Africa F.W. de Klerk, and at the same time also to join me in paying tribute to the critically important programs of the U.S. Information Agency which have also played a key role in influencing positively Mr. de Klerk's thinking about race relations, and thus affecting the course of history.

TRIBUTE TO DON ''THE BEAR'' HASKINS

HON. SILVESTRE REYES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 11, 1997

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a man of great talent and rare humility; a man who has challenged young people to excel and reach beyond their dreams; a man whose steady guidance has influenced the lives of many over the course of a long and distinguished career. I am speaking of Don ''The Bear'' Haskins who has been the head basketball coach for the University of Texas at El Paso for more than 36 years.

Don's teams have won 691 games, a historic national championship, 7 WAC titles, and made 14 NCAA tournament appearances. In 1987, Don was inducted into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame. Don Haskins ranks ninth among the all-time winningest coaches.

But beyond his obvious success on the court, Don Haskins is most proud of the fact that he opened doors for minority players. Don Haskins won the 1966 National Championship over heavily favored Kentucky with an all black starting five, an NCAA first.

Later this month, Don Haskins will be inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, joining other sports legends—former Princeton coach Pete Carril, former NBA stars Alex English and Bailey Howell, women stars Denise Curry and Joan Crawford and Spain's Antonio Diaz-Miguel.

A native of Enid, OK, Don is married to the former Mary Gorman of Bartlesville, OK. The couple has three sons, Brent, Steve, and David, and two grandchildren. I want to congratulate Don not only for being inducted into the Hall of Fame but for the contributions he has made to UTEP and the community of El Paso, and indeed, for the advancement of race relations in this country. He has inspired us all and I am proud to honor him today before my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives as a man of great integrity, courage, and honor.

IN HONOR OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR LADY OF MERCY CHURCH

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 11, 1997

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Our Lady of Mercy Church for 75 years of service to its dedicated and faithful parishoners.

Over the past 75 years, Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church has grown and flourished from a small, isolated Slovak community, to a modern thriving parish. The original name of the church was St. John the Baptist. Early parishoners converted a store into a frame church, and remodeled nearby houses into a two-room schoolhouse and a rectory. After going heavily into debt and being abandoned by the Polish National Church, these parishoners were finally received into the Roman Catholic Church by a public Act of Faith in 1921. The church was blessed and renamed Our Lady of Mercy.

In 1948, construction on a much needed, larger, and more modern building began. The new building is built in the Slovakian Church Architecture style and boasts a 56-foot bell tower and unique artwork. The church used to host an annual Slovak Cultural Day to celebrate its rich traditional history. It still offers parishoners a Catholic Parish Credit Union, the second in the Cleveland Diocese; a weekly bulletin, ''Our Lady of Mercy News,'' and is highly involved in the Cleveland community.

This summer, after 24 dormant years, the school building at Our Lady of Mercy Church was renovated and is once again in full use. The new Hope Academy, a private noncatholic school, serves students in the greater Cleveland area and is the crown jewel of the recent accomplishments of Our Lady of Mercy Church.

Our Lady of Mercy Church has served its community well for 75 years. My fellow colleagues, please join me in honoring this exceptional parish as its dedicated members and other prominent dignitaries of the community celebrate this landmark anniversary on September 14, 1997. I wish them continued success.

INTRODUCTION OF COMMUNITY PROTECTION AND HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION ACT OF 1997

HON. HELEN CHENOWETH

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 11, 1997

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Community Protection and Hazardous Fuels Reduction Act of 1997. Last year, wildfires burned over 6 million acres