TRIBUTE TO WALTER L. JOHNSON—FRIEND OF BAY AREA WORKING MEN AND WOMEN

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 25, 1999

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the extraordinary contributions of my dear friend, Walter L. Johnson, the Secretary-Treasurer of the San Francisco Labor Council (AFL–CIO) and one of our nation's most devoted advocates for worker rights and progressive causes. A patriot, a crusader, and a man of genuine compassion and decency, Walter deserves the gratitude and appreciation of all of us who care about economic justice, civil rights, worker safety, and affordable health care.

Walter Johnson's life of community service began seventy-five years ago in the small town of Amenia, North Dakota. While still a teenager, he joined the United States Army and fought in World War II. At the conclusion of his military service, Walter moved to the Bay Area, where he met and married his wonderful wife Jane. They are the parents of three wonderful children. He also contributed his significant energies to his union—Local 1100 of the United Food & Commercial Workers Union (UFCW). Walter's talents as an organizer quickly became apparent to his colleagues in the UFCW, who selected him for a series of important positions in Local 1100—Business Agent in 1957, President in 1958 and Executive Officer in 1965.

Walter later was chosen to lead the San Mateo County Labor Council. It was while he served in this position that I first worked closely with him on issues of concern to working men and women in our area. Throughout these years and the decades that have followed, he developed a reputation as a fighter for the rights of working people and an articulate spokesman on critical issues affecting the Bay Area. On the basis of his outstanding record, Walter Johnson was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the San Francisco Labor Council on May 13, 1985, a position he still holds. There he has continued to fight for the causes to which he has devoted his life.

Mr. Speaker, whenever an injustice has been committed against any one of the Labor Council's 75,000 members, Walter Johnson can be found leading the crusade to right this wrong. When irresponsible corporations breach contracts or hire strikebreakers or operate sweatshops or discriminate against minorities or ignore worker safety laws, it is Walter who rallies San Francisco's working men and women to stand up against these injustices. It makes no difference whether the violated include truck drivers, bike messengers, hotel employees, teachers, or workers in any other profession—Walter is there, leading a picket line or rallying public opinion behind a just cause.

Walter Johnson's commitment to our nation's fundamental values extend well beyond defending the interests of the membership of the San Francisco Labor Council. He has worked, along with other leaders of the California Labor Federation (AFL–CIO), to educate citizens about matters that affect our diverse society in so many different areas: child labor, health care for young people and the underprivileged, quality child care, human rights and the proliferation of sweatshops abroad, and the civil rights of women, minorities, and immigrants. Walter's principled activism has touched many lives, and I am grateful for it.

Walter's dedication to community service has benefitted the people of San Francisco in just every way imaginable. He has served on the Board of Directors of the United Way of the Bay Area, the Bay Area Economic Forum, the Nature Conservancy, the San Francisco Bay Area Girl Scouts Council, the Council for Civic Unity, the Shelter Network (which provides housing and assistance for the homeless), and a wealth of other civic, cultural, charitable, and educational institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in paying well-deserved tribute to Walter Johnson and in recognizing the exceptional contributions of this outstanding man, who has devoted his life to fighting for the interests and values of San Francisco's working men and women.

TRIBUTE TO THE ARMED GUARD

HON. GEORGE W. GEKAS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 25, 1999

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a group of individuals whose dedicated service deserves recognition. It gives me great joy to offer my appreciation to the brave men of the Naval Armed Guard Service who protected the flow of supplies on the high seas during World Wars I and II.

Created as a branch of the United States Navy during World War I to maintain and operate weapons aboard merchant ships targeted by enemy vessels, the men of the Armed Guard served with unflappable courage as they ensured the safe passage of vital supplies to Europe. Over 144,900 men served in the Armed Guard on more than 6,000 ships. Nearly 2,000 of these brave men lost their lives in defense of freedom.

Crossing the ocean was a perilous, often horrific journey during both World Wars. Enemy submarines were not particular when targeting military or merchant vessels. The character and heroism of the men of the Armed Guard helped to make those voyages a little safer. Their job was not an easy one. Their lives on the sea consisted of hours of quiet punctuated by moments of terror that required strong nerves and courage.

It is said that it takes ten individuals to support one infantryman. The enemy knew that the key to an allied victory was the supply routes, and consequently attacked our merchant fleet mercilessly. It is obvious to me that without the valor exhibited by the Armed Guard, victory in both wars would have been indefinitely delayed.

This country owes a debt of gratitude to these brave men.

A TRIBUTE TO LUIS J. BOTIFOLL

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 25, 1999

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to commend Dr. Luis J. Botifoll for being honored by The Association of Cuban Journalist's Board of Governors with its National Award for his years of work and dedication to expanding and protecting the rights of a free and open press.

Dr. Luis J. Botifoll, who once served as the Director of the Havana based newspaper ''El Mundo,'' is being honored not only for his years of service to the Cuban people, but also for the leadership he has shown the world's free press in the face of the dictatorial regime of Fidel Castro.

Through the use of his eloquent articles and essays, Dr. Botifoll was able to bring a voice to a people who were denied the right to free press, by the dictatorship of Fidel Castro.

In recognition of his many achievements, I would like to applaud the hard-work and energy of Dr. Luis J. Botifoll. His dedication to the sanctity of free speech deserves all of our recognition and respect.

STATEMENT HONORING MR. BATISTA VIEIRA AND MRS. DOLORES VIEIRA

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 25, 1999

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, today I wish to congratulate Mr. Batista Vieira and Mrs. Dolores Vieira on the 25th anniversary of their involvement with the Broadcast Radio Industry, a quarter-century tenure that has been marked by tremendous dedication and service to the Portuguese community in California. Because of their work, the Portuguese language, culture, traditions, and values have remained alive for the people of California in ways that would have been otherwise impossible.

For the last twenty-five years, Mr. and Mrs. Batista's ''Portuguese Radio'' has helped the ''Portuguese of the Diaspora'' living in my district and surrounding areas in Northern California to remain in close contact with the customs and lives of their friends and families in Portugal. ''The Portuguese Radio'' has impressed itself upon the daily lives of so many Portuguese immigrants because of the connection it brings to the nation many of these individuals still consider their cultural homeland; the sounds of Portugal broadcast over Portuguese Radio fill the homes and businesses of these people for countless hours of the day with sounds of the land they once knew, tying their old traditions and ways of life to the land that has newly become their adopted home.

Northern California, and particularly Santa Clara County, is a land of tremendous ethnic and cultural diversity, serving as it does as a home to immigrants from all areas of the globe. The cultural richness of this area is truly a result of the efforts of individuals such as Mr. and Mrs. Vieira who have worked through the Broadcast Radio Industry to preserve the beautiful traditions of Portugal in living form. The people of Northern California owe them a profound debt of gratitude.