

respect to product liability reform, securities litigation reform, and reform of the federal Superfund program. More importantly, I sponsored legislation that has helped reduce frivolous class action lawsuits brought against mortgage brokers.

This year, I voted to support H.R. 1875, the Interstate Class Action Jurisdiction Act. This legislation recognizes that many class action lawsuits do little to help consumers, but allow personal injury lawyers to collect millions of dollars in legal fees. H.R. 1875 is an important step in helping reform a legal system that has been abused time and time again.

Legal reform is a complex issue. The legal system must function to provide justice to every American. This does not mean, however, that the status quo is perfect. When lawsuits and the courts are used in excess or to the detriment of innocent parties, the system must be reviewed and reformed.

Let me acknowledge the BRCALA board of directors for giving of their valuable time and energy: the Honorable Phillip Bissett, BRCALA chairman; Joseph Brown, Jr.; Dr. William Howard; Gary O. Prince; the Honorable Joseph Sachs; and the Honorable Michael Wagner—directors and supporters dedicated to BRCALA; and Nancy Hill, BRCALA executive director.

Mr. Speaker, the Baltimore Regional Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse has declared September 18 through September 22, 2000, as "Lawsuit Abuse Awareness Week" in Maryland.

I want to commend every person involved in this worthwhile effort for their dedication and commitment.

A TRIBUTE TO HON. ROBERT W.
BLANCHETTE

HON. BUD SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 4, 2000

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to one of the true leaders in the renaissance of America's rail transportation system. Robert Blanchette, who died last week, was literally present at the creation when our private-sector railroads suffered financial collapse in the 1970s, and then returned to financial stability after 1980.

After graduation from Yale Law School and service as an Air Force legal officer, Mr. Blanchette began his legal career in railroading as the general counsel of the New Haven Railroad in the late 1960s. While serving in that post, he also became executive director of the America's Sound Transportation Review program, one of the first modern efforts to analyze the ills of the transport system and recommend needed changes.

Bob's next major post was counsel to the bankruptcy trustee of the Penn Central Railroad, which entered bankruptcy in 1970 and collapsed in 1973. At the time, Penn Central was the largest corporate bankruptcy in U.S. history. Based on his outstanding performance as counsel, Bob was later installed first as bankruptcy trustee, then chairman of the board, and chief executive officer.

As one who arrived in Congress in the midst of what became known as "the wreck of the Penn Central," I can personally attest to the

gargantuan effort required to deal with massive creditor claims against the Penn Central estate, while at the same time helping to fashion Conrail as the federally created successor to the various bankrupt Northeastern freight railroads. Bob handled these daunting tasks with characteristic acumen and aplomb. Eventually, thanks to the groundwork laid during Bob's tenure with the Penn Central, Conrail became a thriving railroad that was fully privatized in 1987 and was recently purchased by Norfolk Southern and CSX.

When Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, Bob was named Federal Railroad Administrator. This was an era of massive and long overdue change, when the entire freight railroad industry was being transformed and rehabilitated through the deregulation of the Staggers Rail Act. Bob was at the center of efforts to modernize all federal policies affecting the rail transport system.

In 1983, Bob returned to private law practice, representing the French high-speed rail enterprise, TGV. Later, from 1990 to 1997, he served as general counsel to the Association of American Railroads.

Those who worked in or with the railroad industry can attest to Bob's razor-sharp mind and analytical skills. He was able easily to grasp the most complex issues, and equally important, to fashion sensible proposals for addressing those issues. Without exception, Bob was the consummate gentleman, and a constant source of dry wit and good humor. He never shrank from discussing and dissecting the rail transport policy issues of the day, on or off Capitol Hill.

Throughout his professional career, Bob remained intensely proud of his French heritage, and an unapologetic Francophile, always ready to discuss French culture, cuisine, and of course, wine. He was truly an *homme extraordinaire*, and will be sorely missed by all who had the good fortune to know him.

MR. TRACY JOHNSON HONORED
WITH NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION
AWARD

HON. DONALD A. MANZULLO

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 4, 2000

Mr. MANZULLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. Tracy Johnson of Freeport, Illinois, a town in the congressional district I am privileged to represent. Tracy is a modern-day hero who works tirelessly to prevent crime in northern Illinois.

On September 29, 2000, Tracy joined seven other citizen crime fighters from around the country to receive the SBC Communications Award of Excellence in Crime Prevention. Nationally recognized comedian Joe Piscopo presented the award during the "2000 National Conference on Preventing Crime" in Washington, DC. This year's eight winners, selected from nominations across the country, have all made major impacts in their communities with their innovative crime prevention strategies.

Tracy received this special honor because he helped spearhead the Coalition for a Safe Community, a comprehensive partnership of organizations and people planning and acting to prevent crime throughout Freeport; started an education and action crime prevention pro-

gram for youth; and developed a job training and placement center for young mothers, among other activities.

I wish to thank Tracy and the numerous individuals with whom he works for their tireless efforts to make our communities safer.

NATIONAL DAY OF THE REPUBLIC
OF CHINA

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 4, 2000

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, as the Republic of China's 89th National Day approaches, I wish to congratulate President Chen Shui-bian and the people of Taiwan for their continuing economic success and political reforms.

On this festive occasion, it is my hope that Taiwan and the Chinese mainland will soon begin a serious dialogue on reunification issues. The time is approaching for both sides to work out their differences and find a way to co-exist without antagonism. I am certain the people on Taiwan look forward to the day when they will be able to celebrate October 10th without the fear of a bellicose neighbor threatening not only their political freedom, but also their very lives.

I also would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to Ambassador C.J. Chen, who recently returned to Washington after several years in Taipei. A distinguished diplomat, Ambassador Chen is now Taiwan's chief representative in the United States. Ambassador Chen is an industrious and experienced diplomat who has worked diligently for many years to strengthen ties between the United States and the people of Taiwan.

Mr. Speaker, Taiwan has become a beacon of democracy in an area of the world which has known authoritarianism for centuries. The upcoming celebration of National Day in the Republic of China is a timely reminder of the importance of our friendship and support for Taiwan.

AMERICAN COMPETITIVENESS IN
THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
ACT OF 2000

SPEECH OF

HON. PATRICK J. KENNEDY

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 3, 2000

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island. Mr. Speaker, in 1998, Congress passed legislation to raise the H-1B caps to 115,000 visas per year. That legislation included important provisions to ensure that American workers would not be displaced by those holding H-1B visas. This included requirements for employers to file applications with the Department of Labor showing that they will pay the H-1B worker the "required wage rate" and that a strike or lockout was not occurring at the job site.

Unfortunately, that legislation was not enough and already the 115,000 H-1B visa limit for Fiscal Year 2000 has been reached. Tuesday, the Senate passed S. 2045 to increase the H-1B cap to 195,000 through 2003