

supervisors completed the most rigorous academic training program in our military while being imbued with the highest standards of personal integrity and reliability.

Captain Keller's distinguished awards include the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal and numerous unit and campaign awards.

The Department of the Navy, the Congress, and the American people have been defended and well served by this dedicated Naval Officer for more than 26 years. Captain Russ Keller long will be remembered for his leadership, service and dedication. He will be missed.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have Russ and Chris Keller as constituents. I ask my colleagues in the 109th Congress to join me in congratulating him and wishing him the best of luck in all his future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF DEMOCRACY IN AZERBAIJAN

HON. JACK KINGSTON

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 29, 2005

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I wish to include in the RECORD an article by Azerbaijan Ambassador to the United States Hafiz Pashayev. This was published in The Washington Times on September 11, 2005 and is a great testament to the progress made in Azerbaijan toward holding peaceful and fair elections.

In a recent visit to Azerbaijan as National Democratic Institute chairman, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said, "Election day is important, but the months leading up to the elections are also crucial."

She referred to the parliamentary elections to be held Nov. 6, when the citizens of Azerbaijan go to the polls to elect their representatives to parliament, or Milli Mejlis.

The Bush administration views these elections as a litmus test of the Azerbaijan government's commitment to democracy. The U.S. Congress has weighed in by passing a resolution calling on Azerbaijan "to hold orderly, peaceful, and free and fair elections in November 2005 in order to ensure the long-term growth and stability of the country."

We are the first to recognize that independence, stability and prosperity depend on successful democratic reform. President Iham Aliyev wants an orderly transition, as our last few years of unprecedented economic growth would be jeopardized by political instability. Toward this end and to conduct elections according to international standards, the president issued an Executive Order outlining steps to be taken:

1. Allowing all political parties to organize rallies free from violence and intimidation.
2. Welcoming domestic and international election observers.
3. Providing access to media, thus ensuring fair coverage.
4. And ensuring central and regional authorities create the necessary conditions for exit polls.

Among many provisions of the Order already carried out are those that concern participation in the political arena by opposi-

tion parties. There has been dialogue between ruling and opposition parties, all opposition parties may freely conduct rallies and demonstrations and, thus far, all opposition activists—including those who called for overthrow of government in October 2003—have been allowed to become candidates if they wish. During his visit to Azerbaijan at the end of August, Sen. Richard Lugar, Indiana Republican, said: "The opposition leaders underlined that the registration process of the MP candidates went well, which is a step forward compared to the previous elections." President Aliyev went further by warning all regional election officials not to interfere in the old Soviet fashion, when ballot-stuffing was common.

President Aliyev's insistence on free and fair elections in November is based on the idea Azerbaijan's secular government can co-exist with its Muslim traditions.

Our vision is premised on the belief democratic pluralism will ensure, a peaceful outlet for dissent, eliminating the need for violent alternatives. Citizens of all ethnicities and political persuasions are free to advocate their positions peacefully.

Today, Azerbaijan is a vibrant, independent state. We have faced many challenges in our young country's life: preserving our independence in a tough neighborhood; making the transition from a shattered to a market economy; building government institutions and an independent judiciary; finding a peaceful solution to our conflict with Armenia; and developing our natural resources to world markets.

Throughout these difficult years, the United States has been a friend and ally of Azerbaijan. Our strategic partnership has blossomed since the attacks on America on September 11, 2001. Immediately after, the late President Heydar Aliyev visited the U.S. Embassy in Baku not only to express his condolences but to offer his full support. Today, we stand side-by-side in the global war on terrorism. Our troops proudly serve in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Azerbaijan's location between Russia, Iran and Turkey, coupled with our desire to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic community, requires that we conduct a balanced foreign policy fostering development of democratic institutions and a strong economy. Azerbaijan has come this far without tangible foreign aid and expects to continue democratic and economic development, primarily through its own resources.

According to a recent survey by the International Republican Institute sponsored by USAID, an overwhelming majority of Azerbaijanis want economic and social development to be their government's priority concerns.

This November, the people of Azerbaijan will elect a Parliament I believe will accelerate our transition toward democratic pluralism to match the country's unprecedented economic growth. Mr. Lugar told the press in Baku: "I sense in Azerbaijan a yearning for building strong democratic institutions."

CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF EMILY QUINN MUSTIAN

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 29, 2005

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, today, I am happy to congratulate Rebecca

and Ben Mustian of Columbia, South Carolina, on the birth of their beautiful baby girl. Emily Quinn Mustian was born on September 29, 2005 at 12:01 PM, weighing 7 pounds, 4 ounces and measuring 19 inches long. Emily has been born into a loving home, where she will be raised by parents who are devoted to her well-being and bright future. Her birth is a blessing.

TRIBUTE TO SOUTH LYNCHES FIRE DEPARTMENT

HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 29, 2005

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the South Lynchies Fire Department and to recognize their 50 years of service to the South Carolina counties of Florence and Williamsburg. Chartered as the Lake City Rural Fire Department on January 27, 1955, they started with only one tanker. Today, they have 19 vehicles with which a full time staff and 125 volunteers provide fire and rescue services to the 250 square mile area that encompasses the South Lynchies Fire District.

The original directors of the department in 1955 were S. Keels Brockington, Sr., H. Raymond Askins, Sr., Roy Rogers, J.P. Grimsley, L.W. McDaniel, Joe Tucker, and Walter Moody. Within 10 years, the department had completed a permanent home and secured a second tanker. The department changed its name in the middle 1970s to the Lower Florence County Fire Department as it had expanded its coverage beyond the Lake City area. In 1982, residents created the South Lynchies Fire District establishing the area that the department currently services.

The South Lynchies Fire Department today operates out of six locations within the district. The original station, in Lake City, is still operational. Station 2 "Coward" was built in 1971. Station 3 "Camp Branch" was built in 1979, Station 4 "Cades" in 1979, Station 5 "Leo-Camerontown" in 1979, and Station 6 "Scranton" in 1990.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and my colleagues join me today in honoring the South Lynchies Fire Department as they celebrate their 50th anniversary. I thank each and every member of the Department for their service over the last 50 years and wish them great success and Godspeed in the future.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. HENRY J. HYDE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 29, 2005

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, on September 28, 2005, I was absent for two votes because I was chairing a classified briefing with the Secretary of Defense providing information to members about U.S. efforts in Iraq. Had I been present, I would have voted "no" on rollcall vote No. 500, on motion to recommit and "yes" on rollcall vote No. 501 on passage.