

This award recognizes one woman's time and energy put in to improving the lives of her peers. This woman also acts as a mentor for other women in the community.

Mrs. Julie Stevenson received this award for her many contributions to the community of Worthington. She has served as the executive director of the Southwest Minnesota Chapter of the American Red Cross and she has volunteered with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, United Way, YMCA, Youth Area Baseball Association, Junior Achievement, Nobles County Integration Collaborative and the Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce. Currently, at the Minnesota West Campus, Mrs. Stevenson has helped bring the college and the community together through a variety of programs. These include the Winter Wonderland and Golf the Links at Minnesota West and Kids College. She has been a co-host for a United Way telethon as well as a trainer in a teen asset building workshop at Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

I extend my sincere congratulations to Mrs. Stevenson for receiving this commendable award. Her commitment to service has helped to grow many individuals and to strengthen the community.

**HONORING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF
WILLIAM A. KOCH TO PRESERVE
THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BOY-
HOOD HOME IN LINCOLN CITY,
INDIANA**

HON. MICHAEL E. SODREL

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 26, 2006

Mr. SODREL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to an upcoming meeting of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission (ALBC) at the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial in my district and to honor the achievements of the deceased William A. Koch and Congressman Winfield K. Denton, for their contributions to preserving the memory of Abraham Lincoln's early life in Indiana by establishing this national park.

On May 1, 2006, the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission will meet in Lincoln City, Indiana, at the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, established through legislation signed into law by President John F. Kennedy on February 19, 1962. This national park is the site of the farm on which Abraham Lincoln spent 14 years of his early life, a time when Lincoln grew physically and intellectually into a man. This was a place where he laughed with his father, cried over the death of his mother, read books, and faced the adversities of life at that time. It is only fitting that the ALBC meet at this site while planning events for the celebration in 2009 of Lincoln's birth and, while there, to honor the family of the man who contributed so much to preserve the legacy of President Lincoln's early life, William A. Koch.

A local, influential businessman, Mr. Koch conceived the idea of a national park to preserve Lincoln's legacy in the late 1950s. With the cooperation and leadership of Congressman Winfield K. Denton, he worked tirelessly and patiently through studies, hearings, and debates. And, in 1962, the idea that Bill Koch

developed and nurtured was accomplished. The transfer of the Nancy Hanks part of the Lincoln Memorial to the Department of the Interior was completed.

To William Koch, whose widow and children carry on his mission, we owe a debt of gratitude, for without his vision and perseverance, the memory of Lincoln's Indiana years would be greatly diminished and lost on future generations. Today, visitors from around the world can visit his boyhood home to learn what life was like for Lincoln and other early pioneers in the Midwest.

**INTRODUCTION OF U.S.-CHINA
ENGAGEMENT ACT**

HON. MARK STEVEN KIRK

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 26, 2006

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the U.S. China Engagement Act of 2006 with Congressman RICK LARSEN. The goal of our bill is to ensure American students and businesses are equipped to compete with China throughout the 21st century.

The U.S. China Engagement Act of 2006 provides grants for Chinese language instruction programs for American students, expands the U.S. diplomatic presence in China, and establishes new trade offices which support our U.S. exports to China, ensuring our small and medium size businesses are able to compete in Asia.

This legislation will help give our American students the tools to compete in a global marketplace. By one measure, China is now the world's second largest economy. According to the Asian Conference, 50,000 American students are studying Chinese versus 110 million Chinese students studying English. The U.S. China Engagement Act of 2006 will provide resources to primary, secondary and post-secondary schools so that all levels of our educational system can provide the proper exposure to the Chinese language and economy.

The U.S. China Engagement Act of 2006 triples funding to the State Department for public diplomacy in China and authorizes the creation of a new consulate and ten "diplomatic presence posts" in larger Chinese cities. It also increases the U.S. contribution to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, a 21 Member Organization whose goal is to promote free trade throughout the Asia-Pacific region. America must embrace a strong diplomatic partnership to increase the chance our children will enjoy a stable, economically prosperous and peaceful future with China.

Today, China produces more steel than the U.S.; it has more cell phone users and is building its own space station. Hundreds of U.S. companies from McDonald's to Motorola are heavily invested in the Chinese market. China has bought several airplanes from Boeing and Chinese purchases of other U.S. exports are climbing at a rate of 15 percent a year. At her present rate of growth, China's economy has the potential to become larger than America's. The U.S. China Engagement Act takes steps to help small and medium size American businesses enter the China market

by increasing resources to the Foreign Commercial Service Office of the Commerce Department and creating new export promotion programs.

The U.S. China Engagement Act is an important step in addressing the most critical relationship of the 21st century. It is vital that Americans be prepared for this relationship. We must be prepared diplomatically, educationally, and economically. Our students must have the ability to both culturally understand our competition while also having the ability to communicate with them in their language. This bill will give American students and American businesses the tools to compete in the new and expanding market of China.

I want to thank my co-chair of the U.S.-China Working Group, Congressman RICK LARSEN, for being the lead co-sponsor on this legislation. And I want to thank Senators LIEBERMAN and ALEXANDER who have a companion bill. I look forward to working with them on these important issues surrounding China.

**PAYING TRIBUTE TO ROBERT
SEARS**

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 26, 2006

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Bob "Chief" Sears for his 40 years of service in the Fire Service.

Bob Sears has vigilantly served in a number of different capacities in the fire service in several different cities. Sears, a graduate of the National Fire Academy in Maryland, began his career in 1951 and was promoted to Fire Chief of the Richfield Township Fire Department in Ohio in 1960, at that time he was the youngest Fire Chief in the State of Ohio. He subsequently served for 5 years as the Fire Chief for Kerr-McGee Chemical Corporation in California. Bob has also served over 21 years as Boulder Cities Fire Chief, while in this role he designed innovative programs which increase the efficiency of the Department in terms of firefighting capabilities, community awareness, and staff management.

Chief Sears is very active in the community, donating his time to many organizations; Bob is currently on the Board of Directors, Past President, Life Member and has served as interim Executive Director of the Boulder City Chamber of Commerce. He has also served as President of the Nevada Fire Chiefs Association and Charter President of the Southern Nevada Fire Chiefs Association. He has served as chairman for the American Heart Association's Nevada Affiliate, the local Salvation Army, and is a charter member of the Boulder Sumise Rotary Club. Chief Sears also serves on the Military Selection Committee for the United States Service Academies representing Nevada's Congressional Delegation.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to honor Bob Sears for his long career in the Fire Service and for his dedication to many different community organizations. His record of professional service and devotion to the many organizations he was involved with serves as an inspiration to us all. I wish him the best in his retirement.