

HONORING BRENTWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL AND FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, today I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring two schools in Tennessee's 7th Congressional District that have been ranked among the Nation's best.

Both Brentwood Middle School and Franklin Elementary School have earned recognition from the U.S. Department of Education as 2006 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools.

The schools qualified for this distinction by scoring in the top 10 percent in State assessments. While only six schools in Tennessee achieved this distinction, our community has been blessed with two.

Mr. Speaker, the students, parents, teachers, and administrators at Brentwood Middle and Franklin Elementary deserve our congratulations for their commitment to excellence. Our students are gaining skills that will make them lifelong learners, and that's a real credit to the community.

I would especially like to thank Brentwood Middle Principal Kay Kendrick and Franklin Elementary Principal Mark Tornow for their hard work and dedication.

COMMEMORATING THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN'S INDEPENDENCE

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Azerbaijan's 15th anniversary of its re-independence on October 18. In the current global political climate, Azerbaijan is unique among democracies as the world's first Muslim democratic republic.

Azerbaijan is one of the United States' most important friends and supporters. We share important political, economic and security interests.

Azerbaijan was the first among nations to offer the United States unconditional support in the war against terrorism, providing airspace and airport use for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Azerbaijan cooperates with the United States within international and regional institutions including U.N., Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe—OSCE, and NATO's Partnership for Peace program. Azerbaijan also works together with the United States within the framework of the Organization for Democracy and Development—GUAM which is comprised of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The group was created as a political, economic and strategic alliance aimed at overcoming common risks and threats and strengthening the independence and sovereignty of its member states.

The Republic of Azerbaijan is a standout nation among the South Caucasus countries,

with a population of 8 million people and an ambitious economic policy. During the last decade Azerbaijan has been implementing structural reforms and adopting numerous laws and legislative changes, paving the way toward further integration within the global economy. The Nation has been moving toward a more diversified economy to achieve sustainable growth and to meet the social and development needs of its population. As reported by the International Monetary Fund, IMF, Azerbaijan's macroeconomic performance "has been impressive with strong growth, low inflation, and a stable exchange rate." Real GDP grew by an annual average of over 10 percent during the last 6 years and build up to 34.4 percent in the first 8 months of 2006, driven by investments in the energy sector, followed by growth in the construction and transportation sectors, and agriculture.

Since signing the "Contract of the Century" in 1994, Azerbaijan has developed its energy sources within the Caspian region to diversify western energy supplies. On July 13, 2006 the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan main oil export pipeline was inaugurated.

Diversification of the economy and ensuring the development of non-oil sectors is a priority for the government. This policy includes implementation of projects and programs that create favorable conditions for development of private entrepreneurship, attracting investment in non-oil sector, creating new jobs, evaluation of potential industries and markets and development of infrastructure in the regions.

A democratic, prosperous, and peaceful Azerbaijan will be a strong partner and ally for the United States. I look forward to working with the Azerbaijani Government and people to develop this relationship.

Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues in the House of Representatives today in commemorating Azerbaijan's independence. I look forward to the bonds of friendship between the United States and Azerbaijan becoming even stronger in the future.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO GARY L. MAAS

HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the achievements of retiring Littleton Police Chief Gary Maas. Chief Maas, a constituent of mine, was able to reorganize and improve the Littleton Police Department since the beginning of his term in 1996.

During his tenure, Chief Maas focused on developing a community outreach program to provide services to neighborhoods across divisional lines. Along with this success, Maas oversaw the initiation of community surveys in order to determine the priorities of the citizens. A caring and committed individual, Mr. Maas restored confidence and strength in the Littleton Police Department through his implementation of educational requirements on entry level positions and his work with the union to establish the Master Police Officer program.

Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to honor Mr. Gary Maas and his achievements here today, and wish him all the best in his retirement.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF MARINE LANCE CORPORAL TIMOTHY CREAGER

HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to rise today in honor of Marine LCpl Timothy Creager.

Timothy is one of America's fallen heroes. He was one of our best and brightest, and he had the courage to put himself in harm's way for our country.

On July 1, 2004, Lance Corporal Creager was killed in action while on patrol near Fallujah, in the Al-Anbar Province in Iraq, surrounded by his fellow marines of 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion. His sacrifice shows us how precious freedom is—that a man would give his life to preserve it for his family and fellow Americans.

We Tennesseans knew Tim as an outstanding student, Eagle Scout, and battalion commander in the Civil Air Patrol at Craigmont High School. In 2003, he gave up his scholarship to the Citadel after his sophomore year because he felt it was his duty to enlist in the Marines. Timothy chose this path because he believed in America.

On Veterans Day this November 11, 2006, the Bartlett community will hold a 5K race to honor Timothy. The community will also be dedicating an expanded Bartlett Veterans Memorial to honor Timothy and all those who have served our country.

Mr. Speaker, nothing can replace Timothy and no words can express our gratitude to his friends and family for raising the kind of young man who would give his all for America. We can only honor his life and always remember his courage.

Our thoughts are with his mom and dad, Kay and Mike. I want them to know their country is grateful and we won't forget what their son did for us all.

TRIBUTE TO GREGORY AND DR. NIKOLAOS STAVROU

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, we all remember the heady days when the Communist bloc collapsed on its own weight and the peoples of Eastern Europe came out of the dark days of totalitarianism and into the light of freedom. The collapse was so abrupt and so spontaneous that few people had the luxury of taking stock of the heroic efforts made by so many people over a period of 70 years that preceded the days of freedom; and there were heroes in every country of Eastern Europe throughout the dark days of communist terror.

From all countries of Eastern Europe none was so isolated and its people more oppressed than Albania. The Enver Hoxha regime was the last one to collapse, and just a few days after its demise, over one million Albanians crossed the borders of neighboring countries in search of food and freedom. This particular regime thrived in its splendid isolation and the knowledge that if no one was allowed to enter or leave the country, then no

one would tell the true story of a suffering people. But there were idealists who never forgot the Albanian people and found ways to expose the regimes' sins. I rise today to pay tribute to two such idealists who have been ignored in our hastiness to absolve all former communists if they would just declare themselves democrats, no questions asked. I must refer to two such individuals with unbound idealism, one whom lives among us, the other made the ultimate sacrifice. They are the Stavrou brothers, Gregory and Nikolaos.

Gregory, at age 23 assumed risky intelligence missions into Albania for the Greek service. In his last mission, aimed at restoring a vital network that the British traitor Kim Philby betrayed he, too, was betrayed, captured, tortured, tried before a military tribunal and executed on September 3, 1953. It appears he was Philby's last victim in Albania. I am told that Gregory's last words to the military judges were, "I will do it again, if I have another chance." His heroism gave hope to the Albanian people that they were not forgotten. For his bravery, Gregory was posthumously decorated by Decree of the Greek Government on September 19, 1991 with the Medal of Exceptional Deeds for his courage and unparalleled heroism."

Dr. Nikolaos A. Stavrou, his brother and prominent professor in International Affairs at Howard University continued his brother's work by other means. His testimony before committees of the U.S. House of Representatives and his appearance before the U.N. Commission on Human Rights earned him the wrath of the Hoxha regime. Dr. Stavrou was among the few scholars in the West who regularly exposed Albanian atrocities and Hoxha's vast gulag. His articles appeared in the Washington Post, Outlook Section, the Manchester Guardian, To Vema (Greece), Borba (Yugoslavia), The World and I, World Affairs, and many other journals. For 12 years, he was the analyst of Albanian Affairs for the Hoover Institution's Annual Review of World Communist Movement. He annoyed the Tirana regime so badly that it condemned him to death in absentia.

For 15 years since the collapse of the Albanian Communist regime, Dr. Stavrou sought quietly the help of the Albanian Government to locate, exhume and retrieve Gregory's remains and give him a decent funeral. He approached this truly human tragedy quietly and away from public fanfare and nationalistic overtones until now. Two Albanian Prime Ministers and a Speaker of the Albanian parliament promised him to conduct an inquiry into his brother's death but ultimately nothing came of it. As an American citizen, Dr. Stavrou sought the help of the State Department and again was disappointed. Though he never gave up searching for his brother, he was stymied in every step of the way. The evidence is overwhelming yet the Albanian Government has been less than forthcoming in helping Professor Stavrou honor a hero of the Cold War who happened to be his brother. I have also called upon our Department of State to use its good offices with the Albanian Government and to solve a humanitarian issue but never received a satisfactory answer. The least we can do is honor this family for the sacrifice they made for freedom. I am among those who consistently supported the cause of the Albanian peoples to gain their freedom and develop their country. However, our sup-

port should not be taken for granted. I hope the government of Prime Minister Berisha would be more respectful of those who gave their lives for freedom.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO KELSEY
MARTINEZ

HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of my constituents, Ms. Kelsey Martinez of Centennial, Colorado. Ms. Martinez has been accepted to the People to People World Leadership Forum here in our Nation's Capital. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the People to People program founded by President Eisenhower in 1956.

Ms. Martinez has displayed academic excellence, community involvement and leadership potential. All students chosen for the program have been identified and nominated by educators.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to join in paying tribute to Kelsey Martinez, and wish her the best in all her future endeavors.

EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF CONGRESS
THAT THERE SHOULD BE
ESTABLISHED A LET'S ALL
PLAY DAY

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the distinguished gentleman from Rhode Island, Mr. LANGEVIN for his leadership on this bill. As cosponsor, I also want to express my strong support for children of all abilities to have environments where they can learn and play together.

As the father of three, I understand that play is essential to healthy childhood development. Play inspires thinking, imagination, problem-solving and creates learning opportunities that can't be found in the classroom. Playgrounds are where children can play, learn and understand the world around them. Unfortunately, in many cases, the design of traditional playground isolates children with disabilities from playing, learning and sharing with their peers.

Today, we are introducing legislation that recognizes that all children should have equal access and equal opportunity to play together on barrier-free, inclusive playgrounds. This bill would express the sense of Congress that a "Let's All Play Day" should be established for all children, including the estimated 6 million children in the United States with a disability that make it hard or impossible to enjoy traditional playgrounds.

As we discuss the importance of play for all children, I want to take a moment to recognize the work of the National Center for Boundless Playgrounds. The National Center for Boundless Playgrounds is a champion in bringing the joy of play to all children with and without disabilities. Formed in 1997 and located in the town of Bloomfield in the First Congressional District, Boundless Playgrounds in collabora-

tion with Hasbro, Inc. and GameTime has helped communities in 21 states create more than 100 extraordinary "boundless" barrier-free playgrounds. I want to thank the Center for their tireless work and dedication in the state of Connecticut and across the country on behalf of all children.

Mr. Speaker, as children with and without disabilities learn together in classroom, we should encourage their learning together outside on the playground. I encourage my colleagues and communities across the country to join me and Congressman LANGEVIN in celebrating the joy of play for all children, with all abilities, in every community.

HONORING SAM SMITHSON ON HIS
BIRTHDAY

HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today to honor Mr. Sam Smithson on his 94th birthday and to thank him for his dedication and service to our country.

Born in Williamson County, Tennessee on October 4, 1912, Mr. Smithson was inducted into the Army as a Private First Class in December of 1942.

He fought bravely in major battles across Normandy, northern France, the Rhineland, and in the Ardennes as a member of B Company, 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion. On December 17, 1944, Pfc. Smithson was captured by German forces and sent to a prisoner-of-war camp, Stalag XIII-C, deep within Germany.

After living in captivity under brutal conditions for nearly six months, the camp was liberated by Allied Forces on April 28, 1945. Mr. Smithson's heroism and determination in the face of adversity earned him a promotion to Corporal upon his discharge from the Army in October 1945.

Mr. Smithson and his late wife Fronie were married for 69 years and had one son, Sam Smithson, Jr. On Saturday, September 30th, Mr. Smithson's family and friends will gather to celebrate his 94th birthday.

Sam's story is the American story. It's a testament to the determination and love of country that has kept us free for more than two centuries now. It's because of men like Sam that the American Dream lives. We thank God for his service to America, and it's right that we take time to reflect on his life and celebrate his 94th birthday.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in sending our thanks to Mr. Smithson for his service to our nation and our best wishes as he celebrates his birthday.

REGARDING HIV/AIDS AND
AFRICAN AMERICANS

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the crisis of HIV/AIDS among African Americans.