

democratic, economic and human rights reforms. They have been a key partner in the international community's efforts to build long-term support and stability in the Southeastern European region, and have been an active supporter of the global war against terrorism. Croatia fully recognizes the fundamental importance of sharing its visions of Euro-Atlantic integration with other countries in the region, and is prepared to be an example for developing democracies.

Croatia has benefited greatly from the substantial investment already made by the United States in the region. This investment illustrates our belief that Croatia is a viable partner in promoting democratic ideals and peace-keeping efforts internationally. I was proud to help further solidify this support last year, with the passage of House Resolution 529, which recommended Croatia's integration into NATO.

At the upcoming summit, NATO officials should be encouraged to definitively express their intentions to issue invitations for membership to qualified aspirant countries at the next summit in 2008, of which Croatia is at the top of the list. I wish to convey my strong support for the reform efforts being made in Croatia, and for an invitation to join NATO in the 2008 enlargement round. My congressional Croatian Caucus cochair, Congressman PETER VIS-CLOSKY, and I have also sent letters to the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense encouraging the administration to express support for this goal.

Finally, many individuals have worked very hard to see that this important invitation comes to fruition. I would like to especially thank Congressman VIS-CLOSKY, the Embassy of Croatia, and the multitude of Croatian nationals and Croatian Americans who have been so committed to this cause. I would also like to enter into the RECORD a letter in support of Croatia's membership into NATO.

NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF CROATIAN AMERICANS,
September 20, 2006.

Hon. CONDOLEEZZA RICE,
Secretary, Department of State,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SECRETARY: The problems in our world today are many and the issues you are currently addressing as the leader of our diplomatic efforts, while on the right course, are extremely challenging. However, I am pleased to point out that one emerging bright spot in the problematic region of Southeast Europe is The Republic of Croatia. Since winning her independence ten years ago, Croatia has made great strides along the path to full North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership by implementing democratic processes, upholding the rule of law, partnering with her neighbors on human rights, remaining a consistent supporter of the global war on terrorism, and demonstrating stable leadership among the countries in that region. In addition, Croatia has diligently pursued her responsibilities under NATO's Membership Action Plan in adapting her military to the interoperable and readily available needs of future NATO strategies.

The upcoming NATO meeting in Riga, Latvia, in November 2006 causes us to remember the great successes of this Alliance. For almost sixty years no member of NATO has ever been attacked, and all member nation-states have been blessed with economic prosperity. This is a group to which The Republic of Croatia aspires and to which she has earned the right to belong. While the NATO

meeting in Riga is scheduled to discuss 2007 as a year of transformation, we must also continue to focus on 2008, which is planned as the next year for possible NATO enlargement. Croatia deserves to be at the top of the list of countries qualifying as ready candidates in the 2008 enlargement round. I write to you today to request that Croatia's membership progress be discussed and properly reviewed with regard to early full NATO membership during the November Summit in Riga.

Croatia's democratic, economic, and defensive progress was recognized by the United States Congress late last year with passage of H. Res. 529 and S. Res. 342, both of which commended her and recommended that she be invited to join NATO as a full member at the earliest possible date. In addition, a delegation from the National Federation of Croatian Americans (NFCA) recently met with key representatives from both the U.S. State Department and the National Security Council and received very positive reports on Croatia's progress toward NATO membership and further integration into other western-oriented multilateral organizations. The NFCA will ensure that the Croatian American community in the U.S. continues to support all of these Congressional and Administration efforts, and we will rally our ethnic community as required.

The NFCA is very pleased with President Bush's recent appointment of Mr. Robert A. Bradtke as the new U. S. Ambassador to The Republic of Croatia. Mr. Bradtke's years of service, particularly with his experiences in the last NATO Enlargement, will serve him and the Croatian people well in these history making years for the country. The NFCA will also carry on its communication with Ambassador Bradtke to assist in any way we can towards greater enhancement of the relationship between the United States and The Republic of Croatia. He understands the importance of NATO for Croatia and is committed to reaching out to the Croatian people to continue building enthusiasm for full NATO membership. Your own support, in promoting the international progress of Croatia, is critically important. The NFCA sincerely appreciates your contributions and achievements in these difficult times for our country, and we ask that you support inviting the friendly country of Croatia to join the NATO Alliance in 2008.

If I may be of personal assistance to you on this important request regarding The Republic of Croatia's goal of full NATO membership, please do not hesitate to contact me at your first convenience. If our Government Relations Office may be of direct assistance to you or your staff, Mr. Joe Foley may also be contacted at the number below.

Sincerely,

EDWARD A. ANDRUS,
President.

HONORING THE ALEXANDRIA CONVENTION AND VISITORS ASSOCIATION ON THEIR 10TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and congratulate the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association for its 10 years of outstanding and dedicated service to the Alexandria community. The Association was established as, and remains, the City of

Alexandria's official marketing agency for tourism on what is known as "The Fun Side of the Potomac."

Since ACVA's founding in 1996, annual tourism spending in Alexandria has more than doubled to over \$600 million, and the city's annual revenue from tourism has increased similarly. The direct marketing program created by ACVA has yielded a 58-to-1 return for the city, a number that continues to grow today.

Alexandria's tourism industry employs over 9,000 people who work in the city's hotels, restaurants, attractions, retail shops and related tourism businesses. The tourism industry has helped improve the overall quality of life of all citizens of Alexandria, who enjoy the same amenities enjoyed by visitors to the city.

I am proud of the accomplishments of the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association and the contributions it has made over the last 10 years making the City of Alexandria one of the most desirable places in America to visit. I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating the ACVA on its anniversary and to wish the organization all the best in its future endeavors

COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST AIRCRAFT LANDING AT THE SOUTH POLE BY LCDR "GUS" SHINN

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first aircraft landing at the South Pole by Lieutenant Commander Conrad "Gus" Shinn.

Over 60 years ago, Gus became a pilot with the United States Navy and several years later began testing landing "skis" for aircraft to facilitate polar exploration. It was development of these skis through his testing and evaluation that not only allowed the establishment and support of large field stations in the interiors of Greenland and Antarctica but also the aerial mapping of over 200,000 square miles of unexplored polar territory. Gus's leadership was instrumental in developing a system to maintain these field stations and their research efforts.

No one had set foot at the South Pole since 1912, so it was even more remarkable that the next person to set foot in that unforgiving climate would do so by airplane. When Gus completed the first successful landing at the South Pole, he established his position not only as one of the foremost polar explorers but also one of the foremost pilots. His knowledge of polar exploration was considered to be on par with other famous figures such as Admiral Byrd and Lincoln Ellsworth. So highly regarded was his expertise in both aviation and polar exploration that he led the next four "Deep Freeze" missions that also landed at the South Pole. It was these missions, along with two other flights, that Gus participated in that allowed the materials and manpower to be flown in to build the United States base that remains at the South Pole today.

LCDR Shinn retired from the Navy in 1963, a legend in his field. National Geographic highlighted his party's efforts in 1957, but it is