

Social Service Agency of Greater Washington, 1984–86, and currently serves as the co-chairman for St. Luke's House Building Fund.

Mr. Lessenco is also a dedicated husband, father and treasured mentor.

Mr. Speaker, I extend my sincere congratulations to Gil Lessenco as he celebrates a distinguished career and lifetime of learning and serving our community. I ask my colleagues of the U.S. House of Representatives to join me in recognizing the many accomplishments of this extraordinary man.

MOURNING THE DEATH OF MAJ
JOSEPH "TRANE" McCLOUD

HON. AL GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2006

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I wish to mourn the death of Major Joseph "Trane" McCloud, 39, who was planning to celebrate his 40th birthday next week, but instead tragically died on Sunday, December 3, when the CH-46 helicopter he was riding in crash-landed in a lake in the Anbar province of Iraq. Additionally, I urge my colleagues to mourn the deaths and honor the lives of all of our soldiers who have died defending our country.

Major McCloud was a career marine who had been in Iraq for 3 months as the operations officer with the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment. Major McCloud was described by his family as "a Marine's Marine." He sacrificed the most active years of his life while in armed combat as a platoon and company commander defending the United States of America.

This was the second war in the Middle East that Major McCloud had served in. His service in the Persian Gulf war in 1991 was equally commendable. During the Persian Gulf war in 1991, McCloud served on the USS *Missouri*, as part of the final group of Marines to work aboard the ship before it was decommissioned.

Major McCloud's tremendous service to his country was not limited to the Armed Forces. He also worked at the Pentagon, completed a fellowship here in the U.S. House of Representatives, and served as an instructor at the Marine Corps Officer Candidate School in Quantico, VA. His dedication to teaching was just as strong as his dedication to the protection of this Nation. When Major McCloud worked for Representative JOE WILSON (R-S.C.), he assisted on military issues and took a special interest in a loan forgiveness program for inner-city teachers. This gentleman was the absolute prototype of the compassionate and dedicated soldier.

Shortly after President Bush declared the war on terrorism, McCloud was deployed to Zamboanga, in the Philippines, in charge of a small Marine unit during a time of intense violence and bombings.

McCloud was remembered yesterday as a good-natured man with a wonderful sense of humor who cherished his family above anything else.

A 1989 graduate of the University of Tennessee, Major McCloud leaves behind his wife Maggie and three children: Hayden, 7, Grace, 5, and Meghan, 2.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to mourn the death of a great soldier, husband, and father, MAJ Joseph "Trane" McCloud, and all the soldiers who have fallen while defending our Nation's freedom.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE
BIOGRAPH THEATER

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2006

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in proud recognition of The Biograph Theater, recently acquired by the Victory Gardens Theater, and located in the vibrant and multicultural neighborhood of Lincoln Park.

Since 1914 the Biograph Theater has been a symbol of art in a dense metropolitan area, and thanks to The Victory Garden Theater, it will remain in operation as the new main stage for theater company that has been in business since 1974.

After 90 years as a movie theater, under various owners, in July 2004, Chicago's Victory Gardens Theater announced it had purchased the Biograph for use as a live venue. The theater has been completely renovated by architect Daniel P. Coffey, who constructed a large state-of-the-art stage, with seating for 299 people.

The Biograph Theater will house a state-of-the-art stage guaranteeing the intimacy for which Victory Gardens' performances have become known, while providing greatly enhanced technical production capabilities. The new theater will have the very latest lighting and sound equipment as well as generous wing-space, dressing rooms, and a trap system under the stage, allowing for all kinds of theatrical magic.

In a city with such a rich history in the arts, The Biograph Theater is just one more example of thriving theater in the nation's Second City.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Congressional Arts Caucus I believe that it is important to support and recognize The Biograph Theater, Victory Gardens Theater and the Arts in Chicago. The Biograph Theater is an example of a new breath in an old Chicago landmark. I am proud of the storied history of The Biograph Theater and the work that the Victory Gardens Theater does and I wish them continued success in the coming years.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF HOUSE RE-
GARDING HIRING OF MEMBERS
OF ARMED FORCES

SPEECH OF

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 5, 2006

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the sentiment that motivated the gentleman from California, Mr. HUNTER, to offer this resolution. I agree with him that our Government must set the example when we choose to exhort employers to hire veterans. That's why I was pleased that in July of this year, the House passed by voice vote a concurrent resolution

I offered with Mr. BROWN of South Carolina that calls upon the President to establish a permanent national "Hire a Veteran Week."

The purpose of our bipartisan bill is simple. On a yearly basis, the President would lead a week-long effort to remind employers—both government and private sector—of the importance and value of hiring veterans. According to the most recent U.S. Labor Department data, in August 2005, 20- to 24-year-old veterans had an unemployment rate of 18.7 percent compared with their nonveteran counterparts. For all of 2005, the annual rate was 15.6 percent for 20- to 24-year-old veterans compared with 8.7 percent for non-veterans in that age group. Women veterans also suffer higher rates of unemployment than non-veterans. The unemployment rate for women veterans aged 25–34 stands at 6.9 percent versus 6 percent for their civilian counterparts. More alarmingly, women veterans aged 45–54 have twice the rate of unemployment than their non-veteran counterparts—7.1 percent versus 3.3 percent.

These aren't simply numbers; these are men and women who put on our country's uniform to protect each and every one of us. We can and must do more to help them find good-paying jobs that allow them to build a career and a life in the Nation they served and protected. That process should begin with a yearly reminder to all employers to actively seek out veterans as potential employees. I have been deeply disappointed that to date the Senate has not elected to follow the House's lead and pass my "Hire a Veteran Week" legislation. Should the Senate not pass this bill before the 109th Congress adjourns sine die, it will represent yet another failure of this Congress to meet the real needs of veterans.

My colleague from California, Mr. HUNTER, is correct that Congress should take the lead and set the example when it comes to veterans' employment issues. That's why in 2005 I introduced the American Veterans Congressional Internship Program, H.R. 1242, a bipartisan bill that would allow each Member of Congress to hire a veteran as a paid intern for 1 year.

The benefits of this bill are clear. House and Senate Members would be able to take advantage of the experience and can-do work ethic of veterans, while veterans would get the chance to directly influence policy decisions and contribute to legislation that will affect them and their fellow veterans. I regret the 109th Congress failed to act on this common-sense bill, and I intend to reintroduce it and push for its speedy passage in the 110th Congress.

One thing we should all be able to agree on is that our outreach to veterans seeking jobs should be buttressed with concrete action by Congress to fund job training and placement programs, particularly for young veterans and women veterans.

That we have a long way to go in meeting the employment and training needs of our veterans was made clear by John Rowan, the current president of Vietnam Veterans of America, in testimony he gave before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee on March 30 of this year. Mr. Rowan noted that:

In fact, there is no real national strategy to assist returning veterans, including National Guard and Reservists, who are unemployed or under-employed—and some 15 percent of our newest veterans have yet to find

gainful employment. Similarly, there is no effective mechanism in place for enforcing veterans' preference, and we have an Administration that appeals a case against a disabled veteran who had finally won his case before the Merit System Protection Board pursuant to The Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998.

It is imperative that re-education and work skills upgrades, including self-employment, be made a priority by those agencies of government that provide these services, especially considering the battalions of seriously and permanently disabled veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq.

This indictment of our current federal efforts on behalf of veterans seeking employment is a wake up call. I hope that when the 110th Congress convenes in January 2007, my colleagues will join me in helping create a national strategy to help returning veterans get the job training and employment opportunities they've earned for their service to America.

TRIBUTE TO THE INTERNATIONAL
SYMPOSIUM ON DEMOCRACY
CONGRESS TAIPEI, TAIWAN

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2006

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend the legislators from Pacific Rim countries who will assemble this weekend in Taiwan to explore the role of Congresses in democratic governments. Representatives from 20 Pacific Rim Countries are meeting under the auspices of the Democratic Pacific Union (DPU).

The DPU is a regional organization of Pacific nations that is promoting democracy and peace within that region, in addition to enhancing the multilateral relationships of the participating nations. I applaud the Taiwanese who took the initiative to establish the DPU and its sister organization, the Pacific Congress, I wish the DPU much success in continuing to strengthen the democracies and the vital regional alliances of its Member countries.

TRIBUTE TO THE 2006 CRYSTAL
FALLS FOREST PARK HIGH
SCHOOL TROJANS

HON. BART STUPAK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2006

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 2006 Crystal Falls Forest Park High School Trojans. This high school football team has made the entire Upper Peninsula (U.P.) community proud by once again beating the odds and advancing to the Division 8 State Finals game at Ford Field in Detroit.

This was the third straight year that the Crystal Falls Forest Park Trojans advanced to the Division 8 state high school football championship game. These players, their coaches and the entire Crystal Falls Forest Park community should be commended for representing the U.P. at Michigan's state football championship.

In many ways, the Trojans' advancement to the state finals again this year was a classic Cinderella story. Some "inside" football experts had predicted that 2006 would be a rebuilding year for the Trojans, as this year's roster included only 2 seniors. However, what the Trojans lacked in size and experience, they made up for with dedication, heart and teamwork. These 34 young men brought an unselfish attitude to the game that many college and professional players could learn from.

The team's moment of truth for this year's season came on October 13, when they played Bessemer High School. The short-handed Trojans suffered a 14-6 loss, dropping their record to 6-2 for the season and jeopardizing their chances at the playoffs. While many teams might allow a dispiriting loss such as this to derail their playoff ambitions, the Trojans came together as a team to overcome this challenge and rally in the face of adversity. The Trojans followed their setback in Bessemer with 5 straight wins, including 4 in the postseason.

Assistant Coach Dave Graff summed up the winning attitude of this year's Trojans when he said, "We might not be the best team, but we're good enough to get where we're going. They believe in themselves and anything is possible."

The community of Crystal Falls Forest Park and the U.P. truly united behind the Trojans, giving 110 percent of their support. Some of the supporters of the team traveled a long distance—in a short period—to cheer on their team. Crystal Falls Forest Park fans loaded up three buses at the high school at 10:00 p.m. Thanksgiving night and trekked more than 500 miles, arriving at Ford Field at 7:30 a.m. the Friday morning of the game. That gave the fans just a few hours to stretch before the 10 a.m. kickoff!

Mr. Speaker, each member of this team deserves to be recognized and I want to take a moment to share their names: Fred Hubbard; Jim Freeman; Dustin Basirico; Bob Reid; Zach Sawyer; Kyle Roberts; Justin James; Calix Sholander; John Grandahl; Levi Oleksy; Kyle LaVacque; Tony Grandahl; Andrew Bortolini; Matt Sundquist; Bryan LaChapelle; Erik Peterson; Josh Siler; Tim Wheeler; Ethan Uren; Justin Process; Jim Wheeler; Tony Renner; Marcus Smithson; Kevin Takala; Chris McCarthy; William Bortolini; Bill Fennick; Travis Hoenig; Bill Paige; Ed Zarn; Paige Armstrong; Pat Bredy; Ben Shuck; Jake Jacobson; Jeff Sartori; and Andrew Gussert.

I would be remiss if I did not also salute the Trojans' talented coaching staff. Head Coach Bill Santilli and Assistant Coaches Dave Graff, Gerard Valesano, Gene Giuliani, Jeff Chernach and Dan LaPoint should all be commended for helping lead the Crystal Falls Forest Park Trojans to a third state championship game. Managers L.J. Burns, Dan Ballo-Shuck and Lee Graff should also be recognized for their contributions, as should their trainer, Mark Nylund. Together, this talented coaching staff shepherded this year's young team to the state finals.

Mr. Speaker, the Crystal Falls Forest Park football team knew what the late, great Green Bay Packers coach, Vince Lombardi always said, "Winning isn't everything, but wanting to win is." The Trojan team wanted to win more than the so-called "inside" football experts predicted!

Mr. Speaker, I ask the U.S. House of Representatives to join me in congratulating the Crystal Falls Forest Park Trojans football team, their classmates, parents and the community on their exceptional season and in wishing the Trojans well when they retake the field for the 2007 season.

HONORING CHICAGO ASTRONAUT
JOAN HIGGINBOTHAM

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2006

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor Astronaut Joan Higginbotham. Higginbotham is a member of the crew on the Space Shuttle *Discovery* that is scheduled to launch tonight from NASA's Kennedy Space Center. Additionally, she is a fellow Chicagoan, and I wish her the best of luck as she prepares for her first mission, STS 116.

Higginbotham graduated from Chicago's Whitney Young High School in 1982, and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in 1987. She will be the third African-American woman aboard a NASA mission, and she and her fellow astronaut Robert Curbeam will make history this week on STS 116, the first Space Shuttle mission with two African-American astronauts.

Higginbotham previously worked as a payload engineer at the John F. Kennedy Space Center while also earning two master's degrees from the Florida Institute of Technology.

As a mission specialist on board *Discovery*, Higginbotham's responsibilities will include a complete rewiring of the International Space Station's power supply. She will also have the responsibility of operating the robotic arm to deploy several satellites and to direct payload transfers.

Higginbotham will be joined by Mission Commander Mark Polansky, as well as Robert Curbeam, Sunita Williams, Nicholas Patrick, William Oefelein, and Christer Fuglesang from the European Space Agency, who is the first Swedish astronaut.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing my fellow Chicagoan as well as her fellow astronauts, and to wish them all the best on their launch tonight and their 12-day mission.

HONORING MARILYN W. GROUNDS

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2006

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Marilyn W. Grounds for over 10 years of extraordinary service on the board of the Planned Parenthood Association of the Mercer Area.

Ms. Grounds is best described as a "professional volunteer." Active in her children's schools and the community, she was at first focused in serving the arts community. It was the great fortune of the Planned Parenthood Association of the Mercer Area to have her join their board in 1995.

The Planned Parenthood Association of the Mercer Area provides comprehensive reproductive health care which contributes to both