

Please allow me, on behalf of the American people, to send my most respectful and admiring salute.

#### RETIREMENT OF SANDRA COOK

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I welcome this opportunity to pay tribute to Sandra Cook who retired last week from the Department of Education. For almost 20 years, Sandra has worked in the Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs at the Department, providing invaluable and dedicated service. She will be missed by all who worked with her, both at the Department and in Congress.

Improving education for each and every child in this country is one of the most important priorities for our Nation, and Sandra has been committed to that priority throughout her dedicated service. Her commitment to education began in the classroom in Indiana as a teacher of history and language arts. She came to Washington to work in Congress and then moved to the Department of Education. From there she has provided constant guidance and support to us as we work to improve Federal education policy. She has been an indispensable part of the past two reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—the Improving America's Schools Act and the No Child Left Behind Act, as well as many other Federal education bills.

We all owe Sandra an immense debt of gratitude for her outstanding work. She knows the education laws inside and out, and she always goes the extra mile. She has always been able to work in a truly bipartisan way with Members of both parties. She doesn't just get the job done—she gets it done well, and with grace. We have been fortunate to have her.

As Sandra retires to Illinois, I know her colleagues at the Department of Education will miss her. Her knowledge and skills will be difficult to replace. Certainly, all of us in Congress and our staffs who have had the privilege of working with her will miss her assistance and support. I wish her a long and happy and healthy retirement. She has certainly earned it.

#### IN MEMORIAM: AUGUSTUS HAWKINS

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am honored to remember former Member of the House of Representatives Augustus Hawkins, who passed away on November 10, 2007, at the age of 100.

Augustus Freeman Hawkins was the first African American from California to be elected to Congress. He was a champion of workers, fair housing, and civil rights, and Hawkins represented south Los Angeles, first in the State legislature and then in Congress, for more than half a century.

Augustus was born in Shreveport, LA, on Aug. 31, 1907, the youngest of five children of Nyanza and Hattie Hel-

ena Hawkins. His family arrived in Los Angeles soon after World War I when Hawkins was 11. He attended Jefferson High School and earned a degree from UCLA in 1931.

He began his public service career in an era that was far less congenial to minority politicians, serving as a State assemblyman from 1935 until 1962, when he won election to the U.S. House of Representatives, as the civil rights movement was taking center stage. He served in the House from 1963 to 1991, and I was proud to serve with him.

While soft-spoken, Hawkins was fiery in defense of his constituents. At the time of the 1965 Watts riots in his district, he declared that police had been "abusive and arrogant and have attempted to control things by force, not by more modern methods of control."

When Hawkins retired at 83, he was widely praised for his unflagging legislative efforts to help bring those who had been left out of the system into the mainstream.

His legislative legacy includes a key role in shaping Federal statutes, most importantly as sponsor of the section of the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act that created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Hawkins fought with President after President for minimum-wage increases and, with Senator Hubert Humphrey, wrote the Humphrey-Hawkins Act of 1978 that was designed to reduce unemployment and inflation.

He is survived by two stepdaughters, Barbara A. Hammond and Brenda L. Stevenson; a stepson, Michael A. Taylor; two grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Our Nation lost an amazing public servant and mentor with the passing of Augustus Freeman Hawkins, but his legacy to the people of south Los Angeles, the State of California, and all of America should be remembered.

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

#### RUSSIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

• Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I commend Russian citizens for turning out in large numbers to vote in yesterday's parliamentary elections. For 16 years, Russia's citizens have exercised their right to vote, which is so essential to democracy.

Unfortunately, Russia's leaders have been working to make that vote more and more meaningless by creating an imitation democracy instead of a real one.

Well before the campaign even began, several Russian political parties and politicians were banned from participating in the election. During the campaign, President Putin and his party, United Russia, enjoyed virtually unlimited positive television air-time on Kremlin-controlled networks, while opposition parties had their ads removed and their campaign materials con-

fiscated. The Russian authorities have prevented opposition parties from campaigning fairly, imprisoning opposition leaders, intimidating activists, and preventing them from making their case to Russia's voters. Russian voters have reported that they have been pressured to vote for the Kremlin's party, United Russia, by employers and local officials. In Chechnya, 99.2 percent of voters allegedly turned out to vote and 99.3 percent of these voters allegedly cast their ballot for United Russia. Several other regions have reported similar results for Putin's party, making a mockery of this vote as a free and fair election. Yesterday's elections were the least free and fair in the 16 years of Russia's modern history as an independent country.

We have to work with the Russian leadership in the coming years to deal with vital foreign policy issues, including securing nuclear materials and preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons security is a high priority, and the United States and Russia need to work together to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons or materials.

But in doing so, we do not have to turn a blind eye to the erosion of Russian democracy. We must be clear-eyed on Russia's political direction, which in the long run is not favorable for Russia's own political stability or economic prosperity. By engaging Russia honestly, we will remain friends of the Russian people as they continue to try to build for themselves a better country and future.●

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### HONORING PATROL OFFICER JOHN PAUL MILLER

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the memory of a dedicated public servant, Officer John Paul Miller of the California Highway Patrol. On the evening of November 16, 2007, while searching for a reported reckless drunk driver, Officer Miller's life was tragically cut short in the line of duty when his patrol vehicle struck a tree on a rural road near Livermore.

Officer Miller graduated from the California Highway Patrol Academy in March 2007 and joined the Dublin CHP office soon afterward. Officer Miller dutifully served the citizens and communities of Contra Costa County. Although his time in the uniform was all too short, Officer Miller demonstrated a passion for law enforcement and commitment to helping others, qualities that enabled him to become a respected member of the California Highway Patrol. Officer Miller's colleagues shall always remember him for his gregarious nature and devotion to serving the public.

Officer Miller is survived by his wife Stephanie and children, Chandler and Reese. When he was not on duty or