

body of President John Quincy Adams laying in state, and the famed Swedish soprano, Jenny Lind, performing at the Church in July 1851. Samuel Chapin, the subject of the St. Gaudans "the Puritan" statue, was an early deacon of the Church. Old First Church played a role in the Underground Railroad. In fact, Reverend Osgood brought in leading abolitionists from England to give speeches advocating against slavery. Daniel Webster attended Old First Church on more than one occasion.

The church also organized and annually hosted a series of musical presentations called "Music at First" which featured individual artists, chambers music, ensembles and choral groups. The New England Academy of Academic Artists was also annually provided with a venue for its Juried Show.

Old First Church, until its closing, hosted the largest and longest established Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in Western Massachusetts.

Beginning in 1977, Old First Church began to house "Open Pantry" the largest food distribution service for the needy in the Greater Springfield area. It also hosted and regularly staffed "Loaves and Fishes" providing two meals for the homeless each Saturday and Sunday. In recent years, during the winter months, the Church opened its door to "The Warming Place" supplying emergency shelter to the area's homeless.

Public Vigils to raise consciousness surrounding the issues of AIDS, domestic violence and other social issues have regularly been held at Old First Church as well as memorial services for the New England Association of Fire Chiefs.

The members of the congregation embraced and actively participated in "Walking United" a program designed to gather and distribute unused prosthetic devices in the United States to a clinic it established to aid the people of Nicaragua who suffered as a result of land mine and other catastrophic injuries.

Despite its conservative New England roots, Old First Church has been among the most socially progressive churches in Massachusetts. It has been a church which has paved the way for other congregations to follow and one that has always provided unconditional resources and support to those in need within and beyond the City of Springfield.

At the "Celebrations of the Life of Old First Church 1637 to 2007" those in attendance were invited by the Reverend Dr. J. Thomas Gough, the 23rd settled pastor of Old First Church, to come forward and accept "packets of seed" while offering this prayer:

"Gracious God, Creator of earth and sky, author of all living things, spirit of hope and grace and promise, be part of us now as your people here at Old First Church prepare to offer themselves as seeds of your love. Bless these packets of seed as symbols of your intention for us that we might venture forth into the world bearing what is necessary to grow in other soil.

"May it be your breath that blows us to other places. May it be your call that leads us to go forth from this place to be your people scattered in the world. May we follow in the paths you set before us and take root where next you plant us. Help us, above all, to flourish in new places and to bring the fruit of Old First Church to ripeness in other communities of faith. Let what we have learned in this place, what has given us life and meaning and purpose, create new and holy spaces wherever we are taken in your name."

Madam Speaker, it is my hope that Old First Church will continue to remain a historic landmark and preserved, as it is truly one of the most significant buildings in the city. The parish house has potential valuable uses for the city and it would be a tragedy if we did not do everything in our power to preserve this building. The memories made at the church will continue to live on in the hearts and spirits of the members.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 13, 2008*

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, on March 12, 2008, I was unavoidably detained and was not able to record my votes for Rollcall Nos. 124–134.

Had I been present I would have voted: Rollcall No. 124—"no"—On Motion to Adjourn.

Rollcall No. 125—"no"—Resolution Raising a Question of the Privileges of the House.

Rollcall No. 126—"no"—On Motion to Adjourn.

Rollcall No. 127—"no"—On Motion to Adjourn.

Rollcall No. 128—"yes"—On Motion to Table the Resolution.

Rollcall No. 129—"yes"—Providing for the consideration of H. Con. Res. 312, Congressional Budget for the U.S. Government for Fiscal Year 2009.

Rollcall No. 130—"yes"—Providing for the consideration of H. Con. Res. 312, Congressional Budget for the U.S. Government for Fiscal Year 2009.

Rollcall No. 131—"yes"—Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education Act.

Rollcall No. 132—"yes"—Providing for an adjournment or recess of the two Houses.

Rollcall No. 133—"yes"—Honoring the 200th anniversary of the Gallatin Report on Roads and Canals, celebrating the national unity the Gallatin Report engendered, and recognizing the vast contributions that national planning efforts have provided to the United States.

Rollcall No. 134—"yes"—To temporarily extend the programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965.

#### HONORING FRANKLIN SCHOOL FOR BEING NAMED AN ILLINOIS SCHOOL OF HONOR

### HON. JERRY F. COSTELLO

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 13, 2008*

Mr. COSTELLO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Franklin School, in Belleville, Illinois, for being named an Illinois School of Honor, one of only two schools in Illinois to receive this award.

The University of Illinois Extension has teamed with the Character Education Partnership (CEP) to conduct an award competition that recognizes schools that have implemented outstanding programs in character

education. Franklin School was selected in the state competition as one of only two Illinois Schools of Honor. This is a prestigious honor for Franklin School and brings well-deserved recognition to their very successful character education program.

With the emphasis in recent years on testing and meeting aggressive educational standards, it is refreshing to see that schools also realize that character counts. These schools demonstrate that well-rounded students can be developed by instilling values of respect for others and good moral judgment while also focusing on instruction in academic subjects.

The application process for the State School of Character competition is very rigorous and there are specific, objective criteria that must be met to qualify. In order to be considered, a school must demonstrate that they have implemented a comprehensive, effective and successful program for incorporating character development into their school environment. Winning this award reflects positively on the entire Franklin School community, administration, faculty and staff, students and families. All worked together to achieve this honor.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the administration, faculty, staff, students and families of Franklin School for their recognition as an Illinois School of Honor.

#### FREEDOM FOR RANDY CABRERA MAYOR

### HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 13, 2008*

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about Randy Cabrera Mayor, a prisoner of conscience in totalitarian Cuba.

Mr. Cabrera Mayor was imprisoned by the Cuban totalitarian dictatorship in 1989, a month before his 19th birthday. For his refusal to join the dictatorship's armed forces.

Eight months after his imprisonment, Mr. Cabrera Mayor courageously escaped the atrocious confinement facility known as "Ganusa", located in San Jose de las Lajas. He promptly built himself a makeshift boat and attempted to reach freedom in the United States. Unfortunately, Mr. Cabrera Mayor was caught ten miles off the coast of Matanzas by agents of the communist dictatorship. He was convicted by a sham tribunal on charges of "treason" and "illegal departure from the island." This would mark the first of many unsuccessful attempts by this brave political prisoner to achieve his god-given right to freedom.

My colleagues, I wish to bring to your attention the inhumane conditions Mr. Cabrera Mayor is currently living in. The food he is being provided is consistently under an advanced stage of decomposition to the point that it is propagating intestinal diseases. He spends long periods of time in solitary confinement without access to a bathroom and shackles have been attached to his ankles to hinder his movements. When not in solitary confinement, Mr. Cabrera Mayor and other political prisoners are held in the same cells as common criminals of the most dangerous kinds.

Madam Speaker, Mr. Randy Cabrera Mayor has engaged in numerous hunger strikes to