

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IT'S A SOUTHERN THING

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 9, 2009

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, as we kick off 2009, people across the country are making their new year's resolutions and families are carrying on with their special traditions to start the year out on a good note. Of course by mid February you should be able to get a close parking spot at the gym since that's about the time motivation for the fitness resolution begins to wane. However, there are some traditions that endure year after year, particularly in the South where we seem to value our heritage and culture a little more than our friends to the north.

Since I grew up in Texas, black eyed peas and football were the norm for my family, and everyone I knew, on New Year's Day. Everyone had to have at least one bite for good luck, like it or not, it was the rule. It wasn't until I met my first northerner that I realized this was a southern thing unique only unto us.

There are stories that date the "good luck" tradition all the way back the pharaohs of Egypt, but for us it goes back to the War Between the States. During General Sherman's March to the Sea in late December 1864, he ordered the Union troops to "burn and destroy" everything they saw, and "leave a trail that will be recognized fifty years hence."

In the aftermath of the devastation of the South, the only fields that were spared were the crops of black eyed peas and corn. The Northern soldiers considered them food for the livestock and didn't waste time burning them, thereby leaving them as the only real source of food left for the starving southerners. As a result, black eyed peas were seen as the saving grace of the South and became a sentimental symbol of better days that lie ahead.

Now there are a lot of theories on why we must eat them on New Year's Day, but they all revolve around the principle that they bring good luck and prosperity in the coming year. Every family has a different way of cooking them, if you're from the South you can bet your family has a recipe.

In Texas, some just like to serve plain ole' "East Texas Caviar" (as black eyed peas are referred to in Texas). My friends over in Louisiana like to "kick it up a notch" and add tomatoes and Cajun spices, some folks make Hoppin' John with rice and hammocks, and most everyone serves them with cornbread and some type of greens such as collards, mustard or turnip greens, or just cabbage or cole slaw to symbolize money. But you can't just eat the greens and expect a prosperous year, you have to have the peas too. Just one bite, it's the rule. (Although some say you have to eat 365 peas, one for each day or eat "every bean and pea on your plate"—I leave that one up to you!)

I have even heard of people putting a penny in the pot and whoever gets the penny in their

bowl gets the "best" luck of the year. Maybe this is like the baby in the King Cake? Whatever the case, it is a tradition that runs deep in the South and I am glad to see that it is still alive and well. Both my grandmothers had their special recipes, and every New Year's Day I still hound my kids and grandkids to make sure they eat their peas. So, I hope you all had your black eyed peas and for all you transplants living in the great State of Texas, I hope you get with the program and try some East Texas Caviar to start your year off right. It's a Southern thing.

And that's just the way it is.

CELEBRATING SAN YSIDRO'S
CENTENNIAL YEAR!

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 9, 2009

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker and colleagues, I rise today to commemorate the Centennial of the great community of San Ysidro—the gateway to America. San Ysidro is not only home to the world's busiest land border crossing, but is also a multicultural tight-knit community with a rich history and culture like no other. As California's Border Congressman, I am very proud to represent San Ysidro and will continue to be a vocal advocate for our border community. Please join me in this year-long celebration. "¡Adelante San Ysidro!"

HONORING SPECIAL KIDS DAY

HON. PETER J. ROSKAM

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 9, 2009

Mr. ROSKAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize an important community service organization located in Elmhurst, Illinois in my congressional district called Special Kids Day.

Special Kids Day was created in 1990 as a holiday event for children with special needs and their families to visit Santa Claus without obstacles. This venture has evolved into a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing celebratory events for children with disabilities and their families in an environment designed to accommodate their special needs.

On the first Wednesday each December, Special Kids Day holds their flagship event. Volunteers help children get their picture taken with Santa and distribute goodie bags with toys and candy. Other surprises from face painters to balloon animals help make these events a memorable time for special needs children. All of this allows these children and their families to enjoy the magic of the Christmas season without some of the challenges of making a trip to the mall at the holidays.

Today, the Special Kids Day organization has grown to include dozens of volunteers

who serve hundreds of families in the Chicagoland area. For the first time, Special Kids Day also began holding a Carnival Day at the Annual Elmfest in Elmhurst this year.

Madam Speaker and distinguished colleagues, please join me in honoring the time and effort of Special Kids Day volunteers. This organization's selfless, charitable spirit is what makes Illinois' Sixth District such a pleasure to represent.

THE TERMINATION OF RFE/RL
AND VOA RADIO BROADCASTS IN
AZERBAIJAN

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 9, 2009

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise to express deep concern about Azerbaijan's cessation of local broadcasts of Radio Free Europe and Voice of America. After threatening for months to remove RFE/RL and VOA from the FM airwaves, Baku did precisely that on January 1.

The official justification for this unfortunate decision is that a 2002 Azerbaijani law restricts such frequencies to local broadcasters. The Helsinki Commission, which I chair, sent a letter on November 24, co-signed by Co-Chairman Senator BENJAMIN CARDIN and Ranking Minority Member CHRISTOPHER SMITH, to President Ilham Aliyev in which we urged him to reconsider. We pointed out that keeping Congressionally funded RFE/RL and VOA off the FM airwaves was an unwise and unfriendly move and that ending these programs was a poor way to start a relationship with incoming President Barack Obama. But Baku did not budge. Nor, might I add, have we even received the courtesy of a reply since November.

In fact, there are grounds for even graver concerns. Baku had pledged that only FM broadcasts would be ended. On January 6, however, Azerbaijani authorities tried to close down RFE/RL's Internet operation—which they had said would not be touched.

It is difficult to see these actions in any light other than a desire to restrict information available to the public. As the State Department said on December 30, "These media organizations play a crucial role in supporting democratic debate and the free exchange of ideas and information. This decision, if carried out, will represent a serious setback to freedom of speech, and retard democratic reform in Azerbaijan."

I concur completely. Azerbaijan's record on media freedom was poor before this, with heavy state influence on the airwaves, three journalists in jail and frequent criticism by the OSCE, Council of Europe and freedom of speech advocates. Now, Azerbaijanis without access to cable or the Internet—which means most of the listening audience—are cut off from objective, impartial sources of information.

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