

Azerbaijani relations with the United States will surely be negatively affected by this decision. I regret that when President Ilham Aliiev eventually meets President Barack Obama, they will have to spend time discussing why Baku has shut down U.S.-funded radio stations, instead of exploring ways to deepen the relationship between our countries.

The Helsinki Commission intends to examine U.S. international broadcasting in a future hearing and discuss ways of ensuring the continuance of this vital service. Meanwhile, it is my hope that President Aliiev will find a way to keep RFE/RL and VOA on the air.

BCS/UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

**HON. JASON CHAFFETZ**

OF UTAH

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 9, 2009*

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Madam Speaker, the University of Utah Football Team deserves to be National Champions. The Running Utes of Utah had a remarkably perfect 13-0 season, the only undefeated team out of the 119 in the NCAA's Football Bowl Subdivision. They started the season by defeating the perennial powerhouse Michigan Wolverines. They beat the Oregon State Beavers, who one week earlier had beaten the #1-ranked USC Trojans. They went on to beat the TCU Horned Frogs and the BYU Cougars, who were both ranked in the top 15 of the BCS at the time. Finally, in the Sugar Bowl, the University of Utah crushed the University of Alabama, who was ranked #1 in the BCS for much of the season. The Utes were able to turn back the Crimson Tide, but were still wiped out of consideration for the BCS National Championship.

Perhaps the Bowl Championship Series, the so-called BCS, would best be referred to as the Good 'Ol Boys Championship Series. The University of Utah bowled over 13 opponents this year without a single loss. It would be seemingly inappropriate for the Utes to be bowled over by the good 'ol boys off the field. The University of Utah Football Team deserves to be National Champions.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF ROBERT H. CHRISTY, JR., CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT FOR BUNCOMBE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

**HON. HEATH SHULER**

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 9, 2009*

Mr. SHULER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Robert H. Christy, Jr., on his impending retirement. He has faithfully and effectively served as the Buncombe County Clerk of Superior Court for the past 18 years and will retire on December 31, 2008.

Since his initial swearing in on September 1, 1990, Bob Christy has overseen the court system during a time of tremendous growth. During that time, his office has grown from 47 employees to 65. Criminal and civil court filings have more than doubled during his tenure. Previously practicing law in the community, Christy's experience as an assistant clerk of

court to J. Ray Ellingburg for 7 years prepared him well for the clerkship.

As Clerk of Court, Christy managed Buncombe County's District Court and Superior Court, an operation that entails approximately \$25 million in annual revenue. Beyond monetary responsibilities, Christy supervised record-keeping in the local courts for all civil actions, special proceedings, court minutes, liens and other actions.

Mr. Christy found opportunity in the clerkship to express his great compassion for the elderly, the bereaved, and the struggling of Buncombe County. Over the past 18 years, the Clerk of Court has handled such delicate matters as juvenile crime, adoption, domestic violence, and issues of wills and estates. Christy operated the clerk's office with an open door policy in which he counseled on legal matters but also strove to alleviate the emotional concerns of those in need.

As a public servant, Christy had a great passion and respect for the office that he held. During his tenure, he served as president of the North Carolina Clerks Association, overseeing the executive committee in decision-making that in turn affected 10,000 clerks in the 100 counties across the state. He served on the Governor's Crime Commission and the boards of the North Carolina Courts Commission and the North Carolina Credit Union. He worked closely with the bar association in the county and is known for having strong relationships with area attorneys.

In his private life as well, he is known for activism and involvement. The Democratic Party in Buncombe County has honored Christy with several awards. He is an active member of Central United Methodist Church. In retirement, Christy will be returning to private legal practice with his long-time friend, Asheville attorney Jack Stewart.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor Mr. Robert Christy today, to thank him for his tremendous service to the community, and to wish him well in his retirement.

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD'S SERVICE IN THE U.S. SENATE

**HON. NICK J. RAHALL II**

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 9, 2009*

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, this week, in this Capitol, we are witnessing a convergence of a number of events that will long stand out in our Nation's collective memories. We are on the front edge of a new session of Congress, preparing for a landmark moment in the history of America's presidency. And, at the same time, we are celebrating a major milestone for one of this Nation's most devoted and accomplished public servants—U.S. Senator ROBERT C. BYRD.

It was 50 years ago, that Senator BYRD, for the first time, took the oath of office to serve in the United States Senate—an oath he has now taken a record-setting nine times.

Yesterday, as numerous Members of the House and Senate raised their own hands and took their own very first oaths, I could not help but think about what it must have been like for our Senior Senator from West Virginia to

watch these new ranks at the start of their own Congressional careers.

I was reminded of my first day of service in this body. I recall being humbled by the responsibility that had been placed in my hands and awed by the auspicious ceremony and the grandeur of this ornate Chamber.

On that first day, I was relieved at the knowledge that I was blessed with the wisdom, the support, and the mentorship of ROBERT C. BYRD. Throughout my career here, he has been a constant source of encouragement and sage advice.

Today, as we embark upon this new session cognizant of the tremendous challenges before us—a struggling economy, two wars, a strapped Federal budget, and growing public need—we can breathe easier knowing that we are all blessed to have the continuing service of ROBERT C. BYRD to steer us through the rocky shoals.

Congratulations to Senator BYRD—our trailblazer, our Leader, our Big Daddy. May he continue to serve the people of West Virginia and the entire Nation for many years to come.

ST. PETERSBURG MAYOR RICK BAKER NAMED ONE OF NATION'S OUTSTANDING PUBLIC OFFICIALS

**HON. C.W. BILL YOUNG**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 9, 2009*

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Baker who last November was named one of Governing magazine's eight public officials of the year.

Now beginning his 8th year as mayor, Rick has brought insurmountable energy and passion to serving the people of St. Petersburg and revitalizing the entire community. His catch phrase is, "Another great day in St. Petersburg," and under his leadership, every day has become another great day for our community.

As the only mayor honored this year, the magazine dubbed Mayor Baker as "Mr. Inclusive" for his work to revitalize the city's economy, improve its parks system, and improve the city's schools.

This is one of many honors Rick's hard work and commitment to public service have earned him and the city. Just last September, General Colin Powell's America's Promise Alliance named St. Petersburg one of our Nation's 100 Best Communities for Young People.

During ceremonies September 22 at Union Station, the organization cited St. Petersburg for its effort to improve its schools by forming corporate sponsorships. In particular, it said, "St. Petersburg has a strong backbone—the mayor—who, since 2003, has increased corporate partners for its schools from nine to nearly 80."

It was Rick Baker whose vision led to the establishment of the Mayor's Mentors & More program 6 years ago. With the support of the Pinellas Education Foundation, which funded a city staff position to lead mentor training, the city has trained more than 500 mentors over the past 2 years.

Madam Speaker, as Rick Baker embarks upon his final year as mayor, it is good that he