

Methodist Men at First United Methodist Church.

As the Congressman for the Fifth District of Texas, I am pleased today to recognize Gary Chasey for his many years of public service and countless contributions he has made to make his community and his country a better place. Gary, on behalf of all the constituents of the Fifth District, especially those in Henderson County, I would like to extend our most sincere thanks.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBER MANUEL BENAVIDEZ, JR.

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. CUELLAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the late Manuel Benavidez, Jr. for his service to the people of Starr County, the State of Texas, and the education community across the country. His life was a symbol of what hard work and desire can achieve. He was a respected member of his community and of the State of Texas and we will all miss him dearly.

Mr. Benavidez was born in La Grulla, Texas in 1952. A former migrant farm worker, he graduated from Rio Grande City High School and later attended Pan American University where he received a bachelor's degree in bilingual education. Education has been a focal point in Mr. Benavidez's life, where he has not just worked to educate himself but has dedicated himself to helping others enhance their lives through study.

In 1993, he was appointed to the South Texas College Board of Trustees as the representative for Starr County. He worked tirelessly to bring the first community college to the area and through the years he has been instrumental in bringing millions of dollars to the county for STC campuses. His testimony in support of the dual enrollment program was key to getting legislation passed that has helped families across Texas save millions of dollars on the cost of college tuition. His life has revolved around the idea of bettering his community by giving the residents of Starr County an equal opportunity to accessing higher education.

Madam Speaker, please join me in honoring Manuel Benavidez, Jr. for his lifetime of dedicated service to Starr County and to the education community across the country. He was a husband, a father, and an inspiration for all of us. He will be greatly missed.

HONORING VANESSA SCOTT

HON. C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Madam Speaker, I rise before you today to honor Mrs. Vanessa Scott, recently awarded the 2008 Congress-

sional Volunteer Recognition Award by the 2nd Congressional District of Maryland's Veterans Advisory Council. Vanessa has been selected to receive this award because of her volunteer service at the VA, based on her outstanding dedication to serving the needs of veterans within her community.

Veterans of the United States Armed Forces have dedicated themselves to protecting the lives of every American. Their service to our Nation deserves the highest level of gratitude. It is important that we take the time to recognize the individuals who give of their time and talents to support veterans and ensure their comfort, care, and well-being.

Mrs. Scott has been an advocate for veterans for the past 15 years. She has worked at both Fort Howard and the Baltimore VA Rehabilitation and Extended Care Center. While raising a family, Vanessa has given of her time to the sick and lonesome men and women in those VA facilities, such as spending her evenings playing Bingo with patients. Her unwavering dedication has inspired those who serve with her to provide exceptional service and care.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you join with me today to honor Mrs. Vanessa Scott. Her compassion and commitment to veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces has become an inspiration to us all, and is deserving of the utmost gratitude. It is with great pride that I congratulate Mrs. Scott on her exemplary service as an advocate and a volunteer.

TRIBAL LAW AND ORDER ACT OF 2009

HON. STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN

OF SOUTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Madam Speaker, today, I am pleased to reintroduce the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2009, critical legislation to address needs of law enforcement and justice services in Indian Country. I want to thank Senator DORGAN and his colleagues and staff on the Senate Indian Affairs Committee for their tireless dedication to these issues.

The Tribal Law & Order Act would establish accountability measures for the Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice with regard to tribal law enforcement. This bill also seeks to increase local control to tribal law enforcement agencies and to authorize additional resources for tribes to address the safety and security needs of their communities.

In June 2007, the House Committee on Natural Resources held a hearing on the Lower Brule Reservation in South Dakota. Entitled, The Needs and Challenges of Tribal Law Enforcement in Indian Reservations, tribal leaders and law enforcement officials from eight tribes testified for the need to improve government-to-government consultations between tribes and the federal agencies charged with supporting their law enforcement goals. Witnesses explained the need for more resources for officers, equipment, jails, and tribal courts.

For example, the Law Enforcement Department of Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of South Dakota serves a population spread across 19

communities with a land base of approximately 2.8 million acres. Some of these communities are located as far as 90 miles away from department headquarters. With approximately 4,500 miles of roadways on the reservation, it often takes officers a considerable amount of time to address calls, including emergencies.

At current funding levels, the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Law Enforcement Department is unable to provide adequate police protection to all of these communities. In FY08, the tribal police force was reduced by 10 patrol officers due to budget constraints. Now, officers are logging over 4000 hours of overtime each quarter, which leads to stress and strain on the officers and their families, and ultimately, undermines retention efforts and leads to communities that are not as safe as they should be.

From my work with tribal communities in South Dakota and as a Member of the Committee on Natural Resources, I know that Cheyenne River is not an extreme case. In fact, across all Indian Country, there are less than 3,000 tribal law enforcement officers to patrol over 56 million acres of land. This figure represents less than one-half of the law enforcement presence in comparable rural communities. This disparity is unacceptable and shameful.

The Tribal Law and Order Act is an important step to addressing the complex and broken system of law and order in Indian Country. This bill would clarify the responsibilities of Federal, State, tribal, and local governments with respect to crimes committed in tribal communities; increase coordination and communication among Federal, State, tribal, and local law enforcement agencies; empower tribal governments with the authority, resources, and information necessary to effectively provide for the public's safety in tribal communities; reduce the prevalence of violent crime in tribal communities and combat violence against Indian and Alaska Native women; address and prevent drug trafficking and reduce rates of alcohol and drug addiction in Indian country; and increase and standardize the collection of criminal data and the sharing of criminal history information among Federal, State, and tribal officials responsible for responding to and investigating crimes in tribal communities.

The Senate Indian Affairs Committee has held numerous hearings and has reached out to tribes across the United States while crafting this bill, and I appreciate their efforts to address the concerns raised by tribal members and leaders. I recognize that this bill alone will not solve the problems raised by tribes in these consultations and hearings. As such, I will continue to work for increased funding for law enforcement personnel, detention facilities, equipment and training, tribal courts, and other components required for a successful justice system. I will continue to hold the Bureau of Indian Affairs accountable for upholding the trust responsibility within the realm of law enforcement. Ultimately, I believe that this bill offers important and necessary tools in our shared goal of making Indian Country a safer place to be.

Madam Speak, I urge my colleagues to join with me to pass the Tribal Law and Order Act into law.