

IN RECOGNITION OF 2010 NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS FROM THE 12TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

**HON. MARK S. CRITZ**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, September 29, 2010*

Mr. CRITZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize both Conemaugh Township Area Intermediate School and Wyandville Elementary School for being selected as two of this year's 2010 National Blue Ribbon Schools. This announcement was made by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan on September 9, 2010.

The U.S. Department of Education selected 304 schools nationwide to receive this year's honor, including 14 schools in Pennsylvania. I'm proud to announce that two of these schools were from the district that I represent.

Conemaugh Township Area Intermediate School is located in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and is the home of over 350 elementary students. Wyandville Elementary School, a member of the Canon-McMillan School District, serves a population of approximately 200 students in North Strabane Township, near Eighty Four, Pennsylvania.

Beginning in 1982, the Blue Ribbon Schools Program has honored public and private schools that are models of both excellence and equity. The Award is granted to schools that are either high performing, or have improved student achievement to high levels, particularly among disadvantaged children.

These two schools are outstanding examples of how hard work and commitment can pay off in achieving these criteria. Both of these schools recognize the importance of achievement, and the need to ensure that students have the resources to learn and to succeed. I appreciate the efforts of Conemaugh Township Area Intermediate School and Wyandville Elementary School in teaching our children to recognize their full potential, and equally important, providing them with the tools they need to achieve success in life.

Madam Speaker, I conclude my remarks by congratulating these schools on their exceptional dedication and passion for helping our students succeed. I wish them well as they continue to inspire our young scholars.

HONORING THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS HARLANDALE MEMORIAL POST 4815

**HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, September 29, 2010*

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of 15 years of dedicated community service by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Harlandale Memorial Post 4815 and Post Commander Edward C. Torres. This San Antonio-based non-profit organization has and continues to serve its dedicated senior citizen community.

VFW organizations have a respected reputation for not only serving their fellow community veterans but also the community as a whole. Annually, on average, the VFW and its

supporters contribute more than 13 million hours of volunteerism within their respective communities. With a history dating back to over 110 years ago, the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization and their auxiliaries live up to its mission "to honor the dead by helping the living."

The Harlandale Memorial VFW Post 4815 and Ladies Auxiliary continues to follow this noble tradition. For the past 15 years, this post hosts the areas senior citizens every third Friday of the month. They offer these respected members of their community the opportunity to engage and interact with others while at the same time providing a safe and entertaining place to gather. They prepare and serve both a continental breakfast and hot, full course lunch to those in attendance and provide free entertainment in the way of bingo games with prize-giveaways. They also host seminars regarding community and safety information which are not likely as readily available elsewhere to these residents. The particular groups in attendance are generally from two area nursing homes so this provides one of the few occasions they have to leave their residences. This one, special day allows a luxury these people may not know otherwise. It is fun, entertainment, and a chance to socialize outside of their daily set.

Under the leadership of Commander Edward C. Torres, the Harlandale Memorial VFW Post 4815 and Ladies Auxiliary are an integral part of their community. They provide a precious service to oft time overlooked citizens which help to not only enrich and strengthen community bonds but to enrich and strengthen lives.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, I am privileged to recognize Commander Edward C. Torres and the Harlandale Memorial Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4815 for their hard work and excellence in service to their community.

**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2010**

SPEECH OF

**HON. JOHN L. MICA**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, September 28, 2010*

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman OBERSTAR, Chairman COSTELLO and Ranking Member PETRI for their bipartisan work on this important legislation. While there are several issues that we would like to continue working on in conference, I support H.R. 4714 as amended.

U.S. commercial aviation is the safest in the world. U.S. aviation law and safety regulations are the international gold standard. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) can join the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in taking credit for the safety record.

The NTSB has done an excellent job with the resources and authority they currently have. In fact, the number of commercial aviation accidents has steadily dropped over the last several decades. The three-year average commercial aviation accident rate is now .018 accidents per 100,000 departures.

But there is always room for improvement—one accident is one too many, as was trag-

ically demonstrated by the February 2009 Colgan accident.

Even though it has no regulatory authority, the NTSB has a unique role in transportation safety.

The NTSB investigates accidents and makes recommendations to improve transportation safety with over 82 percent of their recommendations being adopted by the Department of Transportation. NTSB certainly shares in the credit for the safety improvements achieved.

H.R. 4714 as amended, would authorize the NTSB for four years—2011 through 2014.

While we are very supportive of the NTSB and its mission, given the current state of the U.S. economy and the Federal budget, we remain concerned with the authorization levels included in both the introduced bill and the amended bill being considered today.

It has been pointed out that during the 107th and 108th Congresses—when Republicans were in the Majority—we supported NTSB funding for 479 full-time equivalent employees.

It is important to note that these bills were considered well before the recession and the current Federal budget deficit in excess of \$1.3 trillion. According to the Congressional Budget Office, "Relative to the size of the economy, this year's deficit is expected to be the second largest shortfall in the past 65 years: At 9.1 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), it is exceeded only by last year's deficit of 9.9 percent of GDP."

At a time of high Federal deficits, budget constraints, and belt tightening by American tax payers, we are concerned with the overall 27% increase in NTSB funding over 4 years and the 10% increase in NTSB authorization levels from 2010 to 2011.

The President's budget request for the NTSB in FY2011 was \$100.4 million, a level the NTSB itself supports. We believe that this level is the proper starting point.

The NTSB has been very successful in carrying out its mission with staffing levels at the 380 FTE level.

We look forward to continuing to work with our colleagues to reach agreement on the appropriate authorization levels as consideration of the bill moves forward.

H.R. 4714 expands the workload of the Board and would duplicate reviews of other agencies with respect to transportation "incidents".

The FAA and other DOT modal agencies conduct accident investigations and have numerous programs in place to collect information and address safety concerns. The NTSB and these agencies need to better coordinate to avoid duplicative investigations and to ensure the best and most efficient use of scarce resources.

The inclusion of "incidents" in NTSB's investigative authority will require close Congressional oversight to ensure that the regulatory authority of the Department of Transportation is not negatively impacted.

So, we do have some remaining concerns and we will work with our colleague to address these concerns as we move forward. But given the importance of the NTSB's mission, I support this bill and urge Members to vote for its passage.