

COMMENDING VALERIE S. VELEZ FOR COORDINATING THE PEER LEADERS UNITING STUDENTS PROGRAM (PLUS) TO ADVOCATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PREVENTION POLICIES AND TO REDUCE TOBACCO USE AMONG YOUTH

**HON. RAUL RUIZ**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, May 18, 2015*

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, today I am honored to recognize Health Education Program Specialist, Valerie S. Velez for her tireless efforts to preserve the Peer Leaders Uniting Students (PLUS) program that engages student leaders to address the social issues in their community. This year they have chosen to focus on eliminating social disparities in tobacco use in the local community of Hemet, California.

Ms. Velez has been working as a Health Education Program Specialist at the Hemet Unified School District (HUSD) since 1992. She earned a Master's degree in Public Health from U.C. Berkeley and B.S. from U.C. Davis in Applied Behavioral Sciences. In addition, Ms. Velez has been responsible for coordinating a wide variety of programs, including health education and safe school climate programs for HUSD; federal initiatives from the U.S. Department of Education, and the State Tobacco Use Prevention Education grant.

The PLUS program engages middle and high school students as peer leaders promoting mutual understanding and respect on their campuses, working toward innovating solutions that create more welcoming, positive and connected school environments in which students can thrive socially and academically.

In 2014, almost 100 students from the HUSD began collaborating with the Hemet Community Action Network and the California Department of Public Health to improve social disparities in tobacco use in the local community through youth advocacy. Students also made a presentation to the City Council to demonstrate the detrimental health effects of second hand smoke and tobacco waste. Soon after, the City Council adopted a landmark ordinance for the City of Hemet that bans tobacco use in parks.

I am pleased to recognize Ms. Velez for her service and for being a champion for the PLUS program, in the face of budget obstacles.

For her work and on behalf of the HUSD students, I applaud Ms. Velez on her dedication to make our community better and look forward to even more accomplishments in the future.

200 YEARS OF EXEMPLARY SERVICE FROM MOBILE DISTRICT, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

**HON. BRADLEY BYRNE**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, May 18, 2015*

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, on May 4, 1815, the Chief of Engineers issued orders to Lieutenant Hipolite Dumas, which began the long and proud history of engineering service to the Gulf Coast and Mobile.

Mobile District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is celebrating 200 years of exemplary service to the Southeast region, the U.S. military and the Nation.

For its first 70 years in Mobile and along the Gulf Coast, these engineers surveyed and fortified the southern coast from St. Marks River in Florida to Lake Pontchartrain to the west. Forts were the key elements of the coastal defense system, but complementary structures such as lighthouses and towers were also constructed. In addition to the coastal fortifications, Gulf Coast engineers also began surveys to look at connecting the inland waterways with the Tennessee-Coosa River canal study.

Following the Civil War, in 1870, an engineer office was opened in Mobile, Alabama. Eighteen years later the Mobile District was officially established in a formal reorganization of operations at the national level.

The nation turned toward rebuilding the economy after the Civil War and developing the nation's transportation system became a positive, tangible means of measuring progress. Major navigation surveys were conducted on Southeastern rivers such as the Coosa River, the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee Flint, the Black Warrior, Tennessee-Tombigbee, and the Alabama River between 1870 and 1879.

When Mobile District was established in 1888, the District's boundaries were from the Escambia River westward to the East Pearl River. Montgomery District had responsibilities from the Escambia River eastward to St. Marks River in Florida. In 1933 the two districts merged into one, the Mobile District. The District also was also given responsibilities for all military construction for the Army and Army Air Corps in Mississippi, Tennessee and Alabama.

The 1930's were a busy time for the Mobile District. Modernization of the Black Warrior River system began, taking the number of locks required to transit the waterway from 17 to 5. Construction of Brookley Field, the Southeast Army Air Depot and the Mobile Air Service Command during World War II began. The Flood Control Act of 1936 set into motion a national flood protection plan and gave the Corps jurisdiction over federal flood control protection investigation and river improvements.

As busy as the 1930's were, World War II resulted in the largest wartime mobilization effort ever for the United States. The magnitude of Mobile District's work can be judged by expenditure for construction. Between December 1941 and December 1943, nearly \$1 billion was expended in the District on facilities that included 32 Army airfields, an ordnance training center, two arsenals, three Army ground force depots, five harbor defense installations, nine Civil Aviation Administration airfields, two Army Air Force supply depots, one Army Air Force cantonment, six Ordnance manufacturing plants, nine Army ground force cantonments and six special installations.

In the 1950's construction of Buford Dam in Georgia was initiated, Jim Woodruff Lock and Dam was completed, Walter F. George Lock and Dam construction began and the Army Ballistic Missile Agency was established at Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, Alabama in 1956.

In 1959 NASA was established at Redstone Arsenal for the Saturn Project. The construc-

tion of facilities for the Saturn project, a rocket program that was the work of the von Braun team at Redstone, was one of Mobile District's biggest projects. The District was responsible for the testing facilities at Redstone Arsenal associated with the Saturn booster, and eventually one of the major construction projects of the post Korean War period, the Mississippi Test Facility.

In the 1960's, the District continued the legacy of improving and developing the Nation's inland waterway transportation system. West Point Dam was authorized, Carters Dam on the Coosawatee River and Millers Ferry Lock and Dam on the Alabama River began. Construction of the Claiborne Lock and Dam and Robert F. Henry Lock and Dam also began in the 60's.

In the 1970's Mobile again took on new responsibilities. Construction responsibility for Cape Canaveral District was shifted to Mobile. Military construction in Florida, the Panama Canal activities and Central/South America programs were also shifted to Mobile. The 1970's also saw construction begin on the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, at the time the largest Civil Works project in Corps history.

The 70's ended with Hurricane Fredric hitting Mobile on September 12, 1979. Under Public Law 84-99 the Corps was authorized to provide emergency assistance during disasters. The States of Alabama, Florida and Mississippi were all declared Federal disaster areas. Mobile District has been a national leader in emergency response actions for the Corps. Through the District's innovation the Corps developed a national-level Detachable Tactical Operations System to provide immediate support to disaster stricken areas. This was never more evident than after 9/11 when the District supported the New York City police and fire departments with these units.

The 80's saw innovation within the Corps, with Mobile District once again leading the way. Life Cycle/Project Management was first tested and then established in Mobile District. It has now become the standard for Corps management. This decade also saw the opening of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway to navigation, creating the transportation artery from the Gulf Coast to the Nation's mid-section first envisioned in the mid 1800's. Base Realignment and Closure also began in the 80's. Mobile District has been involved in all the BRAC National Environmental Policy Act requirements for BRAC from 1988 until the present.

The closing decade of the 1900's once again revealed Mobile's innovation. In 1994 the Scanning Hydrographic Operational Airborne Lidar Survey, or SHOALS, was first tested. This innovative 3-D technology was adapted for underwater mapping. When later combined with the U.S. Navy's CHARTS system, the team became a world leader in underwater mapping. The 1990's also saw the completion of the J-6 Large Rocket Test Facility, the completion of the John J. Sparkman Center located at the U.S. Army Arsenal at Redstone, Alabama. The Sparkman Center and follow on phases, encompasses more than 1 million square feet and is one of the most modern military facilities in the world.

As the Nation entered the new century Mobile District continued its record of excellence. The Von Braun Center at Redstone Arsenal was completed in 2014 and is home to the