

their liquor distillery during the COVID-19 pandemic to make hand sanitizer, to be distributed at no cost to the community. These Hometown Heroes are being recognized for utilizing their business to contribute to those in need during these trying times.

Blaum Bros. Distillery was founded in 2013 by Matt and Mike with the hope of distilling beverages they could enjoy together. Since March 2020, they have pivoted their purpose to make hand sanitizer and even have a button on their website for hand sanitizer requests. I commend them for taking action during a pandemic, when supplies are in short supply. I thank them for their kindness and generosity to the Moline community.

It is because of leaders such as Matt and Mike Blaum that I am especially proud to serve Illinois' 17th Congressional District. Madam Speaker, I would like to again formally recognize the Blaum Brothers and their Distillery for their kindness and generosity.

ONGOING PARLIAMENTARY
DIPLOMACY IN EUROPE

HON. RICHARD HUDSON

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

Mr. HUDSON. Madam Speaker, I wish to provide an update to my colleagues on the continuing activities of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe—the OSCE PA—during these challenging times.

Not surprisingly, the pandemic challenges the OSCE PA to find new ways to conduct its work. International relations require engagement on both a bilateral level and on multilateral levels as well. It is likely that all gatherings of the OSCE PA this year will be online, through video conferences.

For example, last week the OSCE PA held a webinar on economic security and the COVID-19 pandemic. I participated in the event and spoke specifically on energy security needs, pointing to the continuation of Russia's predatory natural gas supply practices which seek to exert geopolitical influence. Europe needs a diversified supply for its energy sources. Too much reliance on Russia for energy can lead to market distortions and encourage corrupt practices, while alternative sources increase security and benefit the average consumer.

Last week a video session was held of those parliamentarians who comprise the leadership of the OSCE PA, which includes Senator ROGER WICKER of Mississippi and myself. Guest speakers included the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, as well as the EU Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarcic of Slovenia. As Chairman of the First Committee, I made clear that the committee will not waver from its crucial role in defending Helsinki Principles where they are most threatened. In this regard, I noted the public statement I made last week, jointly with my fellow committee officers from the parliaments of Romania and Lithuania, on the third anniversary of the tragic death of Joseph Stone, an American working on the OSCE Monitoring Mission in Ukraine.

Senator BEN CARDIN of Maryland spoke at this leadership session as the Assembly's

Special Representative on anti-Semitism, racism and intolerance. He noted that disadvantaged immigrant and minority communities are made even more vulnerable by the pandemic, and that parliamentarians have an important role in responding to this problem during states of emergency. Our colleague from New Jersey, Mr. CHRIS SMITH, also spoke in his capacity as the Special Representative of the OSCE PA on Human Trafficking Issues. He stressed how current circumstances make those vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation, including children, even more vulnerable. Coronavirus and its butterfly effect have also rendered non-government organizations less effective in their mission to help trafficking victims by operating shelters, care and counseling.

To conclude Madam Speaker, I want to stress that, while we may need to focus our efforts on fighting this pandemic at home, we need to work with our partners abroad to eliminate a virus that knows no borders and from which we ultimately can never fully isolate ourselves. Working with our partners and allies across the globe is the interest of our constituents here at home. I also want to stress that the pandemic has not resolved earlier challenges but in many cases made them worse. We need the capacity to address a wide range of ongoing issues, and the OSCE PA is a valued venue for doing that on a multilateral level.

Madam Speaker, please join me today in recognizing the importance of these continued discussions with our European allies and friends.

IN RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL
TEACHER APPRECIATION MONTH

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor every teacher, administrator, employee and contractor in all San Mateo County school districts who together prepare our children to grow into educated and contributing members of our society. May is National Teacher Appreciation Month, but they deserve our gratitude and admiration every day. They rise to the occasion even under the most challenging and unprecedented conditions they are facing in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

Working in education is more than a job, it's a passion. The dedication to guide and nurture our future generations is based on selflessness and wanting to create a better world. The impact an educator has on children is profound. The philosopher Plato once said: "The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life"—wise and true words.

Who doesn't have memories of a teacher whose words and actions will stay with them for the rest of their lives? My middle school teacher at South San Francisco's Parkway, Mr. Jex, called me "chief" when he appointed me editor in chief of the school newspaper. Mr. Jex gave me confidence and a purpose. He helped determine the direction of my life . . . like all teachers do.

Educators spend countless hours and their own money to prepare students for the future.

They buy pencils, crayons, paper, snacks, toothbrushes, whatever it is the child is lacking. In the United States, we don't pay them anywhere near their value. They deserve more compensation and more recognition for the tireless and essential work they do, but it's not in the nature of teachers to give up and walk away, not even in the face of COVID-19.

The outbreak of the contagious novel coronavirus forced school and health officers to close schools on March 16th to prevent the spread of the disease. It did not shutter education, though. San Mateo County teachers, administrators, kitchen workers and custodians rose to the occasion. They created distance learning, providing students with Chromebooks and hotspots to connect in virtual classrooms. They designed innovative curricula to ensure engaging learning opportunities. Understanding the dependence of many students on breakfast and lunch, they continued to prepare and distribute meals. Striving to prevent the achievement gap from deepening, they provided additional support, tutoring and counseling for students and their families.

Facing unprecedented challenges, everyone from superintendents to principals to teachers to administrators to custodians came together and contributed. Now, everyone continues to adjust to the new reality. Schools will remain closed for the remainder of the academic year.

Madam Speaker, let us rise to acknowledge the remarkable resilience of our educators and to redouble our efforts as Members of Congress and as members of society to support them. They have our children's backs, so we must have theirs. To invoke Plato again, he said: "No man should bring children into the world who is unwilling to persevere to the end of their nature and education."

THANKING THE PEORIA MEDICAL
SOCIETY ALLIANCE FOR 80
YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE PEORIA
COMMUNITY

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

Mrs. BUSTOS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the Peoria Medical Society Alliance (PMSA) for its 80 years of service to the Peoria community. The PMSA is a not-for-profit organization that works with the Peoria Medical Society to promote the health, the education, and the quality of life for the people of the Peoria community.

Partnered with the Peoria Medical Society, the PMSA has several committees dedicated to important causes in the community. For example, in their Adopt-A-School program they adopted Whittier Grade School to tutor kindergartners and first graders. They also host game nights and parties for senior homes, such as Heddington Oaks. PMSA even provides scholarships for students attending college in health-related fields. I commend the PMSA for its contributions to the local Peoria community and I thank them for their kindness and generosity.

It is because of leaders such as the PMSA that I am especially proud to serve Illinois' 17th Congressional District. Madam Speaker, I would like to again formally recognize the Peoria Medical Society Alliance for its great work in the Peoria community.