

know D.C. residents are depending on him to turn his party around and treat D.C. residents the same way they treat their folks back home.

Now is not the time to be quiet. Now is the time to speak out. Speaker Newt Gingrich has opened the door. The next town hall meeting should be held at the air conditioned convention center so that the minds of speakers can concentrate on what they have to say and not the heat.

Congresswoman Norton and Mr. Gingrich have a good thing going here. Let's just hope it is not all talk.

THE LOWER EAST SIDE
TENEMENT MUSEUM

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 14, 1995

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. I rise before you today to announce the introduction of a bill that will grant the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, located at 97 Orchard Street in my District, affiliated status with the National Park Service. I have introduced this piece of legislation in conjunction with my colleague and fellow New Yorker, Congresswoman SUSAN MOLINARI, and I trust our efforts will lead to the prompt passage of this bill.

Located on the island of Manhattan, today's Lower East Side remains what it has been for over 150 years: a vibrant, ethnic, working-class enclave welcoming America's newest residents. The earlier European communities which gave distinctive flavors to the neighborhood have been replaced by Asian, Latin American, and Caribbean residents. The immigrant lifestyle, a rich weave of interlacing threads, plays out its daily drama in an environment largely unchanged in many ways from the Lower East Side of 100 years ago. In numerous places 19th century brick tenements still line the streets—housing businesses at the street level, and families in the floors above. The Lower East Side maintains a distinct identity, whose present character harkens back to a Big Apple of yesteryear.

As a nation, we take pride in commemorating important contributions to our culture. Monuments to illustrious leaders abound; icons such as the Statue of Liberty pay homage to our ideals; log cabins and farmhouses stand as symbols of our agrarian roots. Until recently, however, the urban, working-class immigrant element of our heritage remained a historically important, yet undercelebrated sector of the American experience. The Lower East Side Tenement Museum strives to fill that niche, and Congresswoman MOLINARI and I aim to help facilitate that task.

The museum is believed to be the Nation's first to be specifically devoted to the urban immigrant experience. It is housed in an actual historic tenement, and its board members and staff have pursued the museum's mission to interpret immigrant life in the Lower East Side—and its importance to U.S. history. The museum's work has extended into the present social fabric of the Lower East Side, and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum has quickly blossomed into a nationally renowned institution. Its promotion of: tolerance, ethnic diversity, cultural, and intergenerational interaction, and urban understanding have made the museum a valued part of my community,

of New York and of this country as a whole. In no other museum do the past, the present, and the future come together so perfectly, and in a few others can Americans learn so much about their past, while reflecting on the issues they must grapple daily.

The idea of a tenement museum grew out of the social history movement. The latter holds that the history of ordinary people is an important component of an accurate historical record. In the words of the museum's founder and president, Ruth J. Abram,

We've saved log cabins, farmhouses, and the living spaces of the rich and famous. These efforts have greatly enhanced our understanding of ourselves as a nation. But we've never saved an example of the 19th century urban tenement. Without it, our perception of America, and particularly her immigrant, working-class past, is skewed and incomplete.

It is this very vision that has earned the museum such praise, and that has prompted our legislative proposal.

In 1988, the newly formed museum determined to preserve a tenement and selected 97 Orchard Street. Scanning the continuous wall of brick tenements along Orchard Street, it would be difficult to differentiate the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. It looks like all its neighbors up and down Orchard and the surrounding streets. But number 97 is remarkable. While two lower floors continued to operate as commercial space, the top four floors were sealed for decades, until the discovery by the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. Rooms, wall paper, plumbing, and lighting are preserved as they were left almost 60 years ago. Due in part, to its exceptional degree of integrity, the building conveys a vivid sense of the conditions experienced by its tenants—conditions shared by millions of tenement dwellers throughout the city.

The building also serves as an excellent material record of the results of early housing reform legislation in New York City, particularly the Tenement House Act of 1901. While living conditions on the Lower East Side declined continually throughout the 19th century, by 1900 they were so deplorable that the city passed its farthest reaching laws to regulate housing. Changes to 97 Orchard Street in 1905, which are a direct result of those laws, survive today and are still clearly chronicled in the tenement's historic fabric. The history of standards for tenement plumbing, lighting, and ventilation, and means of egress, are contained within its walls.

The legislation we have introduced today is a bipartisan effort at allowing this marvelous museum to expand its functions, and while granting it affiliated status with the National Park Service will not cause the latter to incur any costs, it will allow the museum to complement the historical trilogy of Castle Clinton, Ellis Island, and the Statue of Liberty.

The legislation has been introduced by Senators MOYNIHAN and D'AMATO in the Senate, and promises to clear that Chamber during the present session. The bill is supported by the New York State and city governments, as well as by civic leaders, small business owners, organized labor, the Wall Street community, and the National Park Service. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join Congresswoman MOLINARI and me in sponsoring this historic piece of legislation, and giving the Lower East Side Tenement Museum its right-

ful place in the annals of our great Nation's history.

“VETERANS” AND “AMERICA, THE BEST”

HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 14, 1995

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I commend these two poems to my colleagues. They were written by Ellen M. Fisher from Belleview, FL, a constituent of mine.

VETERANS

Our veterans have suffered through many struggles and strife,

To protect our American way of life. Most of them volunteered to go in our place, Young and old, some from every race.

They've fought in places too numerous to name.

Some we never heard about, others gained heroic fame.

No matter what the assignment, whether a task great or small,

Each and every one of them can stand proud and tall.

They sacrificed so much for us, some limbs, some sight, some lives,

So we could enjoy liberty and freedom and all that freedom buys.

We can never say thank you long or loud enough,

To erase the pain and suffering that has been so very tough.

The things we take for granted, they fought so hard for.

Have you thanked our many veterans for going off to war?

There are those who never came home from war,

And some who have never been accounted for.

The answers to these questions are known somewhere,

They didn't just vanish into thin air.

The door should never be closed on our POW's and MIA's.

While the search continues, America prays. We want to know without a shadow of a doubt,

Of our friends and loved ones whereabouts.

Our veterans deserve much more than we give.

It's only because of them that we can really live.

They may not be perfect, but neither are we. If it were not for their service, we wouldn't be free.

AMERICA, THE BEST

If you don't think America is the best place on earth,

If you don't want to claim it as the land of your birth,

If you can't look at the red, white, and blue, and say I love it so,

Then take a look around the world at places you might go.

Our world is made up of many countries, Heartwarming people, beautiful terrain,

Many languages and ideals, but basically we're all the same.

There is no place on earth that enjoys the freedoms Americans have.

We can worship, work, or travel on any day of the week.

There's no one to stop us, when life's many pleasures we seek.