

CONGRATULATING THE GARDNER  
GRADE SCHOOL CHORUS

**HON. JERRY WELLER**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 5, 1998*

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Gardner Grade School Chorus of Gardner, IL, on their recent performance at Walt Disney World in Orlando, FL.

At the direction of Patti Johnson, the Gardner Grade School Chorus had a dream back in 1996, that it would someday have a chance to perform at Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom. After a year of research, planning, rehearsals, and raising the funds that were needed to make the trip to Orlando, the Gardner Grade School Chorus realized their dream on June 9, 1997.

The journey to Orlando by the 40 member chorus and 10 chaperones began on June 7, 1997. After saying their goodbyes to family and friends, the chorus was escorted through Gardner by the local police and fire departments as they began their 23-hour bus ride to the Magic Kingdom. In short Mr. Speaker, this was not a dream come true just for the chorus, it was a dream come true for an entire town.

On June 9, 1997 the long-awaited dream was finally fulfilled. Outlasting the Florida rain, the chorus dazzled the audience as they performed on the Tomorrowland Stage in the Magic Kingdom. The chorus performed several selections in their 25-minute performance including, "Dance, Dance, Dance", "Sea of the Cowboy", and "Footloose". On June 10 the Chorus participated in a 3-hour music education workshop at the Epcot Center, where chorus members received first hand knowledge on how Disney prepares its shows from the Disney cast.

Now as you might suspect Mr. Speaker, this trip was not all work and no play. On the final 2 days of their trip, chorus members explored the theme parks and took part in many of the activities in the Orlando area, taking advantage of a much deserved rest before returning home to Illinois.

Mr. Speaker, the Gardner Grade School Chorus had a dream that they would perform at Walt Disney World someday, and they did. Thanks to the hard work of its members, directors and chaperones, the Gardner Grade School Chorus not only realized their dream, but, they shared their dream with their parents, schoolmates, town, and the people in the audience at the Magic Kingdom. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in saluting the Gardner Grade School Chorus and their very special performance at Disney World, and I ask that a list of those who participated on this trip be included in the RECORD following my statement.

DIRECTOR

Patti Johnson.

FIFTH GRADE

Carissa Crater, Jaime Wade.

SIXTH GRADE

Laura Bivens, Rhonda Brookman, Nicole DeToye, Misti Domagala, Rachel Hanson, Lynsi Lardi, Nicci Mack, Krystle Phillips, Nikki Rowland, Jonathan Scheel, Sarah Sibley, Lauren Zagar.

SEVENTH GRADE

Brandon Carwell, Milly Chase, Tiffany Hullet, Cassie Kirkpatrick, Krystal

Lamping, Renee Moore, Jacob Olson, Carly Scheuber, Samantha Serena, Brigid Sweeney, Ashley Wade, Vicki Wayne, Mary Wollgast.

EIGHTH GRADE

Becky Christensen, Candi Forsythe, Beth Hanson, Cindy Harrop, Mindy Harvey, Meghan Holohan, David Wayne.

NINTH GRADE

Jeanette Bivens, Kathy Bolton, Elizabeth Esparza, Amber Forsythe, Mary Landers, Anne Wollgast.

CHAPERONES

Sandy Harrop, Pam Holohan, Janine Lardi, Sharon Zagar, Becci Forsythe, Mary Hanson, Jody Harop, Denise Sibley, Wendy Rowland, Greg Bingheim, Dick Johnson.

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN L. SMITH

**HON. GLENN POSHARD**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 5, 1998*

Mr. POSHARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a dear friend, Mr. John L. Smith of Chicago, IL, who will be retiring next month from the U.S. Small Business Administration. He has honorably served as director of the SBA's Chicago District Office of over 20 years.

Jack has been a faithful Federal employee for 46 years beginning in the U.S. Navy and then establishing his career in the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration. In 1973, Jack was named Regional Administrator for the Commerce Department's Office of Minority Business Enterprise. The SBA noticed his extraordinary accomplishments as Commerce Regional Administrator and after just 2 years, Jack was appointed SBA Chicago District Director. He has been a major supporter of private sector development through his dedicated service. During his tenure, Jack oversaw several billion dollars in loans and Federal contracts to Illinois small businesses.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am a member of the House Small Business Committee which oversees the SBA, and the retirement of one of the best directors from Illinois will certainly be a loss to the Chicago business community and to the state. Jack's experience and enthusiasm for his work will be missed greatly by business owners and public officials involved in private sector development. I wish him the best in his future endeavors.

Mr. Speaker, Jack dedicated his life to the community and to the SBA. Now it is our turn to thank Jack for all of the energy and dedication he expended for so many years to make Illinois a better place.

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF NA-  
TIONAL GIRLS AND WOMEN IN  
SPORTS DAY

**HON. CAROLYN C. KILPATRICK**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 5, 1998*

Ms. KILPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to state my strong support for the 12th Annual National Girls and Women in Sports Day. I have long been an ardent supporter of women

athletes who use grace, strength, and discipline to break down barriers. Sports instill confidence in girls and women and equip them with important life skills such as teamwork, goal-setting, the pursuit of excellence in performance, and other achievement-oriented behaviors.

National Girls and Women in Sports Day was established in 1987 in memory of the late Flo Hyman, the Olympic volleyball champion who died suddenly in 1986.

Participants in this year's celebration include Tajama Abraham, Sacramento Monarchs center; Lillian Greene-Chamberlain, PhD, national track and field champion; Nancy Hogshead, three-time Olympic swimming gold medalist, Benita Fitzgerald Mosley, Olympic track and field champion; Nadia Comaneci, Olympic gymnastics champion; Robin Campbell, track and field Olympian; Dominique Dawes, Olympic gymnastic gold medalist; Camille Duvall-Hero, world champion water-skier; Kelly Dyer, world-champion ice hockey player; Wendy Hilliard, national rhythmic gymnastics champion; Rusty Kanokogi, highest ranking woman in judo; Nikki McCray, 1996 Olympic gold medalist and member of the newly formed WNBA Washington Mystics; Aimee Mullins, national track and field champion; Donna Richardson, fitness star, national aerobic champion; Chanda Rubin, tennis champion; Lyn St. James, champion auto racer.

At a luncheon today in the Senate Hart Building, Nadia Comaneci was given the Women's Sports Foundation's 1998 Flo Hyman Award. Every year on National Girls and Women in Sports Day, the award is given to women who exemplify the dignity, spirit, and commitment to excellence of Ms. Hyman, captain of the 1984 U.S. Olympic volleyball team.

Ms. Comaneci is the most celebrated gymnast in the history of the sport. She was the star of the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, where she won three gold medals, two silver medals, and a bronze, and became the first woman ever to score a perfect 10.

I congratulate Ms. Comaneci for her awe-inspiring achievements, and I applaud the Women's Sports Foundation for its recognition of the importance of sports for women and girls.

MEDICAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS FOR  
FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

**HON. MATT SALMON**

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 5, 1998*

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to see the introduction of the Burton/Archer/Thomas/Mica/Salmon legislation on medical savings accounts for federal employees. It is certainly time our federal workers have the opportunity to select a medical savings account for their health care. Over the past two years we have enacted landmark legislation that has made the choice of an MSA possible for some American workers and Medicare recipients. Now it is time to extend that option to our federal workers.

I have long been a proponent of medical savings accounts. While a state senator in Arizona I sponsored the MSA legislation that was signed into law in 1994. As a member of Congress, I have consistently introduced legislation promoting and expanding MSAs. One of my bills would allow MSAs for federal workers,

and two others would "lift the caps" on MSAs for all workers and those on Medicare, virtually allowing everyone the freedom to choose a medical savings account.

MSAs would empower federal employees to take control of their own health care decisions. With an MSA, workers can choose which physician or specialist they want to see and when to see them. They decide how they want to spend their health care dollars, and what they don't spend they can roll over to the next year.

Medical savings accounts would reduce health care inflation for the federal government. Results from the private sector show that companies using MSAs report lower utilization of health care services and reduced high-deductible premiums. This contributes to lower overall health care costs for the United States.

MSAs encourage preventive care and "incentivize" people to live healthier, so that they do not need expensive medical services in the future. Unlike some insurance plans that have deductibles or copays to meet, the employee's MSA account has money in it to use immediately if they desire routine or preventive care.

Because they can roll funds leftover at year-end, an MSA account would offer federal employees the ability to build a fund for future health care needs such as long-term care insurance or nursing home services. The savings accrued in these accounts will also help the federal government by reducing dependence on federal health care programs for assistance.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in on the introduction of this legislation and I urge all members to support the expansion of health care choices for federal employees by cosponsoring Burton/Archer/Thomas/Mica/Salmon.

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE QUESTIONS U.S. CUBA POLICY

**HON. LEE H. HAMILTON**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 5, 1998*

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I commend to my colleagues' attention the recent statement by Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick, Chairman of the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) Committee on International Policy. The USCC met on the heels of the Pope's historic visit to Cuba, and concluded that "it is incumbent on us, therefore, to take a fresh look at the issues that continue to divide [the United States and Cuba], and to see if it is not time for fresh initiatives to promote goals of reconciliation among us."

We would do well to consider fresh initiatives in U.S. policy toward Cuba.

STATEMENT ON CUBA IN THE LIGHT OF THE PAPAL VISIT BY ARCHBISHOP THEODORE E. MCCARRICK CHAIRMAN, USCC COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL POLICY

JANUARY 30, 1998

Together with other members of the USCC Committee on International Policy and staff of the Conference, I have just returned from a most moving and, I truly believe, historic event, the visit by our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II to the Church and people of

Cuba. It was a visit that not only provided new hope and energy for the Church in Cuba, enabling the faithful to express their religious beliefs in a climate of ever greater freedom, but may also have marked a positive advance in the long sought for goal of reconciliation among the Cuban people, both within Cuba and with the Cubans in the diaspora. It is our hope that the visit will also mark a new phase in the relations between our two countries, so deeply in need of reconciliation.

As bishops of the Church in the United States, we feel strongly called to express our convictions about possible implications the visit may have for the conduct of our country's policy toward Cuba. No other country in the world looms as large in the minds of the Cuban people and their government as does the United States. No other country has had, and continues to have, such a turbulent and mutually hostile relationship with Cuba as does the United States. And no other country outside of Cuba itself has within it such a large concentration of Cuba's sons and daughters. It is incumbent on us, therefore, to take a fresh look at the issues that continue to divide us, and see if it is not time for fresh initiatives to promote the goals of reconciliation among us.

As a Conference, our overarching concern has been and continues to be the freedom of the Church in Cuba to exercise its threefold ministry of free and open worship, of prophetic preaching, and of Christian service to the needy. Within this essential framework of religious liberty and respect for fundamental human rights which we call upon the Cuban government to assure, we turn to the policies of our own government. The central U.S. policy issue is, of course, the decades-old economic sanctions imposed by our government against Cuba. As far back as 1969, the Cuban bishops called for the dismantling of the trade embargo, a move that was publicly supported by the USCC in 1972. It was only in the present decade, however, that circumstances have made such appeals even remotely possible.

The moral principles governing Catholic teaching on economic sanctions in general, and on Cuba specifically, are well known. The Cuban bishops have repeatedly expressed their opposition to "any kind of measure that, in order to punish the Cuban government, serves to aggravate the problems of our people." Observing that embargoes are acts of force, the bishops addressed provisions of the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act, stating that any embargo that prevents essential foods and medicines from getting to people in need is "morally unacceptable, generally in violation of the principles of international law, and always contrary to the value of the Gospel."

After the passage of the so-called Helms-Burton Act in 1996, the Cuban bishops expressed their concern that the law runs the risk of "making even more difficult the likelihood of finding peaceful means to lead to the reconciliation of all Cubans." Cardinal Jaime Ortega of Havana added that "Any economic measure that aims to isolate a country and thus eliminates the possibility of development, thus threatening the survival of people, is unacceptable."

And in his departure remarks at José Martí Airport on January 25th, Pope John Paul stressed that, in our day, "No nation can live in isolation. The Cuban people therefore cannot be denied the contacts with other peoples necessary for economic, social and cultural development, especially when the imposed isolation strikes the population indiscriminately, making it ever more difficult for the weakest to enjoy the bare essentials of decent living, things such as food, health and education. All can and should

take practical steps to bring about changes in this regard."

The officials of our government repeatedly affirm their readiness to at least modify aspects of the embargo, to take some practical steps, in response to clear signs of a greater opening within the society and increased respect for basic human rights, including religious freedom. While we make no predictions on how lasting some of the expressions of openness shown by the Cuban government prior to and during the papal visit may prove to be, it is an undeniable fact that important changes did occur over this past year; allowing for the door-to-door missions conducted by the dioceses to talk about the Pope's visit, permission for a number of open-air Masses, including hitherto forbidden religious processions, granting a larger than previously allowed number of visas for foreign priests and religious to minister in Cuba, a limited amount of access to the state media, even re-instating Christmas, at least for this past year, as a national holiday, and other expressions of a more open official attitude toward the rights and freedoms of believers.

As welcome as these changes are, it is obvious that they fall far short of the measure of a just society repeatedly outlined by the Holy Father. But they are steps along a better path and should be acknowledged as such. In our view, therefore, it is clearly time for the United States also to take some practical steps of its own and test whether the hopes enkindled by the papal visit can lead to real improvements in relations between our two countries.

First of all, we call upon the President to rescind the onerous and evidently meaningless ban on direct flights to Cuba, requiring all passenger traffic and humanitarian aid to transit third countries en route to Cuba. This ban was lifted for flights related to the papal visit these past weeks, for which we are indeed grateful. But as humanitarian agencies here, such as Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Medical Mission Board, plan their next shipments of critically needed medicines and other aid to the Cuban Church's relief and development agency, Caritas Cuba, they are still faced with the excessive added costs that third country transit imposes.

Secondly, only a very small part of the nutritional and health needs of the Cuban people can be met by these periodic infusions of humanitarian aid from private donors from other countries. The Cuban people need these commodities from abroad, including from the United States, without excessive prohibitions and restrictions. The present socio-political system, privileging those with power and ready access to hard currency but leaving great numbers of the poor with inadequate access to food and medicine, will not be changed overnight. The demands of elementary social justice, however, call upon us to do what we can to alleviate the suffering of the Cuban people, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. Ending the restrictions on the sale of food and medicines, as legislation currently in both Houses and of the U.S. Congress calls for, would be, in our view, a noble and needed humanitarian gesture and an expression of wise statesmanship on the part of our elected leaders.

It is our fervent hope and prayer that the encouraging, inspiring and, we hope, transforming words spoken by the Holy Father in Cuba will continue to strengthen and give hope to the Cuban people, especially our brothers and sisters in the faith. And we pray that his powerful and eloquent calls for a more open, participative and just society, for a liberation "that reaches its fullness in the exercise of freedom of conscience, the basis and foundation of all other human