Assembly passed legislation creating Ohio's 84th county, Auglaize. For his contributions, Dr. Holbrook is known as ''the father of Auglaize County.''

To commemorate the tremendous achievements of the people of Auglaize County over the last 150 years, a variety of celebrations are scheduled throughout the year. I am especially looking forward to the Air Show at the Neil Armstrong Airport in New Knoxville and the County Fair.

I congratulate the great people of Auglaize County on this historic achievement and wish them the best of luck over the next 150 years!

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 1996

HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 11, 1998

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, two years ago this week the President signed into law the Telecommunications Act of 1996 aimed at removing monopoly protections and creating fair, full and open competition in the communications marketplace. One of the primary goals in passing this law was to give consumers the benefits of more choices, lower prices and greater quality in their telephone and cable services.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it hasn't happened. In lieu of competition, consumers in many areas of the country are seeing mergers of massive proportions, higher cable rates and lawsuits filed by frustrated competitors seeking to enter the long distance market. Having said that, I would point out that Ameritech, the regional communications company that serves my home state and four other Midwestern states, has done a commendable job of fostering competition in our part of the country.

Today there are more than 130 companies certified to compete in the Ameritech region, and the Company has interconnection agreements with 60 of them. Additionally, the Company's competitors are serving more than 500,000 local lines by reselling service under their brand names. Ameritech is also bringing true cable competition to the Midwest. Its cable subsidiary, Ameritech New Media, has 65 franchises with communities in Ohio, Illinois and Michigan, and is now actively competing against incumbent providers in 40 of those communities offering enhanced cable TV service to more than 100,000 homes. In those communities where Ameritech New Media competes, incumbent providers have slashed their prices, offered customers free premium and pay per view channels, added more channels to existing service and guaranteed customers better service. This is precisely what we intended when we passed the Telecommunications Act.

However, Mr. Speaker, in spite of their efforts, neither Ameritech nor any of the former Bell companies has managed to cross the regulatory threshold to enter the long distance market. I think I speak for many of my colleagues when I say that I am extremely disappointed that consumers across the country have yet to enjoy the full benefits of the Telecommunications Act. I continue to believe this is a good law, and I would urge the Federal Communications Commission to make it work. We now have a new chairman and three new commissioners at the FCC and I am impressed by their recent comments stressing the need to implement the Act. I encourage them in the strongest possible terms to implement the law and give consumers the choices they deserve.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF VARIABLE STAR OBSERVERS

HON. GEORGE E. BROWN, JR.

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 11, 1998

Mr. BROWN of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding contributions that amateur astronomers from around the world have made to our understanding of some of the most profound questions that have confronted mankind—the evolution of the universe. In the very brief period in which humans have had the ability to look up and ponder our place in the universe, we have transcended a time in which religious dictate required a belief that the heavens were unchanging, to one in which we accept change as the status quo.

We now know that stars change. Sometimes the change is dramatic and visible to all such as the supernova explosion in 1987. More often, the changes are subtle to the casual observer. Yet these subtle changes in star brightness due to pulsations and eruptions and eclipses behind intervening objects are crucial in understanding the nature of the universe and its ultimate fate.

Mr. Speaker, in 1911 the American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO) was founded at the Harvard College Observatory. This independent research organization is dedicated to coordinating the observations of variable stars by amateur astronomers in 46 participating countries.

AAVSO receives, digitizes, and archives over 300,000 observations yearly from 300 to 350 observers. Since its founding, AAVSO has catalogued over 8.5 million observations from 4000 observers. AAVSO boasts the largest and longest running computer readable accessible variable star catalogue in existence.

This valuable data base is used to help schedule precious observing time by the large public and privately operated observatories, to carry out collaborative research in analyzing the long term behavior of variable stars, and finally by educators and students.

In 1995, NASA conducted a major study of cataclysmic variable stars by the ASTRO–2 telescope during the Space Shuttle mission STS–67. During the course of this mission, NASA depended on AAVSO for critical guidance in identifying the best variable star targets. This coordinated research program resulted in a superb data base on ten cataclysmic variable stars that has provided a wealth of scientific understanding. Since then, AAVSO has worked with NASA to coordinate observations on the Hubble Space Telescope, the Extreme Ultraviolet Explorer, the X-Ray Timing Explorer, the International Ultraviolet Explorer, and many other international space borne telescopes.

Mr. Speaker, the astronomy community has had a long tradition of active participation by amateurs since the time of Galileo. The vitality of this discipline is evident in magazine shelves worldwide that carry astronomy related publications. AAVSO itself publishes its own highly respected journal to disseminate latest results and scientific concepts.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend AAVSO for its outstanding work and over eighty years of productive contributions to the field of astronomy.

TRIBUTE TO THE EPICUREAN CLUB OF WASHINGTON, DC, INC. AND CHEF RICHARD FISHER

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 11, 1998

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to honor The Epicurean Club, which was originally an all-male group of Executive Chefs who had apprenticed in Europe or Stewards. The club's membership today is composed of men and women who are chefs, bakers and restaurant owners. I am delighted that The Epicurean Club will celebrate its 60th anniversary with a Dinner Dance on February 22, 1998. During that event Chef Richard Fisher, CEC will be honored for his skillful and untiring service as Chairman of the club's annual Christmas Party.

Twenty-five years ago, when chefs were not very well-paid or recognized, this party was an important social event. The club borrowed a ballroom and solicited donations of food and wine. Spouses who rarely went out because their husbands were always at work put on their finest and the party was always a tremendous success. The party was evolved and today serves over 500 people and has become the only Christmas party for some of the area's neediest children. Last year, the club served 200 children from the DC Department of Human Services and The Orphan Foundation of America. Each child received a gift, a gingerbread house, extra food and a visit with Santa Claus.

For over twenty-five years, Chef Fisher has worked in hotels and restaurants and was a representative for Knorr-Swiss in the Metropolitan area. He has been an active member of the club for over twenty years and is also a member of the National Capital Chefs Association. He has served as a judge at Culinary Salons and is regarded as a true food professional. He lives in Virginia with his wife Trudy and has been Chairman of the club's annual Christmas Party for twenty-five years.

Chef Fisher's work on behalf of children of the District of Columbia reflects the caring spirit of many persons who reside outside our city. His efforts serve as a model and motivation for men and women in the metropolitan region who sincerely want to lessen the impact of poverty and hunger.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this body join me in congratulating The Epicurean Club of Washington, DC, Inc. on the occasion of their 60th Anniversary and in applauding Chef Fisher for his selfless service.

SUPPORTING H.R. 3137

HON. WILLIAM L. JENKINS

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 11, 1998

Mr. JENKINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H.R. 3137, the Medicare Venipuncture Seniors Protection Act of 1998. This legislation sponsored by Representative BOB ADERHOLT (4th-AL) would delay implementation of the elimination of the venipuncture home health benefit included in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. In order to determine whether or not the benefit should be restored after the delay, the bill commissions a study of venipuncture benefits. I also want to take the time to applaud the efforts of other Members of Congress who have taken a lead on this important issue. Representative NICK RAHALL (3rd-WV) took the first step to correct this error in the Balanced Budget Act when he introduced H.R. 2912, the Medicare Venipuncture Fairness Act of 1997. I cosponsored the legislation which restores the venipuncture benefit completely.

Everyone is opposed to fraud, waste, and abuse in the Medicare Program. I want to do everything we can to eliminate these items from the program so that we can offer additional medical services and prolong the life of the Medicare trust funds. However, complete elimination of the venipuncture benefit is not a solution to this problem. Unfortunately, eliminating home health visits for the sole purpose of obtaining a venipuncture was included in the Balanced Budget Act passed by this Congress and signed into law by the President last year.

This change in Medicare has affected individual States in different ways. Some of the most negatively affected are rural Southern States like Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Mississippi, Kentucky, and West Virginia. In Tennessee, State regulations prevent lab technicians from entering homes and drawing blood under Medicare part B. Further, there is no safety net on the State level which will care for these patients. If our intent is to save money in health care, it does not make sense to discontinue this benefit. Many of these individuals could be placed into nursing homes and onto the Medicaid Program. In Tennessee, one recent study has indicated that an additional 3,000 nursing beds will be needed by the year 2000. More beds will be needed if this inequity is not corrected.

Like many other Members of Congress, I supported balancing the budget and getting our financial house in order. When I ran for Congress in 1996, one of my primary goals was working to get the budget balanced. However, I believe that we have gone too far with the elimination of this benefit, and I have no intention of balancing the budget on the backs of our frail and elderly.

ALEXANDER OGORODNIKOV AND CHARITY IN MOSCOW

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 11, 1998

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, recently I visited Moscow with my colleagues Mr. HALL of Ohio and Mr. WOLF of Virginia, along with the distinguished Librarian of Congress and specialist on Russia, Dr. James Billington. We were there as part of an international delegation invited to discuss with Russian officials the new Russian law on freedom of conscience and religious organizations. This trip was very fruitful and I believe will have played a role in having some of the most pernicious elements of that regrettable legislation removed or alleviated.

During our stay in Moscow, the U.S. Embassy kindly arranged a meeting for us with Alexander Ogorodnikov, a former Soviet political prisoner whom I first met in 1988. Until recently, he had operated a soup kitchen and shelter for endangered young women in Moscow. I say ''recently'' because just before our arrival, the soup kitchen was closed down by order of city officials. The shelter is still open, although it has been subjected to periodic police raids since its opening.

Mr. Ogorodnikov opened his soup kitchen on Khoroshevskoe Shosse in February 1991, the first such privately funded charitable institution in the former Soviet Union. Among the financial contributors were religious organizations in the United States, Germany, France, and the Netherlands. The soup kitchen fed pensioners, homeless persons, former incarcerees, refugees, people from other neighborhoods, basically most anyone who needed a meal. According to Mr. Ogorodnikov, an average of 450 to 550 persons visited the soup kitchen every day as of 1997.

Unfortunately, as the saying goes, no good deed goes unpunished—especially in today's Russia. Neighborhood officials and the Moscow city property authorities have been leveling (in Mr. Ogorodnikov's words) ''unjustified financial claims'' against the soup kitchen. The case has gone to court and has still not been resolved.

Nevertheless, on the night of November 13, 1997, a group of unknown persons showed up when none of the soup kitchen personnel were present and seized the premises. On the next day, when soup kitchen personnel arrived for work, they were not permitted to enter. The new occupants announced that ''repairs had been initiated.'' Mr. Ogorodnikov was not even allowed to retrieve his equipment or the foodstuffs that had been stored at the soup kitchen.

On January 15, I visited the soup kitchen, or rather what was left of it, with Mr. Ogorodnikov. Repair work on the building was being done, but it appeared as if the soup kitchen had never existed. All Mr. Ogorodnikov's kitchen equipment and his foodstuffs had disappeared. We asked for the foreman of the operation and, after a while, he showed up. I don't think he was glad to see us. The foreman informed Mr. Ogorodnikov that his equipment had been removed and stored elsewhere in the city, but he refused to say where.

Mr. Ogorodnikov was shown a back room where someone had stashed two of the icons that had been on the soup kitchen wall, and Mr. Ogorodnikov was required to sign for the icons before he could remove them for safe keeping, ''so there won't be any claims.'' Of course, no one worried about claims when the food, refrigerators, freezers, tables, and other equipment were hauled away.

The foreman did indicate that he would arrange to have the equipment delivered wherever Mr. Ogorodnikov instructed, a rather difficult condition, since Mr. Ogorodnikov has no other place to store his equipment. In the meantime, Mr. Ogorodnikov could win his case against his tormentors, and the court might order his foodstuffs and equipment returned to him. By that time, who knows what will remain?

Mr. Speaker, ironically, the United States Government has spent significant amounts of taxpayers' money to assist Russia with macroeconomic programs, small business assistance, and humanitarian aid. Yet here is a Russian man who, like many of his contemporaries, could have gone into business for his own financial gain. Instead, he has devoted himself to helping the many poor and destitute among his countrymen. In return, local officials harass him, shut down his operation, and deprive many others of the chance to have a decent meal.

It is a sad commentary on human nature, and bespeaks badly on the political leadership of a city with such great potential.

HONORING JACK B. LEVY

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 11, 1998

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join with my constituents and the friends and family of Jack B. Levy as they gather in Long Beach, New York to celebrate his 100th birthday. Jack is the quintessential example of the American success story and exudes those characteristics and traits that are part of the great American heritage. Born on February 25, 1898 in Levov, Russia as Yankel Levov, he immigrated to America at age 15. Passing through Ellis Island and by the whim of an immigrant inspector, he emerged into his new country as Jack B. Levy.

Having been taken in by his aunt and uncle, Jack took advantage of the many opportunities being offered him and on his second day in America began his first job. Jack was not one to sit idly by and undertook a series of jobs that would include cab driver, train engineer and anything else at which he could earn a living working 12 hours a day seven days a week. With a voracious appetite for reading the daily papers, a habit which he still maintains, Jack quickly learned to read and write English. He soon became a citizen and established the practice of having voted in every local and national election.

In 1924, he married Mollie Steinman and began a family that was to include his children, Lawrence, Aaron and Irene, eight grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren. Much to the perseverance and dedication of their parents, the work ethic, the concept of community service and giving of one's self to help others became ingrained in their daily lives.

Retirement has not changed Jack as is evidenced by the County of Nassau recognizing him for his outstanding work among senior citizens. Not only has he continued to be a source of joy and enlightenment to his entire family, he has also taken his many talents and effectively applied them to the members of the Senior Center of Long Beach, New York.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to rise and join with me in honoring Mr. Jack B. Levy.