

achieved annual growth rates of 10 percent.

Moreover, Georgia is a NATO borderland and at the entry point to the emerging new "Silk Road" that traverses Central Europe to China. This commercial route will eventually encompass oil and gas pipelines, roads, railroads, bridges, airports and communications networks. It will completely alter the region's economic and political landscape. Because Georgia is situated at a critical juncture in the corridor, stability in this state, and its neighbors, is essential. There are signs of a Russian strategy to keep the region frozen in instability, thereby discouraging commercial investment, and ultimately forcing nascent democracies and their resources back into Russia's tacit control.

The small, breakaway region of Abkhazia has been Russia's best available instrument to diminish Georgia's accomplishments and to imperil its remarkable gains. Numerous and compelling reports, including eye-witness accounts by Georgian refugees, suggest active Russian involvement in arming, training and sustaining Abkhazia's so-called freedom fighters against Georgian nationals.

In this context, I am very concerned by indications of Russian activities and covert aggression aimed at eroding public support for President Shevardnadze and his administration. I regard Georgian independence from Russian hegemony as a critical first step toward stability in the region.

I strongly encourage the administration to end its neglect of this situation and become actively engaged. The administration should state unequivocally that it stands behind the leadership of Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze; that the stability and survival of an independent, democratic Georgia is in our national interest; and that the U.S. will consider all appropriate measures necessary to help build closer economic and political ties between Georgia and the United States. Finally, the administration should call the Russians to task for engaging in activities that would re-subordinate Georgia to Moscow's rule.

Moreover, Congress should move expeditiously to secure enactment of the "Silk Road Strategy Act of 1997." This legislation is designed to promote sovereign and independent democratic governments; assist in the development of infrastructure necessary for communications, transportation, energy and trade on an East-West axis; and promote market-oriented principles and practices among Central Asian and South Caucasus countries. Passage would help curb Russian hegemony in the region and contain the spread northward of anti-western Islamic extremism. The legislation is designed to assist all the nations of the region—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Russia is again increasing its grip on the region and working to keep these countries from maintaining their independence. Iran continues to exert influence to foster anti-western attitudes. It is critical that we help these countries look westward to contain extremist forces hostile to U.S. interests—and this is a good place to start.●

TRIBUTE TO MRS. ROSEMARIE PECILLO KNOWLTON

● Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Mrs. Rosemarie Pecillo Knowlton. For almost 50 years, Rosemarie has dedicated her life to education. She will be sincerely missed after her retirement from Sacred Heart Parish School.

At the age of four, Rosemarie asked to attend school with some of her older friends. The principal allowed her to begin, believing it was probably just a "phase." This phase turned into a teaching career. Such was her desire to teach, that immediately after graduating high school, Rosemarie took a teaching position which required her to travel on four modes of public transportation just to commute back and forth.

When Rosemarie transferred to a position closer to home, she decided to continue her own formal education by taking night classes at Villanova University. There, she met her future husband, Arthur L. Knowlton. They were married in 1956. As her son, Arthur, Jr., graduated from high school in 1975, Rosemarie also received her degree from Villanova.

Rosemarie never saw teaching as a job that began and ended with morning and afternoon bells. She enriched her students through forensics, the annual Science Fair, and CCD classes. She also directed the school's music shows, the Parish Living Stations of the Cross, and the Living Rosary.

Mr. President, the lives Rosemarie has touched are too numerous to count. She is leaving a legacy of dedication and accomplishment, and her son, Richard, carries on the family's teaching tradition. I ask my colleagues to join me both in congratulating Rosemarie for 46 years of dedication to the children of southeastern Pennsylvania and in extending the Senate's best wishes to the Knowltons as Rosemarie retires to devote all of her time to her husband, children, and seven grandchildren.●

AMERICA-ISRAEL FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE CELEBRATES ISRAEL'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

● Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, I rise to inform the Senate of a celebration being held later this evening in New York's historic Gracie Mansion. New York City's Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and his wife Donna Hanover will be joining the America-Israel Friendship League and the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York in hosting

a gala dinner celebrating the State of Israel's Golden Jubilee. It is most appropriate that the city with the largest Jewish population in the world is hosting this official celebration of Israel's fiftieth anniversary.

The members of the Senate are familiar with the important work of the America-Israel Friendship League (AIFL), a national, non-sectarian organization committed to maintaining and strengthening the historic, mutually supportive relationship between the peoples of the United States and Israel. Founded in 1971, the AIFL's activities generate bi-partisan support in reaching out to our citizens of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds in an effort to educate Americans and Israelis about the common interests they share. With a membership and leadership comprised of political, religious, labor, business, and community activists of all faiths, the diversity of the AIFL's membership makes its efforts even more extraordinary. The distinguished publisher Mortimer Zuckerman currently serves as the League's president, one of New York's leading attorneys Kenneth Bialkin serves as chairman of the board, and the talented Ilana Artman is the League's executive vice president.

As a non-sectarian, people-to-people organization, the AIFL is devoted to fostering cultural and economic ties between the United States and Israel and to strengthening the unique friendship between our country and the only democracy in the entire history of the Middle East. Throughout Israel's first half century, the people of Israel have struggled to survive in a hostile region. Enduring five wars, they have most recently embarked on an historic journey in search of peace.

The United States' support for Israel is grounded in an appreciation of the shared values and principles that are at the foundation of American and Israeli societies. Israel is the only country in the Middle East that, like the United States, is founded on the rights and privileges that guarantee a free society: elected government; freedom of speech; freedom of the press; an independent judiciary; and the rule of law. There have been just fourteen free elections in the entire history of the Middle East: all fourteen have been held in the State of Israel since 1948.

To promote the unique friendship between these two great democracies, the AIFL has successfully mobilized a coalition of Americans of all ages and backgrounds to participate in a broad range of cultural and educational programs. Three of our most revered former members—Frank Church, Hubert Humphrey, and Jacob Javits—played major roles in creating the League in 1971, and I can testify to how strongly they believed in the League's mission and responsibilities.

I ask that a report on tonight's dinner be printed in the RECORD.