

Commission recently drafted a directive on a common framework for a comprehensive digital signature infrastructure. In addition, the Canadian government is already utilizing digital signatures for its transactions. These actions are designed to promote the growth of electronic commerce, but they will also enhance the position of European and Canadian companies that are developing digital signature systems. This is an attempt to become the world leader in electronic commerce.

In the United States, we have a number of companies which offer digital signature services. The States are beginning to enact a patchwork of laws on digital signatures that could inhibit the widespread use of digital signatures. While I don't believe the government should dictate any one digital signature system, we should develop a level playing field which will encourage rather than hinder the development of a truly national infrastructure. It is my intent that the Digital Signature Act be a first step in this direction. This legislation has two simple goals: (1) develop uniform guidelines for Federal agencies to follow when they use digital signatures and encourage agencies to maximize the interoperability of their systems; and (2) establish a national policy panel for digital signatures to begin a dialog on the development of a national digital signature infrastructure.

My legislation requires the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to develop minimum technical standards and guidelines for use by Federal agencies when developing their digital signature infrastructure and to give due consideration to the interoperability of their system. Whenever possible, the legislation encourages agencies to use commercial-off-the-shelf products.

Agencies are currently developing and beginning to deploy digital signatures technologies. However, there is little coordination between agencies to ensure that the standards they use are consistent and that the technologies that they deploy are interoperable. NIST is charged with developing, with input from industry, technical standards and guidelines which ensure that the agencies deploy digital signature infrastructures that are both secure and interoperable. If agencies develop a variety of incompatible systems, I believe the result will be to discourage the widespread use of this electronic authentication technique by making it more complicated rather than easier to conduct business with the Federal Government.

Agencies would be required to report back to Congress what they are doing to develop digital signature systems, and why, if applicable, they are not following NIST guidelines.

In addition, the bill requires NIST to develop minimum technical criteria for agencies' use for electronic certification and management systems, both "in-house" systems or if they use a private entity. Once again, this is an attempt to level the playing field among Federal agencies to promote the private sector development of these goods and services.

To promote a uniform environment for certification authorities, the bill establishes a national panel, under the auspices of the Department of Commerce's Technology Administration to develop model practices and procedures, uniformity among jurisdictions that license certification authorities, and uniform audit standards for certification authorities. This national panel, with broadly based rep-

resentation from all stakeholders, will provide the coordination needed to put in place the national infrastructure that is a prerequisite for the widespread use of digital signatures.

In closing, I want to make clear that this legislation does not favor any digital signature system, but attempts to begin to create a minimum uniform framework for Federal agencies to make communicating with the Federal Government easier and more secure. I also want to make clear that this legislation is an outline or work in progress. The framework of the Internet is dynamic. It would be short-sighted to draft Internet related legislation that is static and unresponsive. I expect further refinements and will continue to work with industry groups, the States, the administration and other stakeholders as we move through the legislative process.

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WALT AND MELODY GENTRY  
BRING JOY INTO THE LIVES OF  
MANY THROUGH THE ADOPT-A-  
WILD HORSE AND BURRO PRO-  
GRAM

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**HON. JOHN SHIMKUS**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 27, 1999*

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to commend my constituents from Mt. Vernon, IL, Walt and Melody Gentry, for using their love of horses to bring happiness to the lives of others.

Walt and Melody have spent the past 8 years educating others about the Bureau of Land Management's Adopt-A-Wild Horse and Burro program. Established in 1992, this program's objectives are to manage the population of horses and burros in the effort to protect them from dying from starvation or dehydration. Spending countless hours traveling over 30,000 miles, Walt and Melody have not only aided in many adoptions all over the Eastern United States, but have also adopted 18 of their own horses that they use to compete in horse shows and riding competitions.

In addition to Walt and Melody's compassion for these beautiful animals is their compassion for others in need. They have combined their love and appreciation for horses with their concern and eagerness to help others by performing many of these shows for disadvantaged youths. Through these events, these kids have an opportunity to interact with horses—something they wouldn't otherwise be able to do. In a time when children are often hungry for leadership and inspiration, the Gentry's have played a pivotal role by sharing the happiness they have found in the Adopt-A-Wild Horse and Burro program.

I would like to thank Walt and Melody Gentry for sharing the joy in their lives with these disadvantaged children. They are not only an inspiration for them, but for all of us who have so many joys to share.

IN HONOR OF THE WEEHAWKEN  
VOLUNTEER FIRST AID SQUAD  
ON ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY

**HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 27, 1999*

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Weehawken Volunteer First Aid Squad for 30 years of dedicated service to the community.

The Weehawken Volunteer First Aid Squad was the first volunteer organization of its kind in Hudson County when it was organized in 1969. Over the last three decades, almost 400 volunteers have served the Squad, providing free and indispensable lifesaving ambulance and emergency medical service for Weehawken.

Because of the caliber and dedication of the volunteers, the Squad has an excellent two to three minute response time in emergencies. This remarkable accomplishment has not only allowed the Squad to respond to an estimated 40,000 distress calls but has made it responsible for saving countless lives in my district. In fact, the Squad the fastest response team of any emergency medical service in the state of New Jersey.

Long thought of as a strictly suburban service, the First Aid Squad showed that not only could a volunteer ambulance service operate in urban areas, but that they would prove to be an invaluable source of support to the residents of these communities. It was so successful in this endeavor that it prompted five neighboring towns to follow its lead in this important health service.

On May 7, 1999, the Squad will hold its 30th Anniversary Celebration where they will highlight these tremendous accomplishments, as well as to thank those who have assisted the organization through the years. The individual who will receive an Honorary Life Membership is the Mayor of Weehawken, Mr. Richard Turner. Mayor Turner, one of the Squad's greatest supporters, has been instrumental in recruiting new members, raising funds for a new ambulance, and in ensuring the opening of the Squad's state of the art headquarters in 1986.

The Weehawken First Aid Squad exemplifies leadership and professionalism. For its pioneering efforts in the field of emergency medicine and for 30 years of service to Weehawken, I am very happy to honor and salute the Weehawken First Aid Squad.

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A TRIBUTE TO KEW GARDENS  
CIVIC ASSOCIATION

**HON. ANTHONY D. WEINER**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 27, 1999*

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to invite my colleagues to pay tribute to the Kew Gardens Civic Association, Inc., on the occasion of its annual meeting.

The members of the Kew Gardens Civic Association have long been known for their commitment to community service and to enhancing the quality of life for all Kew Gardens residents.