

In the mid-1980s I served as the Republican Staff Director of the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families. I visited numerous creative character education programs across this nation including in St. Louis, Miami and Baltimore.

Each school system had involved the local community in the development of their program. Each was having a positive impact on the students in their schools. And, importantly, each program was done differently. It is important that we continue to encourage such creative flexibility.

Currently, there are a number of character education efforts in my district in northeastern Indiana. One of the best is a program called "Character Counts" which I have discussed with Garrett-Keyser-Butler Community School system superintendent Alan Middleton, as well as others in the Garrett system.

We need to encourage efforts to implement such programs. By allowing—leaving it up to the school districts themselves but allowing—teacher training to include character education training is an important advance for character education. Congressman FLETCHER's amendment made it clear that funds can be used for such training.

What follows is some basic information from the Garrett community school system's "Character Counts" program, which gives some idea of the approach of one character education initiative. It is important to note the emphasis on community participation as well as the specific themes that are stressed.

What? The Character Counts! Coalition is a national partnership of organizations and individuals involved in the education, training and care of youth. They have joined in a collaborative effort to improve the character of America's young people based on six basic standards of character.

Six pillars of character: Trustworthiness, responsibility, respect, fairness, caring, citizenship.

The Garrett-Keyser-Butler School Corporation this last year became a member of the national CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition. The program's development was based on a 1992 summit meeting of educators, youth leaders, religious leaders and ethicists who worked together to identify those basic characteristics that they could all agree on as being essential to the development of good character. These became known as the Six Pillars of Character.

The CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition hopes to combat violence, irresponsibility and dishonesty while strengthening the character of the next generation. The program is not associated with any particular religion or ideological agenda other than that of promoting good character through ethical decision making.

The membership list includes many well respected national organizations such as American Red Cross, the United Way of America, USA Police Activities League, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, 4-H, Little League Baseball, YMCA of the USA, the National Association of State Boards of Education and National Association of Secondary School Principals to mention a few.

We at the GKB School Corporation have made a commitment to work through the CHARACTER COUNTS! program in an effort to improve the character of our young people.

We believe that CHARACTER COUNTS! in personal relationships, in school, at the workplace, and in life. Who you are makes a difference!

Mission Statement: The Garrett-Keyser-Butler School Corp., is committed to the de-

velopment of a program which unites the whole community in promoting trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. We believe these ethical traits are essential for the success of young people in all areas of their life—in school, work, and personal relationships.

The Coalition is comprised of about 100 national and regional organizations that together reach more than 40 million young people.

Coalition includes: YMCA, BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS, 4-H, BIG BROTHERS/SISTERS, ATSO, LITTLE LEAGUE, RED CROSS, BOYS TOWN, NAT'L ASS'N OF POLICE, ATHLETIC LEAGUES, U.S. SOCCER ASS'N., AFT, NEA, NAT'L ASS'N OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS, NAT'L ASS'N OF STATE BOARDS OF EDUCATION, NAT'L ASS'N OF STUDENT COUNCILS, NAT'L CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASS'N, AARP, LA RAZA, INTERNATIONAL ASS'N OF POLICE CHIEFS, NAT'L URBAN LEAGUE AND UNITED WAY.

TRIBUTE TO REV. LEROY BELLAMY

HON. KAREN L. THURMAN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Mrs. THURMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Reverend Leroy Bellamy, a dear friend and senior pastor at Grace Temple Church of God in Floral City, FL.

For 40 years, the Reverend Bellamy has touched the lives of many Citrus County residents through gospel and prayer. He has worked hard over the years to build trust in the community and to inspire his congregations. Achieving that was not always easy, but he followed his heart and answered his calling.

Reverend Bellamy was the first minister of color in Citrus County to participate in inter-denominational and inter-racial community religious and social activities. At a time when many residents believed separate was better, Reverend Bellamy challenged that notion and encouraged the community to worship and pray together.

The annual sunrise Easter service in Citrus County is proof of Reverend Bellamy's commitment to racial tolerance.

Each year, parishioners of different racial and ethnic backgrounds sit side by side in a packed stadium to listen to his inspiring sermons. The 86-year-old pastor prides himself on never having missed a sunrise service. The service is one of many ways this unassuming and humble man shows those around him that building bridges is God's answer to burning them. That working to bring people together—regardless of race, color, sex, religion or social class—is the right thing to do.

The people of Citrus County have listened carefully over the years to Reverend Bellamy's wise words. As a special way to thank him, the community is hosting a "Reverend Leroy Bellamy Day" in his honor on July 31st.

This is one of many times the pastor has been recognized for his service to the community. Reverend Bellamy and his late wife Priscilla were selected Citrus County's Family of the Year in 1992. He was also given a "Key to the City" in Inverness and lives on a road in Inverness bearing his name.

As you can tell, we're very proud to have Reverend Bellamy in our community. He's the epitome of goodness and righteousness. He grew up in Florida during a time when economic depression and racial isolation made life hard for many people. But, as a young man, Reverend Bellamy followed God's path and shunned bitterness and anger.

He often juggled several manual-labor jobs to provide for his 10 children: Leroy Jr., Randolph, Lonnie, James, Clarence, Curtis, Bruce, Gilbert, Nina, and Lucille. In later years, he went to work for himself in the hog-farming business and prospered. He saved his earnings and sent several of his children to college—an opportunity that was not available to him.

Like so many other upstanding Americans, Reverend Bellamy started within his own family to make life better for future generations. His grandson Patrick Thomas is a dedicated caseworker in one of my Florida district offices. Patrick says has grandfather always stressed upon his children and grandchildren, the importance of self-discipline, education and respect for oneself and others. Most of all, the Reverend Bellamy taught his children and parishioners to have faith and trust in God. This, the Reverend says, is the most important lesson. The lesson that shapes a lifetime. The lesson that opens Heaven's gates.

Through his ministry, the Reverend Bellamy lifts the spirits of people in prisons, hospitals and nursing homes. He grieves with families at funerals, brings couples together in holy matrimony and celebrates life's simple pleasures at parades and other county festivities.

We are forever grateful to the Reverend Bellamy for leading a life dedicated to God's work and for choosing to make Citrus County his home. His smile brings hope and joy to the troubled. His prayers strengthen wearied hearts. His words of comfort console those in need.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in paying tribute to the Reverend Leroy Bellamy, a man who credits his good life to his commitment to God. May Citrus County be blessed with the Rev. Bellamy's divine presence and spiritual leadership for many more years to come.

CARRIE P. MEEK'S TRIBUTE TO REV. DR. G. DAVID HORTON, PASTOR, GREATER NEW BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. CARRIE P. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is truly a distinct honor and privilege to pay tribute to one of Miami-Dade County's great ecclesiastical leaders, the Rev. Dr. G. David Horton, on his 20th Year Anniversary as Pastor of Greater New Bethel Baptist Church. I want to echo the same sentiments of joy and gratitude that his congregation is lifting up to Almighty God to celebrate his milestone during this month of July, culminating on Sunday, August 1, 1999.

Rev. Dr. Horton truly represents the best and the noblest of God's Chosen Ones. As pastor, preacher and minister of the Gospel, he is remarkably leading his congregation in the ways of God and has tirelessly worked to

enlighten our community on the agenda of spiritual wisdom and good government based on our God-given conscience and responsibility toward others.

It is indeed fitting for those of us who subscribe to the Judaeo-Christian Faith to pause and reflect on the important role that Rev. Dr. Horton plays in the day-to-day affairs of his congregation. I want to acknowledge the tremendous work he is doing in constantly guiding not only the members of the Greater New Bethel Baptist Church, but also our community at large. He has truly exemplified the example of Christ as the Good Shepherd, and is wisely leading his flock of believers to the demands of Faith and to the works of Charity, sharing with them the words of God's wisdom and salvation emanating from the Gospel.

His consecration and vigilance over the spiritual growth and socio-moral well-being of his congregation have impacted the lives of countless people, propelling him into one of our state's charismatic preachers. Accordingly, my constituents in the 17th Congressional District's northern sector are the fortunate beneficiaries of Rev. Horton's teachings and ministry, especially in his advocacy to reach out both by way of word and example our unconditional love and commitment to the children, the elderly, the poor, the disenfranchised and the less fortunate among us. We have learned from him the centrality of God in our daily lives, conscious of the fact that the mandate of our Faith and the obligation of our citizenship must characterize our service to those who could least fend for themselves.

His countless awards aptly described him as a forceful, courageous and visionary leader not only of the religious community, but also our society at large, firmly compelled by the fact that the Greater New Bethel Baptist Church in Miami is indeed part of a larger network of institutions that serve as the voice and conscience of our community. Rev. Dr. Horton is fully living up to his vocation as a pastor par excellence. His standards for learning, caring and achieving, especially among the youth, have won for him the accolades of our community. Public and private agencies, along with countless organizations, have oftentimes cited him for his resolute consecration to the Truth of the Gospel, along with his uncompromising stance on justice and equal opportunity for all.

Moreover, his crusades in teaching our youth have become legendary. He has gained the utmost confidence of parents, teachers and countless others from diverse professions who see in him as a no-nonsense motivator. They are wont to entrust him with the future of their children and families, genuinely confident that they will learn from him the tenets of personal excellence, buoyed up by an uncompromising commitment to hard work and discipline.

Our community is deeply touched and comforted by his undaunted leadership, compassion and personal warmth. As head of one of the largest Baptist Churches in Florida, Rev. Dr. Horton preaches and lives by the adage that the grace of God's Providence and the quest for His Justice must buttress our common quest for personal integrity and professional achievement in the service of others. As a man of God and as an indomitable leader in our community, he has rightfully earned our deepest respect and genuine admiration.

This is the great legacy the Rev. Dr. G. David Horton is unselfishly sharing with us on

the occasion of his 20th Pastoral Anniversary. I am privileged indeed to be blessed with his friendship and confidence. And I am deeply grateful that he continues to teach us to live by his noble ethic of always loving God and serving our fellow men.

IN PROTEST OF RECEPTION FOR
CASTRO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

HON. PETER DEUTSCH

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to protest tonight's reception honoring two officials of the Castro regime, which makes a statement to Cuban dictator Fidel Castro and the world that the United States considers a Communist dictator to be a good trading partner.

I am troubled by the fact that tonight two of Castro's officials will be hosted at a Capitol Hill event for the first time in 40 years. Maria de la Luz B'Hammel and Igor Montero Brito should not have been granted visas to visit the United States, and they should not be welcomed as spokespeople for the opening up of trade between the United States and Cuba.

It is important that we remain vigilant in bringing to light the continuing deplorable behavior of Castro and his regime. Castro uses food as a weapon, cutting off the rations of those who speak out against his destructive and oppressive policies. He has destroyed his own country, and trade with him will not only be an affront to American ideals of human rights and freedom, but will also be disastrous for our economy.

There are those who look upon trade with the Castro regime as a panacea for the problems of our agriculture industry. In reality, trade with Castro will actually open up our markets to cheap products made with cheap labor in Cuba. Castro's agricultural products will be inexpensive because they will be made by overworked and underpaid workers in a country with no labor rights. His products may harm the environment, as they will be produced by a government without a system of checks and balances over environmental policies. And they will be dumped on the U.S. market, because Castro has never possessed nor does he now possess the ability to cooperate meaningfully with other nations.

Trade with Cuba will eventually be possible, but never under this tyrannical regime. To suggest otherwise, as tonight's reception does, is to forget our commitment to the ideals of freedom and democracy—ideals that Castro does not and will never share.

FOLIC ACID PROMOTION AND
BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION
ACT OF 1999

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, today, I, along with my colleague Congresswoman JO ANN EMERSON, am introducing the Folic Acid Promotion and Birth Defects Prevention Act of

1999. This bipartisan bill, with 102 Democratic and Republican original cosponsors, is being introduced in the Senate by Senators ABRAHAM, KOHL and BOND.

The Folic Acid Promotion and Birth Defects Prevention Act of 1999 will provide for a national folic acid education program to prevent birth defects.

Each year an estimated 2,500 babies are born in the United States with serious birth defects of the brain and spine, called neural tube defects. These neural tube defects cause crippling lifelong physical disabilities and at times, even death.

However, up to 70% of neural tube birth defects could be prevented if women of child-bearing age consumed 400 micrograms of folic acid daily. That means women need to eat a healthy diet and take a daily multivitamin. It's that simple.

Women need to be taking folic acid before and during their first trimester of pregnancy because these neural tube defects occur very early in pregnancy, before most women know that they are pregnant and because roughly 50% of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unplanned.

The problem is that the majority of women are not aware of the benefits of folic acid. A 1997 March of Dimes national survey found that only 30% of women take a multivitamin with folic acid before pregnancy. There is an urgent need to teach women about the importance of increasing their consumption of folic acid by taking a daily vitamin pill, eating more fortified cereal grain products and eating food naturally rich in folic acid.

Nationwide, Hispanic women have the highest rates of neural tube defects. In fact, in my home state of California, Hispanic mothers have the highest number of cases of neural tube defects than any other racial group and Mexican-born mothers have twice the risk of having babies with neural tube defects compared to U.S.-born mothers.

The Folic Acid Promotion and Birth Defects Prevention Act of 1999 will amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for a national folic acid education program to prevent birth defects. This bill authorizes the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in partnership with states and local public and private entities, to launch an education and public awareness campaign, conduct research to identify effective strategies for increasing folic acid consumption by women of reproductive capacity, and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies.

The Folic Acid Promotion and Birth Defects Prevention Act of 1999 is supported by leading health organizations, including the March of Dimes, Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Associates and Practitioners, Council for Responsible Nutrition, American Association of University Affiliated Programs for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American College of Nurse-Midwives, American Public Health Association, Council of Women's and Infants' Specialty Hospitals, Easter Seals, National Association of County and City Health Officials, National Women's Health Network, and the Spina Bifida Association of America.

I would like to recognize the March of Dimes, the National Council on Folic Acid and