

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE
BLIND ANNIVERSARY

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring a very special anniversary to the attention of my colleagues. This Saturday, November 13, marks the 59th anniversary of the founding of the National Federation of the Blind. An historic plaque will be placed at the original meeting place in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania on Saturday afternoon, and I am proud to have been asked to participate in this historic celebration.

In November of 1940, the first nationwide self-advisory group of persons with disabilities was founded at a meeting in the Reddington Hotel in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. At that time, the future for most blind people was bleak and employment often meant sheltered workshops for pennies an hour. With few educational opportunities available, the blind came together to organize. Elected to lead the fledgling group was Dr. Jacobus tenBroek, a young blind lawyer who would go on to become a prominent professor of constitutional law. This small group of people dedicated to the advancement of those with disabilities began a trend of advocacy for all people with physical and mental challenges.

Mr. Speaker, today the National Federation of the Blind is the largest organization of its kind in America. Every state has a chapter, as do many communities across the nation. Several thousand activists attend the Federation's annual national convention. The Federation provides scholarships, discrimination assistance, newsletters, and legislative consultation. It supports and assists in the development of new technology to improve the lives of the visually impaired. The Federation champions civil rights for the blind and often intercedes when parents face interference from social service agencies who attempt to remove their children from their homes. Currently, the Federation is attempting to establish sound case law regarding custody rights of visually impaired parents.

Today, the blind are employed in every profession there is, from the law to medicine. The National Federation of the Blind should take great pride in the extraordinary progress it has helped bring about since that day in November of 1940 when the founders gathered together for the first time. I am pleased to join with the citizens in Northeastern Pennsylvania and across the nation in congratulating the National Federation of the Blind and its local chapters as members gather at the organization's birthplace in my district in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania to celebrate this historic event.

TRIBUTE TO SAM T. GIBSON

HON. SCOTT McINNS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mr. McINNS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize Sam T. Gibson, former Director of the National Blood Bank for the Red Cross, who recently passed away.

Dr. Gibson joined the Red Cross in 1949, following research at Harvard Medical School.

He worked in the blood program of the Red Cross for 18 years and taught at George Washington University medical school and the Uniformed Services University. Dr. Gibson directed the national blood bank program of the American Red Cross and retired from a research post at the FDA in 1988.

Prior to his work at the FDA, Dr. Gibson was a biological official at the National Institute of Health where he retired as director of science and technology in the Office of Health Affairs.

Dr. Gibson was an asset to all of those he served who will be greatly missed by those who were under his care.

TEXAS STATE TECHNICAL
COLLEGE AT BRECKENRIDGE

HON. CHARLES W. STENHOLM

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding educational institution in the 17th District of Texas. The Texas State Technical College campus in Breckenridge, Texas, provides top rate education to students from across Texas, the United States and the world.

On Tuesday, November 9, 1999, the campus celebrated its tenth anniversary. I offered a flag flown over the Capitol to commemorate this occasion and to show our dedication to the education to both past and future generations.

I would like to submit for the RECORD a copy of a resolution that I offered at this very special event.

It is my hope that this Nation and my home State of Texas will continue to honor institutions like Texas State Technical College that have dedicated themselves to providing the best possible education to its students.

RESOLUTION

Whereas, On November 9, 1999, the Breckenridge Campus of Texas State Technical College will celebrate its tenth anniversary; and

Whereas, The Breckenridge campus serves as a vital component of the Texas State Technical College System, welcoming students from every walk of life; and

Whereas, T.S.T.C. has made an ongoing commitment to the future by providing a top rate education to students from across Texas, the United States and the world; and

Whereas, Today's celebration honors not only the service by the Breckenridge campus of T.S.T.C. during the last ten years, but its commitment to the future; and

Whereas, I present this flag flown over our nation's Capitol on October 4, 1999, as symbol of our dedication to those past and future generations who have benefitted by the instruction and opportunities made available to them at the Breckenridge campus, be it

Resolved, That I, Charles W. Stenholm, as Congressman for the 17th District of Texas, do officially recognize and extend my best wishes on the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Breckenridge campus of T.S.T.C. and that an official copy of this resolution be presented to T.S.T.C. as an expression of my high regards for their efforts.

DEMOCRATIZATION AND HUMAN
RIGHTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the House schedule did not permit consideration of my resolution, H. Con. Res. 204, which has been co-sponsored by Representative HOYER, Representative FORBES and Representative MCKINNEY. The resolution voices concern about serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in most states of Central Asia, in particular, substantial noncompliance with OSCE commitments on democratization and the holding of free and fair elections.

Among the countries of the former Soviet Union, only in Ukraine and Moldova have sitting presidents lost an election and peacefully left office. We will yet see what happens in Russia, where President Yeltsin has launched another war in Chechnya. It may be too much, given the historical differences between our respective societies, to hope the post-Soviet states could find among their political leaders a George Washington, who could have been king but chose not to be, and who chose to leave office after two terms. But it is not too much to hope that other post-Soviet leaders might emulate Ukraine's former President Leonid Kravchuk or Moldova's former President Mircea Snegur, not to mention Lithuania's Algirdas Brazauskas, who all allowed a peaceful transfer of power.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Central Asian leaders give every indication of intending to remain in office for life. Their desire for unlimited and permanent power means that they cannot implement all OSCE commitments on democracy, the rule of law and human rights, as doing so would create a level playing field for challengers and allow the media to shine the light on presidential misdeeds and high-level corruption. The result has been an entire region in the OSCE space where fundamental OSCE freedoms are ignored while leaders entrench themselves and their families in power and wealth.

To give credit where it is due, the situation is least bad in Kyrgyzstan. President Akaev, a physicist, is the only Central Asian leader who was not previously the head of his republic's Communist Party. One can actually meet members of parliament who strongly criticize President Akaev and the legislature itself is not a rubber stamp body. Moreover, print media—though under serious pressure from the executive branch—exhibit diversity of views and opposition parties function. Still, in 1995, two contenders in the presidential election were disqualified before the vote. Parliamentary and presidential elections are approaching in 2000. Kyrgyzstan's OSCE partners will be watching carefully to see whether they are free and fair.

Until the mid-1990s, Kazakhstan seemed a relatively reformist country, where various political parties could function and the media enjoyed some freedom. But President Nazarbaev dissolved two parliaments and singlemindedly sought to accumulate sole power. In the last few years, the regime has become ever more authoritarian. President Nazarbaev has concentrated all power in his hands, subordinating