

TRIBUTE TO THE STUDENTS AND STAFF OF BECKEMEYER GRADE SCHOOL, HILLSBORO, ILLINOIS

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2001

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the students and staff of Beckemeyer Grade School in Hillsboro, Illinois, and the heartwarming project they undertook to bring comfort to the victims of the recent tragedies.

The attacks of September 11th were a horrible shock to everyone in the United States, but to none were they more devastating than to the victims and their families. American hearts went out to those who would now have to struggle on without the light and laughter of their loved ones who had died. The outpouring of support for these families was enormous, like a bright light of kindness that shone out through the darkness of the disaster. Money, well-wishes and prayers poured in from all across the nation.

Mr. Speaker, the students and staff of Beckemeyer Grade School were part of that outpouring. They purchased several thousand small, glass figurines, called Comfort Angels. These beautiful angels were meant to bring hope and well-wishes to all who viewed them. The people of Hillsboro, lead by their coordinator Pamela Hopper, then set an ambitious goal: to distribute an angel to the families of every victim of the tragedy.

They have come astonishingly close to that goal—thousands of Comfort Angels have been distributed to families all over the world. They have found their way to embassies, fire stations, Congressional offices, and homes in New York and Washington. Two thousand of them were distributed by the Salvation Army alone, at the Memorial for the Pentagon on October 11th. And the results have been equally amazing. Letters have poured into Hillsboro, filled with thanks and touching stories.

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that the terrorists of September wished to divide and demoralize our country. Instead, in many ways they have energized us and brought us closer together. The amazing success of the people of Beckemeyer Grade School is a wonderful example of this—their faith and hard work has allowed them to make a difference in many lives, and they deserve my thanks and the thanks of these chambers.

COMMENDING THE CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY HOLIDAY TRAIN

HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2001

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, this year, the Canadian Pacific Railway Holiday Train embarked on its third annual "journey of goodwill" to collect food throughout Canada and the United States for those most in need. The two previous drives have collected 18 tons of food, and have raised more than \$500,000 to combat hunger. On December 4th, one of the three trains traveling throughout the United

States and Canada embarked on its journey from the Fresh Pond Junction Rail Yard in Queens, New York. There, the Canadian Pacific Railway hosted a special ceremony honoring and remembering the heroes of September 11th.

I would like to sincerely thank the Canadian Pacific Railway for having one of their beautifully decorated trains originate in New York City. This was a tribute to the men and women who lost their lives in the September 11th tragedy, as well as a tribute to their families. The victims' families were invited to the ceremony, and Christmas trees were given to all of the families of the firefighters and police officers who were killed. In addition, Canadian Pacific Railway donated \$100,000 to the NYSE Fund for Fallen Heroes. This kindness and generosity is just the most recent example of Canadian Pacific Railway's long standing commitment to the people of New York.

I commend the Canadian Pacific Railway on their benevolent gestures towards the city of New York, and thank them for not only supporting the United States and our families in this time of tragedy, but also for continuing their plight to feed the hungry.

IN HONOR OF MARY LOU WEISS UPON HER RETIREMENT FROM HERMOSA BEACH SCHOOL BOARD

HON. JANE HARMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2001

Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a good friend, Mary Lou Weiss, who retires this month from the Hermosa Beach Unified School District Board of Trustees, on which she has served as Trustee for 16 years, including 6 tours as President.

In her capacity as a School Board Trustee, Mary Lou has been a strong advocate for Hermosa Beach children, helping to ensure they receive the best educational opportunities. Because of her knowledge and expertise, I asked her to serve on my Education Advisory Committee.

A long time resident of Hermosa Beach, Mary Lou has contributed to the community in so many other ways as well. She has served as an advisory member for the Hermosa Beach Chamber of Commerce, coached AYSO boys soccer, and served on the advisory board for the Hermosa Beach Education Foundation. For her active contributions, she was named 1989 Hermosa Beach Woman of the Year.

Of special interest, she has managed several local farmers' markets, making sure the vendors get the space they need and that the markets run smoothly. I have taken advantage of these markets many times—during my campaigns, the farmers' markets have always been a great way to reach a lot of people, and as a member of Congress, my staff and I often bring our office resources to the community by setting up our own booth. Mary Lou not only accommodates these important visits for me, but she is always thoughtful enough to provide flowers and to remember that I like Diet Coke.

Mary Lou also is a tremendous resource to my staff, always available to answer questions about policy, politics, or which vendor has the

best produce. My staff members over the years consider Mary Lou as an additional "mother."

This year, Mary Lou chose not to run for another term as a School Board Trustee in order to apply her years of experience to a run for Hermosa Beach City Council. Although she was not successful in this endeavor, she once again demonstrated her leadership and commitment to the community through the classy way she ran her campaign.

I will miss Mary Lou on the School Board, but I know we will continue to work together to ensure that we do the best we can for the children of our community. I join the citizens of Hermosa Beach in wishing Mary Lou and her family well in their future endeavors.]

DO REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS THWART RELIGIOUS FREEDOM?

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2001

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, the "Helsinki" Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe recently convened a briefing which examined the policies of various governments which require registration of religious groups and the effect of such policies on the freedom of religious belief and practice. There was evidence that such requirements can be, and often are, a threat to religious freedom among countries in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

As Co-Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, mandated to monitor and encourage compliance with the Helsinki Final Act and other OSCE commitments, I have become alarmed over the past decade by the creation of new laws and regulations in some OSCE countries that serve as a roadblock to the free exercise of religious belief. These actions have not been limited to emerging democracies, but include Western European countries such as Austria.

Many of these laws are crafted with the intent to repress religious communities deemed nefarious and dangerous to public safety. One cannot deny that certain groups have hidden behind the veil of religion in perpetrating monstrous and perfidious acts. The September 11th tragedies have been a grim reminder of that. Yet, while history does hold examples of religion employed as a tool for evil, these are exceptions and not the rule. In our own country, during the Civil Rights Movement, religious communities were the driving force in the effort to overturn the immoral "separate but equal" laws and provide legal protections. If strict religious registration laws had existed in this country, government officials could have clamped down on this just movement, possibly delaying long overdue reform.

While OSCE commitments do not forbid basic registration of religious groups, governments often use the pretext of "state security" to quell groups espousing views contrary to the ruling powers' party line.

Registration laws are often designed on the premise that minority faiths are inimical to governmental goals. Proponents of more strenuous provisions cite crimes committed by individuals in justifying stringent registration requirements against religious groups, ignoring