

who are the most innovative and successful in developing trade and promoting exports for the United States. The recipients of the award each receive a certificate signed by the Secretary of State and \$5,000. Along with Alan Larson, Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs, I would like to bring your attention to the exemplary work of these career Department of State employees:

AMERICAN DIPLOMATS: BUSINESS IS THEIR "BUSINESS"

Shortly after arriving in Cotonou, U.S. Ambassador Pamela Bridgewater, began exploring with the President of Benin ways in which an American company could resolve the challenges faced by a major U.S. telecommunication investment in this small West African country. In Poland, Ambassador Chris Hill used strong personal relationships with senior Polish government decisionmakers, including the Prime Minister, to assist a U.S. company win a multi-million dollar contract to privatize a Polish defense industry. Ian Campbell, an economic officer in Jordan is helping in the formation of a business-government steering committee that will implement the U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement. And Laura Byergo has turned the American Mongolia Business Group in Ulaan Baatar into an effective vehicle for improving the business climate there and increasing American exports.

What these diplomats—and hundreds like them—have in common is their understanding that advancing opportunities overseas for American business is central to maintaining our nation's economic prosperity and national security. Exports accounted for more than one quarter of our economic growth during the past decade; they currently support an estimated 12 million highpaying jobs.

American diplomats have made business their "business." Support for U.S. business is now a central feature of the work of our 150-plus posts worldwide. Business executives, who only a decade ago shied away from contacting American missions about their business problems, know that if help is needed—with a contract, a tender, access to local government officials—U.S. diplomatic missions abroad are prepared to assist. Ambassadors today often spend 30 to 60 percent of their time on commercial issues; their doors and those of their staff are open to companies that provide jobs for American workers and they are working hard to assist them in promoting the export of our country's goods and services.

To add momentum to this sea-change in the work of American diplomats, Charles Cobb Jr., former Ambassador to Iceland, established an annual award in 1991 to recognize two individuals at posts abroad—an Ambassador and a non-Ambassador—for their success in developing trade and promoting exports. Along with several other government officials and U.S. business executives, we were privileged to participate in reviewing an impressive list of nominees and deciding on the recipients of this year's award.

Ambassador Bridgewater in Benin and Ms. Byergo in Mongolia were this year's recipients in recognition of their energy, imagination, initiative and leadership on the business front. Ambassador Bridgewater was cited for championing American investments in Benin and for working tirelessly to promote the benefits of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a U.S. law passed in 2000 that promotes trade and development in sub-Saharan Africa. On that score, she identified sectors of Benin's economy best positioned to benefit from AGOA provisions. With AGOA, we have an opportunity to go

beyond traditional development assistance and give all of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, no matter how small or how poor, an opportunity to avail themselves of trade incentives if they pursue economic reform and move toward democracy and good governance.

Ms. Byergo improved the business environment for American products in Mongolia by persuading the government of Mongolia to act upon the recommendations for change made by U.S. business executives. Her "Open Government Initiative" brought U.S. business and Mongolian government officials together to address specific problems such as taxation policy.

Others nominated for the award this year were praised for working with business to cut through bureaucratic red tape, improve the regulatory environment, reduce high tariffs, encourage privatization, and combat corruption. These efforts to push the envelope on economic policy often translated into greater transparency and business opportunities.

Past winners of the Cobb Award continue to distinguish themselves in government service and with the business community, including Richard Boucher, the Secretary of State's spokesman; Beth Jones, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs; and John Wolf, Assistant Secretary for Non-proliferation.

The commercial advocacy of American diplomats ensures that what we have won for American business and American workers at the negotiating table—in bilateral and free trade agreements, regional trade compacts and the World Trade Organization—is translated into commercial opportunities and ultimately business contracts.

In U.S. missions large and small, wherever American business sees opportunity and needs assistance in winning a fair market share, our diplomats are there to help. Their work is key not just to our own future, but to the welfare of others in the world community as well.

CONGRATULATING THE LA SPARKS

HON. MAXINE WATERS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 10, 2002

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to my hometown WNBA team, the Los Angeles Sparks. Today we passed H. Res. 532 which honors the Los Angeles Sparks players and staff for winning the WNBA championship and completing a remarkable season.

On August 30th, they won the WNBA title for the second year in a row. The Sparks were competing against New York Liberty for this year's title. It was a competitive series and the decisive game went down to the last couple of seconds. With the game tied at 66, rookie Nikki Teasley got the ball and scored the winning basket—a three pointer, putting the team up for good and clinching the championship. Both teams played superbly. It was exciting, a great show of gamesmanship and the fans were treated to an exceptional game. Lisa Leslie was named the series Most Valuable Player. This is an honor she received last year, as well. She finished the game with seventeen points.

With this championship, the LA Sparks join the Houston Comets as the only multiple title-

holders in the league's six-year history. In addition, by winning every playoff game they played, they tied the Comets record of sweeping all six playoff games. The team's winning streak is nine if you count the last three games of the regular season.

It was not an easy season, but the women worked hard, played hard and were rewarded for their efforts. That is something from which we can all learn. So as I close, I would like to congratulate the Sparks and thank them for being leaders. I hope they continue to set good examples for our city.

INTRODUCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACT OF 2002

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 10, 2002

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleague, Congressman MARK UDALL, in introducing the Environmental Justice Act of 2002.

This bill will codify a 1994 environmental justice Executive Order by President Bill Clinton.

Executive Order 12898, the "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations," attempts to address environmental injustice within existing federal laws and regulations by prohibiting discriminatory practices in programs that receive federal funds.

This issue has been one of my priorities as a public servant because I have seen the damage—first hand—that environmental injustice can bring to poor and minority communities.

I grew up in the shadow of one of the largest landfills in the country.

As the landfill grew, so did other regional pollution.

Gravel pits that are miles wide and hundreds of feet deep were dug to build roads and buildings in California.

Heavy industry moved in—especially during World War II when my area manufactured jet fuel.

And the rivers that were once free-flowing water bodies were reduced to sewer channels.

Areas where my family would picnic or enjoy nature when I was little are now part of the dirtiest watershed in the country.

In the Los Angeles area, it is estimated that over 71 percent of African Americans and 50 percent of Latinos reside in areas with the most polluted air, while only 34 percent of whites live in highly polluted areas.

Even our open space tends to be divided among financial or other demographic lines.

In Los Angeles neighborhoods where 1990 household income averaged less than \$20,000 a year, there was less than a half-acre of parkland for every 1,000 residents.

The ratio was more than 40 times higher—21.2 acres for every 1,000 people—in neighborhoods where household incomes were \$40,000 or higher.

Park access was similarly lopsided when broken down by race.

Majority white neighborhoods had 95.7 acres of parkland for every 1,000 children, compared with 5 acres in Latino areas, 2.9 acres in African-American neighborhoods and 6.3 acres in Asian-American areas.