

and a vigorous (I can assure you!), a vigorous and energetic free press for Taiwan!

In our Legislative Yuan we have four major parties and one independent group. You will be 'shocked' to know we sometimes quarrel, we shout, we argue, we debate into the night. But on matters concerning the mutual interests of the free people of Taiwan and the United States, we—like you—stand firmly united.

I pledge that we will continue to do all in our power to strengthen US-Taiwan ties and to advance mutual economic, diplomatic and security interests.

On two issues in particular I want to ask your help. Both concern our cousins across the Taiwan Strait, the People's Republic of China.

The people of Taiwan earnestly hope for a dialogue with the authorities in Beijing. We want to discuss matters of health. We want to discuss trade, security, transportation, improving people-to-people exchanges.

We have many issues of common interest to explore with the PRC. There is much we can learn from each other. There is much we can accomplish together. The peoples of the entire region desire peace and security, but there must be a mutual willingness for dialogue. So we ask our friends in the United States to use your important relationship with the authorities in Beijing. Encourage them to engage us in a dialogue unburdened by preconditions. It can only advance the interests of all concerned.

The second issue where we ask your help is in the area of health and Taiwan's international human rights.

Taiwan has weathered a terrible scourge in recent months as SARS swept the region. Lives have been lost. Livelihoods have been threatened. Commerce has been disrupted. People throughout the world have suffered from the PRC's cover-up of the SARS epidemic. At the same time the leaders in Beijing prevented Taiwan from receiving support from WHO, and other countries, by insisting that all assistance had to be approved and channeled through the PRC. Although the PRC could not handle its own problems with SARS it had the audacity to claim it was helping Taiwan, which did not receive anything.

Throughout this time, Taiwan has been seeking to participate in the programs of the World Health Organization. Not as a member state—we recognize that nomenclature would offend some in Beijing—but simply as an observer. Yet the stubborn rejection of our effort by the PRC—their international arm-twisting, bullying and threatening trade partners—has been shameful, a clear violation of Taiwan's international human rights. It is a crystal clear example for all to see of how a dictatorship places power politics above the interests of people—people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait who have suffered. Advice and support from the WHO did not arrive in time because of the PRC's interference. Health should not be a political issue used for gain and punishment. It is a life and death people issue and those who are chosen to govern must look to the people's interests first.

The fact is the SARS crisis will pass. But other health and economic challenges of an interdependent world will surely confront us. Taiwan can make its own contributions to the world's fight against disease, but it cannot be treated as a pariah. The time for the people of Taiwan to secure the benefits of international organizations, especially one as important as the WHO, has surely come. Taiwan's international human rights demand that its people should not be prevented from participating in international organizations and programs that will further their health and welfare and that of the world at large.

Under the landmark Taiwan Relations Act, the U.S. has pledged to work to benefit the welfare and human rights of the free people of Taiwan. I call upon you and your colleagues to hold hearings—consistent with this legislative requirement—on how the U.S. can advance Taiwan's health, human rights and security by pressing for Taiwan's inclusion in appropriate international organizations. We hope the American belief in fair play will encourage you to reach out to other friends and allies and urge their support for Taiwan's place in the community of international organizations.

Dear Friends, let me close with a personal note.

I have been honored by my colleagues and placed in a position of leadership in our national legislature. I have been honored by my president and asked to convey a message to our most important allies. Today, I have even been honored to work in that arsenal of democracy where the fighting forces of freedom are captained, the Pentagon.

But it is a signal honor of my career to be with you here today in the United States Capitol, truly the people's house, where the beacon of liberty shines forth for all around the globe to see.

Thank you so very much. May God bless you, and God bless the American people.

COMMENDING MRS. DEPOALA'S
FIFTH GRADE CLASS ON THE
CREATION OF THEIR PEACE
QUILT

HON. MAURICE D. HINCHEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2003

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to commend the children of Mrs. Sally DePoala's Fifth Grade class at Cahill Elementary School in Saugerties, New York for their contribution to the national dialogue in support of peace and hope. Last Friday I had the good fortune to spend some time with these young people and receive from them a Peace Quilt that they had spent a good part of the year creating. After reading an African folk tale earlier in the year, the students were inspired to create an artistic quilt that expressed their deeply held commitment to peace here in the United States of America and throughout the world. All of the students in the class contributed to the beautiful quilt and asked to present it to me so I may assist them in eventually having it displayed at a memorial for the World Trade Center in New York City.

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 have had a profound effect on the Nation and the world. Together, we have sought out ways to deal with the fear, anger and grief that struck us all on that fateful day. Indeed, we as a nation have come together to find strength in the masses and to recommit ourselves to our families, our communities and our country.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud that the fifth grade students in Mrs. DePoala's class at Cahill Elementary decided to express themselves in this very thoughtful and traditional way. In a simple way, they have profoundly communicated the dream of our future generations to embrace peace and hope and to seek out strength from within our communities. I'm grateful to have been chosen as the messenger of the spirit of these young people and

I will enthusiastically seek to have their wonderful Peace Quilt displayed prominently at the site where the world will remember the tragic events of September 11, 2001. In the meantime, I will proudly display this quilt in my Kingston district office so that our local community can appreciate this profound statement by our future generation.

HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF BRITTANY ATKINS

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2003

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Brittany Amber Atkins of Smyrna, Tennessee, for being chosen as the National Exchange Club Youth of the Year.

Brittany recently graduated from Battle Ground Academy with a 4.1 GPA. Her list of accomplishments while in high school are long. Among the honors and awards Brittany has received are Tennessee District Youth of the Year for the National Exchange Club, Brentwood Exchange Club Youth of the Year, Helen and Ralph Brown School Spirit Award, Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen Award, President's Award for Outstanding Academic Excellence, Music Medal, Drama Medal and Harvard Book Award.

Brittany was also involved in a host of extracurricular activities, including Student Council, Leadership Council, Speech and Debate, plays, choirs, Students Against Destructive Decisions, Spanish Club, Key Club and Dance Team.

While her awards and extracurricular activities contributed to Brittany becoming the National Exchange Club Youth of the Year, I found her essay, "America's Young Patriots: Believing and Achieving for a Better America," to be most impressive. She writes, "America's future rests in the hearts, dreams, and preparations of these young patriots—no matter race, religion, place of residence, or economic status. It is through the beliefs and achievements of today's youth that America will thrive in the future." Brittany believes patriotism is found within the unlimited opportunities for one's education, profession and service to his or her community.

Brittany concludes her essay by pledging to "concentrate on service before reward, to introduce problems with solutions, and when encountering conflict, to interject love and humor." I commend Brittany for her many accomplishments and awards, and wish her the best of luck in future endeavors.

CONGRATULATING JOE GUNN ON HIS RETIREMENT

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2003

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, after 14 years as president of the Texas AFL-CIO, Joe Gunn has announced that he will retire. I rise today to congratulate Joe and to wish him well in his retirement.

Joe Gunn has actively served the workers of the State of Texas for many years.