

tribute to an organization that is dedicated to serving people in need of affordable housing. The Tri-County Housing & Community Development Corporation serves Colorado's Bent, Crowley, and Otero counties. The corporation works to rehabilitate homes and bring neighborhoods back to life. It is for their ongoing efforts to provide safe, sanitary, and affordable housing to the residents of Colorado that I would like to recognize Tri-County here today.

The Tri-County Housing & Community Development Corporation was created in 1991 to provide assistance in rehabilitating low-income housing. Over the years, Tri-County has received several accolades, including the Eagle Award from Colorado Housing NOW, as well as acknowledgement from Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros.

From helping build or repair homes to answering questions regarding financing, Tri-County serves local homeowners in many ways. Tri-County serves more than homeowners, though. The corporation also owns and operates several low-income housing apartments. Tri-County remains active in community development, assisting with downtown renovations, restoration of historic train stations, and improving local senior centers. Tri-County has been a major help in securing funding for the creation of parks, libraries, nature trails, and other community services.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize an organization committed to creating and maintaining safe, sanitary, and affordable housing. Tri-County Housing & Community Development Corporation provides a needed service to a grateful community. Tri-County's work lifts not only individual people but transforms the entire community. I join with my colleagues today in honoring this dedicated and hard-working organization.

RECOGNIZING REPUBLIC OF
KAZAKHSTAN

HON. JOE BARTON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2003

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Republic of Kazakhstan for its potential to enhance our nation's energy independence and for its significant contributions in support of the United States in the War on Terror. I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing the strategic importance of Kazakhstan to our nation's well-being.

It is widely recognized that the United States relies greatly on imports of OPEC oil from the Middle East. This reliance is exacerbated by the present instability of that region. Mr. Speaker, if the United States is to become truly energy independent, it must seek non-OPEC alternatives for our supply of oil. Kazakhstan can—and is willing to—help greatly in this endeavor.

The Caspian region of Central Asia contains a wealth of oil reserves. Kazakhstan, in particular, shows great promise. Adding to its robust economy, over the past six years, Kazakhstan has more than doubled its production of oil from 415,000 to almost 1 million barrels per day. By 2015, Kazakhstan is expected to produce 2.5 million barrels per day. This production would place it among the top non-OPEC producers of oil in the world. However,

Kazakhstan requires foreign investment in order to improve and expand its oil and gas infrastructure so that the benefit of its significant reserves can be realized.

Importantly, Kazakhstan has taken steps to promote transparency in its financial transactions, particularly with regard to oil transactions. The government recently established the National Fund, which will be a model for openness and disclosure in the management of the country's oil revenues. The government also has pledged transparency and openness in future oil and gas contracts, and has officially endorsed the British government's Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

Kazakhstan is a young country struggling to institute meaningful democratic reforms. This has been a difficult path to travel and much work remains. Yet from the beginning, Kazakhstan's tangible progress has signaled its unwavering commitment to effect true change. Kazakhstan's desire to forge a strong energy partnership with the United States is one example. Another is Kazakhstan's support of the United States in the War on Terror.

As the center of the former Soviet Union's nuclear and biological weapons programs, Kazakhstan held considerable—and potentially dangerous—power over the world as the Soviet Union broke apart. In fact, Kazakhstan had the fourth largest arsenal of nuclear weapons in the world larger than Britain, France and China combined. Rather than capitulating to countries offering to pay millions of dollars to purchase these weapons, Kazakhstan's leader, Nursultan Nazarbayev, boldly chose instead to destroy the country's stockpile and position Kazakhstan as a stabilizing force in the region. Mr. President, in light of September 11, threats from North Korea, and the war and continuing operations in Iraq, Kazakhstan's courageous decision against becoming a nuclear state certainly has helped the world avoid greater threats to peace and stability.

Kazakhstan has been a leader and is the current chair of the Central Asian Cooperation Organization, which unites several nations of the region to combat terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking. Toward that end, Kazakhstan has consistently supported the United States in the War on Terror. During the war in Iraq, Kazakhstan granted to the United States overflight rights and access to its airbase at Almaty. Kazakhstan also participates in NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

Kazakhstan's contributions have not gone unnoticed. During a visit to Kazakhstan in July 2003, the NATO Secretary General praised Kazakhstan for its support of the peace keeping mission in Iraq and its support for the War on Terror. Kazakhstan was the first Central Asian republic to join in the post-war reconstruction efforts. In August 2003, Kazakhstan sent 27 military personnel, including de-mining experts, engineers, and translators to Iraq.

The illustrations of Kazakhstan's tangible efforts to join the democratic world could not be more stark. Kazakhstan chose non-proliferation over possessing nuclear weapons; it chose peace and prosperity over terrorism and strife; it chose a market economy over the communist status quo; and it chose the difficult path of reform over complacency. Kazakhstan's ability to greatly enhance our energy independence, and its position alongside the United States in the War on Terror,

are but two illustrations of Kazakhstan's resolve to affect positive, longstanding change.

Kazakhstan stands out because it possesses great potential and is supported by a powerful commitment toward democracy. Considerable work remains, and the United States must lend its support to ensure that Kazakhstan continues down the path toward democratization. I ask that my colleagues join me in commending the Republic of Kazakhstan on its positive steps forward.

NORTH STAR CHARTER SCHOOL

HON. C. L. "BUTCH" OTTER

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2003

Mr. OTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the work and purpose of the North Star Charter School in Eagle, Idaho. This public school was founded by volunteers—parents with a vision of virtue, citizenship and leadership not only for their own children but also for their community and our nation.

I recently had the honor of visiting the North Star Charter School at its new building, not far from my ranch in Idaho. About 270 students joined with 20 excellent faculty members and a similar number of involved, caring parents as we unveiled a painting of George Washington at prayer. That painting now is displayed prominently near the school's main entrance. It is a stirring image of the first and greatest of our Founding Fathers, and it provides a fitting reminder of the kind of values that the North Star Charter School has made the foundation of its curriculum and educational environment.

The school for kindergarteners through eighth-graders, led by Board of Directors Chairman Gale Pooley and Principal Nancy Smith, has established as its mission the development of virtuous citizen leaders. The lives and work of our Founding Fathers are the historical guideposts of that journey.

Even the school's name provides a constant reminder that its goals are unwavering and steadfast, like the North Star itself—an eternal beacon trusted by navigators searching for new lands, or simply making their way home.

I couldn't hope to say it any better than the school's own mission statement: "The North Star Charter School will endeavor to develop each student into a leader that can be trusted to serve the interests of his family, community, profession and nation with the strength of character and the depth of knowledge to stand for the time-honored principles and ideals of a free and open society."

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud to represent the school, its students and the families that find such great value in the timeless lessons of our nation's birth.

TRIBUTE TO MS. RITA BALIAN

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2003

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a woman who exemplifies the idea of the humanitarian