

willingly and unselfishly give their time and talent and make their communities a better place to live and work. Ray Becker is one of these individuals. Ray will be stepping down as President of the Building Industry Association of Southern California (BIA) and I would like to thank him for his service.

Ray originally came to the Inland Empire in the early 1980s as Vice President and Division Manager with the Lusk Company. During 20 years in Southern California real estate development, Ray has managed the construction of more than 3,000 homes and 16,000 home sites. For eight years Ray taught Light Construction and Development Management at the University of California, Riverside.

Ray is also Senior Vice President of Lennar Communities Inland, a division of Lunar Homes of California. Lunar is a national real estate company listed on the New York Stock Exchange and is one of the largest public homebuilders in the United States. Under his leadership, Lunar acquires, plans, entitles, develops, markets, sells, and manages medium and large scale communities.

Ray has been an excellent President of BIA and continually promotes the building profession. He is also involved in California BIA and the National Association of Homebuilders. He is past President of the Inland Chapter of HomeAid, an industry charitable foundation, and has held the Presidency of the Youth Service Center and Parkview Community Hospital Foundation. Ray's commitment to the community and to Southern California is exemplary.

Ray's tireless passion for the building industry has contributed immensely to the betterment of the community of Southern California. I am proud to call him a fellow community member, American and friend. I know that many BIA members and homebuilders are grateful for his service and salute him as he steps down from his position.

H.R. 1964, THE HIGHLANDS STEWARDSHIP ACT

HON. SUE W. KELLY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge the passage of H.R. 1964, the Highlands Stewardship Act.

The Highlands region is spread through parts of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania and covers more than two million acres of pristine, undeveloped land. In studies in 1992 and 2002, the National Forest Service recognized the Highlands as "nationally significant" and estimated that 5,000 acres of land are lost to development just in the New York and New Jersey portions of the Highlands.

The Highlands also serve as an "oasis" amid the urban centers of Philadelphia, Hartford, and New York. The region, with its networks of reservoirs and aquifers, supplies clean, safe drinking water for over 11 million Americans. At the moment, only 23% of those watershed lands are protected, with almost 100,000 of those acres being immediately threatened. Without these water sources, the sprawling metropolises we know today and New York and Philadelphia would have never developed.

The tourist value of this region cannot be overlooked. Every year, over 14 million people visit the Highlands. This total is higher than the number of people who visit Yellowstone National Park every year, and we don't even have a geyser.

Twenty million people live within a two hour drive of the Highlands. With the ever-increasing rigors of city and suburban life, it is important to have a place for families to unwind and interact with the natural splendors that are too often missing from their lives. The Highlands provides that and so much more. This bill will ensure that these natural beauties survive so that future generations can enjoy them as we do now.

IN HONOR OF FATHER MARINO FRASCATI

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of and recognition of Father Marino Frascati, founding member of the Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization—and spiritual guide, healer, and beloved mentor and friend to many in this Westside community for more than fifty years. Father Frascati, parish priest of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, continues to serve the Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood with integrity, compassion, and grace, and was bestowed the honorary appointment of President for Life with the Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization. Father Frascati has been a steady and focused instrument of healing, preservation, growth and hope along the streets of this neighborhood.

When others lost hope and turned away, Father Frascati dug in, continuing his quest to improve the lives of the families, seniors and individuals who live and work within this Westside community. His rare ability to connect with others and bring people and groups together for the common good has significantly improved all aspects of this neighborhood.

Father Frascati was instrumental in renovating and developing countless commercial and residential structures along Cleveland's Westside. Due to his persistence and personal meetings with Monsignor Barone, then Undersecretary for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood was the first community in Cuyahoga County to be awarded the Urban Development Action Grant for a neighborhood project. This grant resulted in the construction of Father Caruso Boulevard and restoration of the historical Gordon Square Arcade. Despite opposition and adversity, Father Frascati remains a tireless and unwavering champion of this neighborhood. Father Frascati established Nolasco Corporation which resulted in new housing for senior citizens and low income families. Additionally, Father Frascati has created strong and enduring bonds with local business owners, bringing businesses and jobs—like Bank One at the Gordon Square Arcade—back into the neighborhood.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, please join me in honor, recognition and gratitude of Father Marino Frascati, whose compassion, commit-

ment and energy continues to create a haven of assistance, hope and renewal along the streets of Detroit-Shoreway and beyond. His presence, vision, leadership, and unwavering faith in the people and possibilities of this community have restored and uplifted the very foundation of this neighborhood—reclaiming the heart and soul of this community one brick, one senior citizen, one family at a time.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 641, 642, 643, and 644, I was absent because I was receiving a major named award from and giving remarks to the national meeting of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on all four votes.

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

HON. RICHARD BURR

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. BURR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process. Aside from our own Nation's ongoing military operations in the war against terrorism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most important foreign policy issues being discussed and debated by my constituents.

Clearly, there is a wide range of points of view on this critically important issue, and they cover the range of the political spectrum. I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to outline some of my own thoughts on some of these subjects.

I should state at the outset that I believe Israel has a right to defend herself against the actions of Palestinian extremists. It would be the height of hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker, for our own country—engaged in its own fight against terrorists bent on her destruction—to deny Israel the right to pursue those bent on her destruction. Since obtaining independence in 1948, Israel has been engaged in a near-constant struggle for survival.

The current violence, and Israel's military response to it, is a reflection and continuation of that struggle. There are some on the Palestinian side, many of whom have close ties—if not direct connections—to Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority, who desire nothing less than the destruction of the state of Israel. These are the very groups sending young Palestinians to detonate suicide bombs on buses, in pizza parlors, in sidewalk cafes, and even at Jewish religious celebrations. On that basis alone, Israel has no choice but to continue efforts to round up those responsible. Even prior to the eruption of the latest violence more than two years ago, Arafat refused to do so. He refuses to do so to this day.

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that Arafat has abdicated his position as a responsible negotiator

and representative of the best interests of the Palestinian people. On too many occasions, he has walked away from the peace table and given tacit approval to renewed violence by Palestinian extremists. Arafat remains—for better or worse—the “chosen” representative of the Palestinian people. For real progress to occur, however, the Palestinian people need a prime minister with real authority—the authority to go after the extremists, the authority to negotiate with the government of Israel, and the authority to make decisions that will not be overturned at Arafat’s whim. If a lasting peace in the Middle East is the ultimate goal, and I firmly believe that it must be, the Palestinian people must have a capable, effective prime minister. I am hopeful that Ahmed Qureia, sworn in as the Palestinian prime minister earlier this month, will be permitted to take the steps necessary to end the terror attacks against Israel and return the Palestinians to the peace table.

I am not opposed to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Neither, for that matter, are the people and government of Israel. That state, however, can only be established if it and the larger Arab world in turn recognize Israel’s right to exist. Without that recognition, there can be no lasting peace. If Israel were to accept the establishment of an independent Palestinian state that maintained its opposition to Israel’s existence, the country would only be ensuring its own destruction.

I firmly believe that our country should continue providing financial and military assistance to the Israeli people. As long as the nations surrounding Israel continue to provide assistance to those trying to destroy the country, the United States should continue its efforts to support her. As the region’s only democratically elected government, Israel deserves our support.

Our Nation has an important role to play in the peace process, Mr. Speaker, and we should continue to do so. We can and should continue diplomatic efforts to bring a lasting peace to the region. It remains to be seen if the Arab states, which have called on us to play a more active role, will actually respect that role. I do not believe, however, that our involvement should extend to the deployment of U.S. troops to “police” any final peace agreement. Any agreement that requires peacekeepers to be deployed is flawed to begin with—it means neither side actually expects the other to abide by the agreement’s provisions. We must pursue a comprehensive agreement that both sides accept.

Having accepted Israel’s right to defend herself, I also believe there must come a time for negotiations and a legitimate peace process. Israel should make every effort to limit incursions into Palestinian-controlled areas. There must be recognition, both in this country and around the world, that both sides must be willing to talk. The Israelis have shown that willingness in the past, and have made significant proposals aimed at achieving a lasting peace. What remains, however, is the need for a serious commitment on the part of the Palestinians to return to the table and actively work with the Israelis.

In order for that to happen, though, the new Palestinian leadership must denounce terrorism once and for all and make a firm commitment to restrain, arrest, detain, and destroy those militant elements in Palestinian areas that want the violence to continue. After all,

there are groups who have stated that they will never accept cease-fire, nor respect any peace agreement. More than a firm commitment, however, the Palestinians must take firm action—or empower a prime minister to take firm action on their behalf.

In crisis, Mr. Speaker, there is opportunity. The only thing that remains is for both sides to accept the challenge, and take advantage of the opportunity. Peace in the region is long overdue, but it will take the active participation of both sides to achieve it.

HONORING PAUL J. SIMMERT OF
NORWICH, CONNECTICUT

HON. ROB SIMMONS

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Cadet Paul J. Simmert of Norwich, Connecticut who was recently named Chief Petty Officer of the Nautilus 571 Division of the United States Naval Sea Cadet Corps.

At only 17 years of age, Paul will be in command of 50 cadets, ranging in age from 11 to 17 years. This appointment follows tremendous hard work and dedication, including the completion of regulation U.S. Navy courses and many months of training throughout the country over the past 4 years.

Having a father in the Navy inspired Paul’s interest in serving his country at a very young age. At 12, he took the first steps toward what will be a very successful career in the U.S. Navy by joining the U.S. Sea Cadet Corps. Through this program, Paul has been able to take on important responsibilities and learn the ropes of the United States Navy.

Chief Petty Officer Simmert is an exemplary young man and is highly deserving of this great honor and responsibility. I am most proud to have him serving his peers in this capacity. Now more than ever, we need young men like Paul to take the lead in protecting the freedoms that this great country was founded on for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the Members of the House of Representatives to join me in congratulating Chief Petty Officer Paul J. Simmert in receiving this prestigious award and thanking him for the contributions he makes to his country.

IN RECOGNITION OF AN INTER-
FAITH CELEBRATION OF
THANKSGIVING

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a group of congregations in my district that will come together to give thanks in the true spirit of Thanksgiving. These congregations are of different faiths, different sects and different practices. Nonetheless, they have in common a love for our country and gratitude to our Creator for bringing them or their forebears to a democratic country where civil rights and individual freedoms are protected. This inspired them to plan a joint service to give thanks.

Thanksgiving is a holiday that belongs to every American. It unites our country and embodies the principles upon which our great nation was founded. The first Thanksgiving is an account of immigrants arriving on a remote continent, launching a new life, surviving dangerous conditions, encountering a different culture, and sitting down with strangers to enjoy the bounty of this land. As waves of new Americans have found welcome here, they have embraced American values and joined in celebrating Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving symbolizes the bond that unites the very first immigrants with every subsequent generation of Americans. When we recreate the meal eaten at the first Thanksgiving, we remember the importance of sharing, kindness and tolerance, and we are grateful for the rich bounty offered us by this country. This is a land filled with plenty—fertile soil, rich resources and, most of all, liberty. We also recall, with sadness, that although the early immigrants were greeted with friendship by the native Americans, they reciprocated with hostility, greed and intolerance. Thanksgiving gives us an opportunity to be at our best, to welcome friends and family into our homes, and to recall those who are not as well off. Many Americans take time to feed the hungry in Thanksgiving celebrations at homeless shelters, soup kitchens and neighborhood civic organizations.

The Pilgrims arrived in the new world in November 1620, too late to plant crops. Of 110 men and women who arrived here from Europe, fewer than 50 survived the first hard winter. With help from a neighboring tribe, the Pilgrims learned how to cultivate local produce. In the fall they celebrated the harvest with members of the tribe. Over time, this harvest celebration became an institution. In 1817 New York State adopted Thanksgiving Day as an annual custom. By the middle of the 19th century many other states also celebrated a Thanksgiving Day. In 1863 President Abraham Lincoln appointed a national day of thanksgiving. Since then every subsequent President has issued a proclamation designating a day of Thanksgiving.

At dark times in our history the celebration of Thanksgiving has seemed especially poignant. For example, in 1942, London’s Westminster Abbey held its first secular service in nine centuries, hosting a Thanksgiving event for U.S. troops stationed in England. More than 3,500 people filled the church, reveling in singing “The Star Spangled Banner” and “America the Beautiful”. Everything that marked their differences—geography, religion, race—seemed insignificant in comparison to the things that united them and the liberties they had joined in battle to defend.

In times of tragedy, Thanksgiving has served to rally our nation. Six days after the assassination of President Kennedy, President Lyndon Johnson addressed the nation on Thanksgiving Day. He asked his fellow citizens to remain “determined that from this mid-night of tragedy we shall move toward a new American greatness.”

Mr. Speaker, I pay tribute to the congregations that honor the true spirit of Thanksgiving by setting aside the differences among their faiths and joining together to celebrate the liberties and freedoms we all treasure.