

I do not think we are headed in the right direction. I am going to submit for the RECORD an article that was in The New York Times last week indicating that Florida could be Florida again. In other words, the problems that we experienced in the 2000 election have not been corrected. It is a disservice to the people that we serve that we do not straighten out the problems with the elections, not just in Florida but all over this country; and we have not properly funded the program.

Also, let me mention the coup d'etat that took place a couple of weeks ago in Haiti. It is very unfortunate that this Bush administration has chosen to go in and take out a duly elected president. Just take him out. Just take him out. The poorest country in the western hemisphere. We have to make sure that the Haitian people get the assistance that they need from the super Bush administration, after going in and taking out the duly elected president.

And I would also like to comment on the recently announced bank merger that the Federal Reserve approved of the Bank of America Corporation and FleetBoston Financial Corporation merger.

I am concerned about the recent Bank of America-FleetBoston bank merger announced today, particularly since it went through with very little public input. What concerns me even more is that although Bank of America has made significant Community Reinvestment commitments to other states, I am disappointed that Bank of America did not ensure the state I represent, Florida, that it too will receive its fair share of resources for minority communities.

On February 16, in the City Hall of Orlando, Florida, I hosted a Public Hearing so that Bank of America could better understand its responsibility to make a difference in Florida's African-American, Asian and Hispanic communities. Many minority groups and activists from across Florida attended this hearing, along with local elected officials of Florida, and Congressman EDOLPHUS TOWNS of New York. The groups testified that significant Community Reinvestment dollars were necessary for home loans for minorities, the development of affordable housing, small business loans for minorities, procurement opportunities for minority businesses, community lending for minorities, and community investment for industrial, commercial and social facilities in minority communities. The Bank of America sent representatives to this hearing, but the pleas from the minority communities in Florida fell on deaf ears, and Florida was never promised a specific dollar amount for Community Reinvestment. Bank of America has shown the minority communities of New England and California great respect, but refuses to do the same for our Florida minority communities. It is imperative that the leadership of Bank of America meet immediately with minority leaders at a general forum to discuss the specifics of a Bank of America commitment for Florida.

I am concerned about what occurred in 1994, when Bank of America publicly announced its plans to initiate certain lending programs in the state of Hawaii for Native Hawaiians on Hawaiian Home Lands. The Bank of America publicly called these programs "commitments" but did not pledge these commitments to the Federal Reserve Board, nor did Bank of America fulfill its public commitments to Hawaii. The Federal Reserve has

stated that the enforceability of this third-party pledge is a matter outside of the Community Reinvestment Act, and to this day, Hawaii has been left without redress. How are we to trust that Florida will receive its share of Community Reinvestment Act money when Bank of America could not keep its word to Hawaii?

The Federal Reserve noted in its Order Approving the Merger of Bank Holding Companies, that there were requests for state-specific goals for certain loan products and programs, but that it viewed such third-party agreements as outside of the Community Reinvestment Act. I wholeheartedly disagree. The Board focuses on existing Community Reinvestment Act performance rather than promises of future activities, and anyhow, what type of organization does not have a plan for the future? My office was told that Bank of America has no plan for future Community Reinvestment activity in Florida or how much money would be spent in Florida—but not to worry. I think that this is a poor way to do business. Noting the experience that Hawaii had with Bank of America, I am wary of trusting that Bank of America has the needs of minority communities in Florida at heart.

HONORING THE AFGHAN AMERICAN CUISINE OF FREMONT, CALIFORNIA

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 2004

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to submit to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD an article that appears in the current issue of VIA Magazine, celebrating the culinary contributions of several Afghan American restaurateurs in my city of Fremont, California.

These establishments deserve praise, not only for satisfying many appetites with delectable food, but for enriching our community with their enterprise and important cultural gifts that make Fremont a better place to live.

I am honored to represent the largest Afghan American community in the nation and gladly invite my colleagues to come to California to enjoy, as the author of this article exclaims, "some of the best Afghan food and goods this side of Kabul." I couldn't agree more myself.

[From VIA Magazine, Mar.-Apr. 2004]

LITTLE AFGHANISTAN: DISCOVER THE FLAVORS OF KABUL IN THE BAY AREA

(By April Thompson)

Handmade Afghan ravioli and rugs in sleepy, suburban Fremont? The Northern California city is home to the nation's largest Afghan American community and some of the best Afghan food and goods this side of Kabul. Afghanistan's cuisine has been influenced by Russia, India, China, and Persia, and its dishes star the rich, sweet, and tart tastes of cardamom, cilantro, rose water, and homemade yogurt.

The storefronts on Fremont Boulevard may look plain, but inside their shelves are stocked with pomegranate juice, sugared chickpeas, apple tobacco, and other goods imported from Bombay, Cairo, and numerous points between.

At the Pamir Food Mart, you can buy long loaves of Afghan naan warm from the oven. Bring a hearty appetite and sense of adventure to Salang Pass, one of four Afghan res-

taurants on the boulevard. Don't miss gabili pilau, Afghanistan's national dish of baked brown rice with lamb and raisins; aushak, ravioli stuffed with leeks and spices; or the burani kadu, soft pumpkin sauteed with garlic and cardamom. Across the street, carnivores should check out the De Afghanan Kabob House, where every plate features skewered meat.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DENNIS A. CARDOZA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 2004

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker on rollcall Nos. 54, 55, 56, and 57, had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

A PROCLAMATION HONORING JEFF FREEMAN AND NICOLE PALYA

HON. ROBERT W. NEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 2004

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker: Whereas, Jeff Freeman and Nicole Palya have decided to dedicate their lives to each other; and

Whereas, Jeff and Nicole have shown the love and commitment necessary to live a long and beautiful life together; and

Whereas, Jeff and Nicole have chosen to share their special day with friends and family;

Therefore, I join with the Members of Congress and their staff in congratulating Jeff Freeman and Nicole Palya on the occasion of their marriage.

CONGRATULATING THE ST. MICHAEL-ALBERTVILLE KNIGHTS IN THEIR VICTORY IN THE MINNESOTA CLASS AA STATE WRESTLING TOURNAMENT

HON. MARK R. KENNEDY

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 2004

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the St. Michael-Albertville Knights on their victory in the Minnesota Class AA State Wrestling Tournament. This is the Knights' seventh consecutive and 14th overall state tournament appearance, and their third championship.

Coached by Gregg Greeno, the Knights finished a perfect 32-0 this season, winning all of their meets by at least 10 points. This was truly a team effort; they rose to the challenge in big meets and avoided injuries during the season.

Individually, the Knights qualified 12 of a possible 14 individuals for the state tournament. Two wrestlers, 112-pounder Mike Thorn and 160-pounder Chas Betts, won individual championships and six others finished in the top six.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the students, coaches and fans from St. Michael-Albertville on their championship season. It's a great tribute to their hard work, dedication and overall