

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

TRIBUTE TO GREATER UNIVERSAL BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 30, 2004

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to pay tribute to Greater Universal Baptist Church on the occasion of their 50th anniversary.

The Greater Universal Baptist Church was established in the Bronx, New York, in 1954 and immediately became a cornerstone of the community. For fifty years this church has served not only as a place of worship but as a community institution where individuals could build relationships with neighbors and develop skills necessary for success in everyday life. Whether through after school programs, community festivals, clothing distributions or movie nights at the church, the Greater Universal Baptist Church has found ways to engage the people of the Bronx.

In 1998, the church founded the Community Development Corporation in an effort to develop the area surrounding the church. As a result of their efforts and those of the Atlantic Development Group, 204 units of housing and three community centers will be added to the community's landscape in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot say enough about the efforts of the Greater Universal Baptist Church to uplift the people of the Bronx. Through various activities, including feeding the homeless and holding community based seminars for job development, health care and spiritual enrichment, they help the people of my district enjoy a higher standard of living.

For fifty years of service to people of the Bronx, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the Greater Universal Baptist Church and in wishing them another prosperous fifty years.

HONORING ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 30, 2004

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the State of Israel on the 56th anniversary of its establishment. The brave men and women who fought against all odds for the establishment of the State of Israel were determined to build a prosperous, democratic land where western ideals of freedom and tolerance could live. Now, in 2004, Israel stands out more clearly than ever as the ideal its neighbors should aspire towards.

I am proud to have visited Israel, and to have seen firsthand the bravery and steadfastness of its people. I look forward to the day when Israel's independence day is celebrated around the world as a celebration of the val-

ues all people of good will share, and a tribute to the Israel of yesterday, today, and the future.

Mr. Speaker, I also ask my colleagues to join me in commending the Jewish Federation of Las Vegas for sponsoring Las Vegas' Israel Independence Day Celebration on Sunday, May 2, 2004. It is my hope that America's citizens will mark this occasion and demonstrate their support for the U.S.-Israeli relationship with similar events across the country.

A TRIBUTE IN HONOR OF TOM MACNAUGHTON, DIRECTOR OF THE LENAWEE COUNTY DEPARTMENT ON AGING, ADRIAN, MICHIGAN

HON. NICK SMITH

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 30, 2004

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Tom MacNaughton, director of the Lenawee County Department on Aging, and to recognize his dedication to the senior citizens of Lenawee and Monroe counties and the Foster Grandparents program. Tom has given 20 years to the Foster Grandparents program and has helped improve the lives of countless seniors and at-risk youth in Lenawee and Monroe counties.

Tom is passionate about everything he does. Whether it's running a marathon or helping the senior citizens in the community, Tom's commitment to excellence is clearly evident. His hard work has helped the senior citizens of Lenawee and Monroe counties live independently with dignity for as long as possible.

We live in a time when many children lack extended families and seniors face many challenges while living independently. The Foster Grandparents program matches these at-risk children with low-income seniors in a win-win program that fosters caring, compassion, and confidence. The foster grandparents help the children with schoolwork and act as a necessary source of positive reinforcement and attention, while earning money that helps them live independent lives.

In 1982, the State of Michigan allocated additional funding to the Lenawee Foster Grandparent program. While serving as director, Tom MacNaughton used the funding to expand the program into Monroe County. Tom's diligence in working with the local school districts and securing local funding has greatly contributed to the program's success.

For these reasons, I rise to honor Tom MacNaughton of Adrian, Michigan. May his actions be an example for all.

A TRIBUTE TO ANTHONY FORMAN

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 30, 2004

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor of Anthony Forman in recognition of his important work as a community activist in East New York.

Tony, as he is known to his family and friends, grew up in the community of East New York in Brooklyn. A graduate of Thomas Jefferson High School, he went on to receive a B.A. Degree in theater and an M.S. Degree and Advanced Certificate in guidance and counseling from the School of Education at Brooklyn College. As part of his academic training in the theater, Tony appeared in several Off Broadway stage productions and worked as a professional model. While pursuing his degrees from the School of Education, he designed a community-based training program for ex-offenders who lack education or job skills. Tony is also a dedicated husband and family man with three sons.

Through his work as the office manager for my Pennsylvania Avenue district office, Tony has continued his focus on at-risk young adults. He is a Community Action Board member with the Department of Youth and Community Development. He has also established the East New York Scholarship Fund to assist at-risk youth from low income, resource-deprived communities like East New York. Moreover, because Tony is bilingual in Spanish and English, his work with constituents in need of immigration assistance has been invaluable to the community.

In addition to his community work, Tony is an accomplished entrepreneur. He is currently President and Chief Executive Officer for his company, NUBN Prince Enterprises, a partner in Trucomm Construction Company, and a consultant for KRL Group, LLC and the Crescent Consulting firm. These businesses are all based on the principle of empowering one's community through "TCI," total community involvement.

Mr. Speaker, Anthony Forman has been truly committed to improving the quality of life for his fellow residents in the East New York community. As such, he is more than worthy of receiving our recognition today, and I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring this truly remarkable community activist.

TRIBUTE TO THE BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S HALL OF FAME 10K RUN

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 30, 2004

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, it is with joy that I rise today to once again pay tribute to

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

Bronx Community College, which will hold its 26th Anniversary Hall of Fame 10K Run on Saturday, May 1, 2004.

The Hall of Fame 10K Run was founded in 1978 by Bronx Community College's third president, Dr. Roscoe C. Brown, and today continues to be an event of great significance. Each year, amateur and professional runners alike from all five of New York's boroughs and the entire tri-state area come together to run in the Bronx. Participants include teams from municipal agencies along with faculty, staff and students of Bronx Community College and other nearby schools.

It is indeed one of the Bronx's most anticipated yearly events and has contributed to a strong sense of community within the Bronx. The race also places an emphasis on physical fitness and achieving athletic goals. Historically, its mission has been to highlight the Hall of Fame for Great Americans, a national institution dedicated to those who have helped make America great.

The 10K race tradition continues under the stewardship of Bronx Community College's current president, Dr. Carolyn G. Williams. Dr. Williams has endorsed the race since her inauguration and has not only continued the tradition started by Dr. Brown, to promote physical fitness and highlight higher education, but has added raising awareness of important community issues.

I can recall the high level of energy and community involvement each of the 20 plus years I ran in the Hall of Fame 10K race. The race has attracted well over 400 runners each year and I am sure this year will see an even larger number of participants.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in honoring the individuals and participants who make the Bronx Community College's Annual Hall of Fame 10K Run possible.

INTRODUCING THE FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT OF 2004

HON. MAJOR R. OWENS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 30, 2004

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, today I am joining with 75 of my colleagues to introduce the "Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2004"—legislation that will give hard-working Americans a much needed raise. These minimum wage employees—many of whom work full-time, year-round—earn no more than \$5.15 an hour. The vast majority do not even receive enough pay in their pockets to lift them above the poverty line.

According to a very stark alarming report, 48 percent of all African American men in New York City are unemployed. Without a job, they do not earn any wages. This bill is not the vehicle to help give the unemployed jobs, but it underscores the importance of increasing the minimum wage. How can we allow full-time minimum wage workers to live in poverty? Last time I looked, we were not a third world nation. Those with jobs at the bottom of the pay scale deserve fair compensation for their labor.

More than a quarter of the constituents I represent in Brooklyn are minimum wage workers. They include the very same child care and nursing home workers, dish washers

and laundry workers, taxi drivers, hotel clerks and mail room workers everyone relies upon. Far too many of them are single mothers or fathers, with children to support. According to a recent Russell Sage Foundation study, they are included among a staggering 29 percent of all working families in America who cannot earn enough to keep a basic living standard. That means that close to one out of every three working families in America are just not making ends meet. Some are barely hanging on.

Why do the Republicans continue to nickel and dime these hard-working Americans in low-wage jobs? The last increase in the minimum wage was in 1997. This Democratic bill would give them a pay raise in 3 easy steps: from \$5.85 an hour in the two months following enactment, to \$6.45 an hour a year after that. On the following year's anniversary, the minimum wage would finally reach \$7.00 an hour.

Why do Republicans reject this bill, giving workers at the bottom of the pay scale a much needed raise? Republicans tout tired old arguments, such as "only teens work for the minimum wage;" or, "it will hurt small businesses and the economy." In truth, recent history proves exactly the reverse. Once the dust settled after the 1997 increase in the minimum wage, more than 10 million new jobs were created and over half of them (6 million) were in minimum wage service jobs.

The dividing line between the political parties could not be greater on this issue. There's a saying—"No Shame in My Game"—that minimum-wage workers use sometimes. It is a kind of shorthand that signals a tough and resilient work ethic among the working poor, despite the low wages, lack of benefits and poor conditions. These workers are absolutely correct: there is no shame in their work ethic and daily efforts. The only shame is in the Congressional game, if the Republicans continue to block this bill and our efforts to give minimum wage workers a long-delayed, essential raise.

TRIBUTE TO SHERRY ANN LITTMAN: A COMMUNITY TREASURER

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 30, 2004

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the life and recognize the accomplishments of a truly great lady, Mrs. Sherry Ann Littman, who passed away on April 11.

Sherry Littman can perhaps best be described as a person of untiring energy and a great big heart, who also had a strong ethic of community service and cared deeply about the opportunities, welfare and well-being of other people. She was an activist and a respected advocate for her Eastern Shores community in the City of North Miami Beach, but her interests extended far beyond the city limits.

When Sherry Littman saw a need, particularly among people without the resources to address that need themselves; she flung herself into the task. One example is hunger and malnutrition. Almost 25 years ago, when Sherry and her husband, former North Miami Beach Councilman Jules Littman, saw gaps in

the social services network in South Florida, they founded a nonprofit organization known today as Stop The Hunger. Today, Stop The Hunger serves a half-million meals a month to children and adults all over Florida.

I know I speak for our entire community in extending our heartfelt sympathies to Sherry's husband, Jules, her daughter, Phyllis Diskin, her son, Paul Levin and her four grandchildren.

No one whose life was touched by Sherry Littman could ever forget her. What is even more remarkable about her, however, is that she will be dearly missed by countless thousands of people who never met her, but whose lives were nonetheless touched by her life and work.

CONGRESSIONAL UKRAINIAN CAUCUS

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 30, 2004

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to request that the following letter be inserted in the RECORD.

CONGRESSIONAL UKRAINIAN CAUCUS,
Washington, DC, March 26, 2004.

Hon. VIKTOR YANUKOVYCH,
Prime Minister of Ukraine.

DEAR PRIME MINISTER YANUKOVYCH: As members of the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus and long time supporters of Ukraine's independence and economic growth, we are writing to express our concern regarding an investment issue that involves U.S. taxpayer funds.

The Congress established the Western NIS Enterprise Fund (WNISEF) as a private equity fund to invest in small- and medium-sized private enterprises in Ukraine (Moldova and Belarus) in 1994. WNISEF was capitalized initially with \$150 million by the U.S. Government, with the key aspect of spurring foreign investment in Ukraine. Since its foundation, the Fund has fulfilled its mission as envisioned by Congress, making cumulative investment commitments of more than \$73 million in 22 companies in Ukraine, as well as \$3.8 small business loans to 67 Ukrainian small businesses. The Fund has attracted additional capital to these businesses of well over the amount it has invested itself.

However, these accomplishments are now at risk of being overshadowed by an investment dispute that threatens Ukraine's foreign investment reputation and U.S.-Ukrainian economic relations.

WNISEF recently filed an arbitration case against Ukraine arising out of Ukraine's violation of the Fund's rights under the U.S.-Ukraine Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT). It is a disturbing investment issue implicating the fundamental value of rule of law, contract and treaty obligation enforcement.

The case involves a WNISEF loan to the Ukrainian company, Sonola JSC (Kirovohrad). After Sonola defaulted on payments of the loan, WNISEF sought to collect the loan and, as in accordance with the dispute settlement language of the loan agreement, filed a claim for arbitration with the American Arbitration Association, New York, USA. The arbitrator, and subsequently the New York courts, upheld WNISEF's claim against Sonola of \$3.8 million.

Unfortunately, WNISEF has been unable to enforce the international arbitration award in Ukraine's courts—twice filing a petition

for recognition and enforcement of the award to the Kirovohrad Oblast Court of Appeal during 2001-2002. The Supreme Court of Ukraine has refused the Fund's appeal, casting doubts as to the fulfillment by Ukraine of its obligations under international agreements.

WNISEF has now been forced to file an action against Ukraine to the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (Washington, D.C.), alleging that the actions of the Ukrainian judiciary have violated international law, including Ukraine's obligations under two important international agreements to which Ukraine is party.

We would like to ensure that the Fund is treated fairly under the terms of the U.S.-Ukraine Bilateral Investment Treaty. If WNISEF is not provided basic protection under Ukrainian law, how can other potential foreign investors have any confidence in Ukraine's foreign investment climate?

The Fund has repeatedly expressed its willingness to resolve the dispute by way of negotiations and reaching an amicable agreement. In order to prevent the potential negative effects for Ukraine due to a hearing of this case at the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, we urge you to facilitate a prompt resolution of this dispute.

Reducing investor risk and increasing investor confidence are the keys to attracting additional foreign capital to Ukraine, which will in turn create jobs, modernize factories and bring numerous other benefits to the Ukrainian people.

It is our hope that American companies doing business in Ukraine maintain full confidence in the Ukrainian system and continue to contribute to its economic development. A prompt resolution of the WNISEF investment dispute will enhance U.S. confidence in Ukraine's commitment to foreign investment protection.

Sincerely,

MARCY KAPTUR,
Co-Chair.
CURT WELDON,
Co-Chair.

RECOGNIZING CLARE ADKIN, JR.

HON. DAVID E. PRICE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 30, 2004

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Clare Adkin, Jr., for being recognized as one of five finalists in the National Council on Economic Education (NCEE)/NASDAQ National Teaching Awards.

These awards are presented to teachers in grades 6-12 for creative, original and effective efforts in applying economic content and reasoning skills to instruction on market economies, personal finance, financial markets, entrepreneurship, and the capital formation process. Since 1949, NCEE has developed and implemented programs that equip teachers to get economic and personal finance education into the classroom. The NASDAQ Stock Market Educational Foundation, whose goal is to expand understanding of capital formation and financial markets, sponsors the National Teaching Awards.

Mr. Adkin was chosen for this honor because of the innovative teaching technique he developed to illustrate and explain various complex economic concepts such as opportunity cost, diminishing marginal utility, and ra-

tional ignorance. Using five-by-eight index cards, Mr. Adkin created "Economic Concept Cards," which provide a definition or explanation of an economic concept as well as a narrative description or example and a sample question demonstrating the student's mastery of the concept. After developing the cards, students use them to prepare for tests, including the AP Economics exam, and many students keep the cards to use to study for college economics classes.

At the Cary Academy, Mr. Adkin taught Advanced Principles of Economics, Basic Economics, Great Court Cases, and The Sixties: the Tumultuous Decade. He also served as chair of the Cary Academy History Department. In 2003, Mr. Adkin retired from teaching after a 39-year career.

I am pleased to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Adkin for this national achievement. It is a fitting recognition for someone who devoted nearly four decades to teaching, and who developed effective and engaging techniques for teaching students about economics.

INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY RIGHTS: THE PROPOSED U.N. CONVENTION

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 30, 2004

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, please insert the attached statement into today's CONGRESSIONAL RECORD under Extensions of Remarks.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on March 30th, the Congressional Human Rights Caucus held a groundbreaking Members' Briefing entitled, "International Disability Rights: The Proposed UN Convention." This discussion of the global situation of people with disabilities was intended to help establish disability rights issues as an integral part of the general human rights discourse. The briefing brought together the human rights community and the disability rights community, and it raised awareness in Congress of the need to protect disability rights under international law to the same extent as other human rights through a binding UN convention on the rights of people with disabilities.

Our expert witnesses included Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Mark P. Lagon; the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Ecuador to the United Nations, Ambassador Luis Gallegos; the United Nations Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Johan Schölvinn; the distinguished former Attorney General of the United States, former Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and former Governor of Pennsylvania, the Honorable Dick Thornburgh; the President of the National Organization on Disability (NOD), Alan A. Reich; Kathy Martinez, a member of the National Council on Disabilities (NCD); and a representative of the United States International Council on Disabilities (USCID) and Executive Director of Mental Disability Rights International, Eric Rosenthal.

As I had announced earlier, I intend to place the important statements of our witnesses in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, so that all of my colleagues may profit from their expertise, and I ask that the statement of Mr. Alan Reich be placed at this point in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Mr. ALAN A. REICH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I come before you today in my capacity as Chairman of the World Committee on Disability. There are 600 million men, women, and children with disabilities in the world. Disability knows no political boundaries. Eighty per cent live in developing countries and are doubly disadvantaged by poverty and hunger. The numbers are increasing dramatically. Population growth, war injuries, landmines, HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, disease, substance abuse, accidents, and environmental damage all contribute to this increase. Prejudice abounds. Many are consigned to the shadows of beggary. Anyone can join the disability community in an instant. No one is immune.

While economic and social conditions vary among countries, all of us with disabilities are united by the pursuit of a common goal: full and equal participation in the life of our respective societies. And, we all yearn to end the hurtful discrimination that exists in all our countries. Is not access to employment, education, religious worship and basic services our human right? Surely it is. Mr. Chairman, I commend you and the Human Rights Caucus of our Congress for recognizing disability as a human rights issue and for calling on our nation, which consistently and forcefully provides leadership on human rights issues, to advance the United Nations Convention on Disability Rights.

Disability is a silent crisis; it has not received the attention that this body and the United Nations itself have historically accorded other human rights issues. Indeed, we ourselves shaped the United Nations as the global forum for human rights law and policy. The time has come to end the marginalization of disability in the quest for universal human rights. As president of the National Organization on Disability, I thank you for this significant contribution.

We also are most thankful to those nations who have pressed this cause as an issue of human rights within the U.N. Paradoxically and unfortunately, the United States cannot yet be counted among those countries that have come forward to lead this effort. This is evidenced not only by the U.S. position on the Convention, but also—in a most visible way—by the composition of the U.S. delegation to the U.N., which unlike the delegations of so many other countries, does not include a single individual with a disability!

It is very important that the United States take an active leadership role in securing an effective U.N. Convention. It is not sufficient for us to be a passive participant, any more than it would be for Ecuador, whose distinguished U.N. Permanent Representative Ambassador Luis Gallegos is with us today. Ambassador Gallegos' own involvement in disability matters came about through his nation's winning the World Committee's \$50,000 Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award two years ago. He then quickly assumed leadership of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee for the U.N. Convention, and it has been a privilege to work with him as he has generated support throughout the world and has guided this endeavor within the U.N. Its successful adoption by the general assembly and the world most certainly will be attributable to Ambassador Gallegos and his dedicated hard work.

Mr. Chairman, for more than a quarter century the United Nations slowly but progressively has recognized the need to confront the disability crisis and has taken important actions. The General Assembly in 1976 proclaimed 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons. At the end of the year, I had the privilege of addressing the General Assembly, the first person in a wheelchair ever to do so, to urge adoption of

the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons. This was followed by the Decade of Disabled Persons and the development of the U.N. Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities of Disabled Persons. But these efforts, while important, have been non-binding.

A binding instrument, or, a U.N. Convention, that states can sign and ratify is the next natural step, and it would be a travesty if the United States, which has been at the forefront of the United Nations human rights and disability efforts were not at the forefront of this one. People with disabilities in our country have benefited from the United Nations leadership. Our own National Organization on Disability, of which I have served as President since its founding in 1982, is a direct outgrowth of the United Nations initiative. Literally thousands of national and local organizations throughout the world have come into being and continue to derive their stimulus from the United Nations' core concern. The U.N. stimulates and nurtures interactions among those with disabilities and has helped enormously in solidifying our cause as a global one. Certainly, progress must come about within nations, but the international communication and interaction has provided wonderful opportunities for the exchange of ideas and learning centered on shared values. This International Convention will, as other United Nations instrumentalities before it have done, encourage and stimulate these interactions and that will be very worthwhile for those with disabilities and their family members.

Intensified international communication in the important area of disability, as we witness every day, is good for Americans with disabilities and for our organizations—just as I know our participation benefits our counterparts abroad. This ongoing dialogue and sharing in this area of common interest helps create a climate conducive to active diplomacy in other more political areas of concern. It generates mutual understanding that is so much in need in our world today.

It is incomprehensible that the United States would not seize the opportunity in this non-controversial area of common interest, an area in which we are acknowledged world leader, to ensure the best possible Convention that reflects our principles and values we cherish.

Continued United Nations progress for our field of humanity is an economic, social, and humanitarian imperative. The eyes of the world are upon us. Like the United Nations World Programme of Action before it, the U.N. Convention on Disability Rights will be a beacon of hope for people with disabilities and for all mankind.

Mr. Chairman, I have written President Bush urging that he and his administration vigorously support this Convention at the United Nations. I have urged him to support in all possible ways H. Con. Res. 169. I request your permission to include in the record this letter in its entirety along with my remarks here today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Letter to President George W. Bush]

MARCH 31, 2004.

Hon. GEORGE W. BUSH, *President of the United States*,

WASHINGTON, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: Shortly after taking office, on February 1, 2001, you announced the New Freedom Initiative and expressed your strong commitment to improving the lives of America's 54 million citizens with disabilities. I recall well how proud I was to be on the platform with you that day as you announced your plans to bring to reality the hopes and dreams of our constituency.

The entire world has benefited greatly from America's leadership as our nation has

set the pace for the world through our legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and our leadership in the United Nations of ongoing international disability initiatives. Thanks to this commitment, we are looked to by the world, and especially by its 600 million men, women, and children with disabilities, for spirited leadership in this area of concern.

I therefore write to respectfully request that you continue our nation's world leadership in the area of disability by instructing the U.S. Departments of State and Justice to advance aggressively the work in which our nation and many others are engaged presently at the United Nations to develop a U.N. Convention on Disability Rights. Many other U.N. member nations are wondering why the United States, as a long-time leader in this area of concern (as you and your father have asserted and demonstrated), is not pursuing development of this Convention.

There are humanitarian and economic reasons why America should be out in front on this issue. Because the world's disabled are highly marginalized as a distinct minority as well as within all other minorities, they need America's and the U.N.'s help. The U.N. Convention will encourage action among governments and non-governmental organizations everywhere that will have a profound impact over time. People with disabilities around the world will benefit from America's commitment and example. We Americans with disabilities will continue to benefit greatly from the interactions and sharing of experience stimulated by the Convention.

The United Nations and most members regard disability as a human rights issue. America cannot afford to forfeit its avowed leadership as the champion of human rights in the world, and backing this initiative would be a wonderful expression of our human rights concerns.

Please, Mr. President, direct your Administration team to take a positive, aggressive leadership role in bringing about the U.N. Convention on Disability Rights. I also request that you ensure that the U.S. delegation at the U.N. include people with disabilities themselves to maximize its effectiveness. I am sure you have heard our cry, "nothing about us without us." We need to be at the table.

Finally, the House of Representatives International Relations Committee has recognized the importance and value of such a Convention by voting H. Con. Res. 169 out of committee unanimously. It is currently awaiting scheduling for the floor. We support this resolution and the U.N. Convention itself. We respectfully urge you to seize this opportunity for the good of our nation and for people with disabilities everywhere.

With all best wishes,

Respectfully yours,

ALAN A. REICH,
Chairman.

MARRIAGE PENALTY TAX BILL

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 30, 2004

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, when a couple plans to marry, it is a time of anticipation, joy, and yes, stress. There is much to think about, to plan for, and to organize. But when a couple is finally standing at the altar, they should not be thinking about paying more in taxes. When the marriage penalty tax was in effect, there is evidence that couples were thinking just that: many couples stayed unmarried for

tax purposes, and others even tried to game the system by divorcing each December and remarrying each January. Unless they went to great lengths to avoid marriage altogether, many couples were walloped with the marriage penalty at tax time.

The marriage penalty did not always exist. When the Federal Government first levied an income tax in 1913, all taxpayers filed individual tax returns, and the rate schedules did not differentiate between singles and married couples. By basing a married couple's federal income tax entirely on the separate income of each spouse, the original code taxed married couples no differently than it taxed single taxpayers.

Created in 1969, the marriage penalty caused many married couples to pay more in taxes than the sum of what they would have paid as unmarried individuals filing separately. In recent years, it punished married couples where both spouses worked with an average tax penalty of \$1,100, while giving couples where only one spouse worked a marriage bonus. By making the repeal of the marriage penalty permanent, we will allow 70,000 working families in my district—and 810,000 in New Jersey—to use their savings for mortgage payments, car payments, college payments, childcare, or other needed expenses. It will be beneficial to the New Jersey economy.

This vote is the sixth in a series of votes over my time in Congress to remove the marriage penalty. I have always voted for its repeal. In fact, several years ago, I voted to override the former President's veto of it. Simply put, Americans have rejected the idea that our tax laws should make it more expensive to be married than to be single.

Unfortunately, the Republican leadership has made a botch of tax policy in this country. The Tax Code remains burdensome, unwieldy, and in places, unfair. Some Americans pay excessive and unfair taxes relative to other Americans. The unfairness is glaringly obvious. It should be fixed.

I believe, as many do, that tax cuts should first go to the middle-class. Not only do middle-class tax cuts ease the tax burden on the group that feels it most, but they also deliver more economic stimulus than tax cuts targeted to the wealthiest 1 percent. Through middle-class tax cuts, we can help families in New Jersey and around the country provide for their families' healthcare, education, housing, and other priorities.

The marriage penalty is one of the only parts of the Republican tax package that can fairly be described as a middle-class tax cut. That is why I support its repeal, even though I do not support the broader budgetary approach that has taken our country back down the road of deficits as far as the eye can see. Generally speaking, tax policy has a unique role in the American political system: it is perhaps where the government and the citizen interact most directly. Because the marriage penalty seems illogical and capricious, it makes the whole government seem illogical and capricious. The repeal was passed in 2001, and it should be sustained.

Of course, I am disappointed that this legislation is not offset with other revenue or savings. This repeal could have been done with a higher priority placed on balancing the other side of the ledger, but the Republican leadership is more interested in symbolism than fiscal responsibility. Still, although I do not support—and have voted against—the overall

Bush tax cuts because they are skewed to benefit the wealthy, the marriage penalty should not be allowed to return. In accomplishing this victory for married couples and working families, I invite my colleagues to begin immediately to revise their overall budget so that it responsibly and effectively meets America's needs and priorities.

HONORING BLUES LEGEND
"GATEMOUTH" MOORE

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 30, 2004

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize an African-American

pioneer, 90-year-old blues singer Rev. Arnold Dwight "Gatemouth" Moore.

Nicknamed "Gatemouth" because of his loud singing and speaking voice, Arnold Dwight Moore paved the way for blues. As a boy growing up on world famous Beale Street in Memphis, TN, he was influenced by the African-American culture and heritage that made up the streets and music that was a result of the day to day existence of individuals who lived there. The pride of Beale Street and student of blues was a vocalist at the Elk's, better known as the Blues Bowl.

Moore recorded his first record in 1941 and wrote such songs as "Somebody's Got to Go," "I Ain't Mad at You," "Pretty Baby," and "Did You Ever Love a Woman?" which was later recorded by B.B. King and Rufus Thomas.

Gatemouth lead the way for blues through his firsts. Moore was the first blues singer to sing at Carnegie Hall; the first to travel with W.C. Handy to New York City; first to sing at the segregated Peabody Hotel's Roof Garden; first to sing in many halls around the country, including The Apollo in New York, The Regal in Chicago, the Chicago Civic Center, The Music Hall in Detroit, the Howard Theatre in Washington, DC, and The Royal in Baltimore, MD.

Arnold Dwight "Gatemouth" Moore, listed in the Who's Who in Blues in America, is much more than one of the many blues singers throughout history. He is a true legendary pioneer of blues.