

Mr. Speaker, in a series of meetings arranged last week by Ms. Scallon, I met with representatives of scores of U.S. corporations deeply concerned over the potential impact of modifications or discontinuance of the "dual gateway" policy on their operations. Approximately half of U.S. investment in Ireland is made in the western part of the country. Many of these corporations have made sizable investments in western Ireland and are keen to maintain their presence in the region, but would be forced to reevaluate their positions should Shannon Airport's status be downgraded.

These business executives estimate that 40,000 jobs on the western corridor from north of Galway to south of Limerick are directly affected by Shannon Airport. An additional 80,000 jobs are indirectly affected by Shannon operations according to these business representatives. I also met with local leaders along the west coast who were united in their concern over the likely economic and social consequences of a downgrading of Shannon Airport's status. Business leaders from County Donegal warned of the ripple effect their region would feel from such a change.

The potential threat posed by possible changes to the "dual gateway" policy have galvanized U.S. business executives representing many different sizes and types of enterprises along the west coast to speak out with a single voice on this matter. They highlight the fact that Shannon Airport is a major access point to and from the U.S. and European cities necessary to sustain and promote development and growth in the region.

Mr. Speaker, for nearly six decades Shannon Airport has served as a vital gateway for the United States to Ireland and beyond. Indeed, many Americans, including me, trace their family roots back generations to counties along the rugged western coast of Ireland. Hundreds of thousands of American tourists pass through this gateway each year. An estimated 140 U.S. corporations have come to rely upon Shannon Airport as a vital gateway to doing business in western Ireland.

RECOGNITION OF UPCOMING ELECTIONS IN BELARUS

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 2004

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to again bring attention to the upcoming elections in Belarus.

The current leader, Aleksandr Lukashenko told the National Assembly on April 14th, "The new parliament that is to be elected this fall should include representatives of all groups aside from "businessmen, merchants and capitalists."

At a time when Belarus desperately needs business and entrepreneurs, it is appalling that the Belarussian leader would declare that candidates with business backgrounds or professions would not be allowed to run or to serve in the Belarus Assembly.

In response to this repressive political environment, we need to focus our efforts on helping to promote the institutional survival of the country's democratic political organizations and helping their leaders and activists prepare for political and public policy.

The important thing for the current regime in Belarus to understand is that Washington and the world are watching.

HONORING FLAG CITY USA

HON. MICHAEL G. OXLEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 2004

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the official designation of my hometown of Findlay, Ohio, as Flag City USA.

Findlay's spirited celebration of Flag Day dates back to 1968, when an area businessman shared his passion for Old Glory with the community. John B. Cooke, a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, determined that every household in Findlay should display the flag on June 14. Speaking to industry and community groups throughout Findlay in support of this idea, he spearheaded a successful effort to purchase 14,000 flags. Area Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Camp Fire Girls distributed these flags to area households and businesses.

My predecessor in Congress and former boss, Jackson Betts, recognized this achievement in a speech to the House on June 12, 1968. "The strong patriotism of residents of my district," he said, "has rarely been better exhibited than the present project which will make Findlay, Ohio, Flag City USA on June 14, 1968." Congressman Betts also contributed a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol to Findlay's Flag Day display.

The event was heralded in the House by my immediate predecessor in Congress, Tennyson Guyer. On May 7, 1974, Congressman Guyer introduced a joint resolution to designate Findlay as Flag City USA, citing the 1968 Flag Day event and the dedication of a plaque in Findlay to our armed forces on that day. This Friday, May 7, I will join my constituents at an event in Findlay hosted by the Hancock/Flag City Heritage Commission to commemorate the 30th anniversary of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Flag City know that Old Glory is far more than a piece of cloth. This point was most clearly illustrated in 1989, after the Supreme Court upheld flag burning as a protected act. More than 2,000 area residents gathered in Findlay's Dorney Plaza to celebrate our flag end express their strong opposition to this ruling. I was proud to join them at this event, where they presented me with a petition containing more than 5,000 signatures objecting to the Court's act.

Our flag has never gone out of fashion in Findlay, but the post-September 11 era has brought even more poignancy to the banners readily seen throughout our city. They remind us of the debt we owe to the brave men and women who fight in defense of our freedom—both those protecting our homeland domestically and those engaged on our behalf across the globe.

As I go to work each day and see Old Glory flying over the Capitol dome, I reflect on our enduring freedoms celebrated each day in Findlay and in towns and villages throughout the nation. Our flag remains the most visible symbol of our nation and of the liberties we have too often taken for granted. It is a uni-

fying sign in times of peace and war, renewing pride in America and continued hope for our future.

It has been three decades since we were officially named Flag City USA, but Findlay's spirit of patriotism has shined brightly throughout its history. I salute the hard work of the Hancock/Flag City Heritage Commission for coordinating this commemoration, and thank all of the fine citizens of our community who maintain the pride of Flag City USA. They remind us that ours is the greatest nation on earth, and that our city is brimming with the American spirit.

NATIONAL TEACHER DAY

HON. CHARLES W. STENHOLM

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 2004

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I want to take time to recognize an important group of individuals who are being honored today, Tuesday, May 4, National Teacher Day.

Growing up in Stamford, my own teachers played an important role in my upbringing. It is one reason why I chose to become a teacher myself.

Since starting out as a vocational agriculture teacher, education has been a passion of mine. That is why I now spend so much time in our schools. And I certainly realize the important role that teachers play in our children's lives. Our teachers go above and beyond the call of duty time after time to help their students learn and be successful.

I'm happy we take this day to honor those who have chosen to enter this profession. It sometimes can be a thankless job. But it is rewarding to see the kids grow and mature before your very eyes—even after they have left your classroom.

I am pleased to cosponsor several pieces of legislation that support America's teachers, including:

The LEARN Act (H.R. 1643), legislation that would provide a \$2,000 tax credit to teachers and principals who work in low-income schools.

Student loan forgiveness legislation (H.R. 1751, H.R. 934 and H.R. 2811), designed to result in the recruitment of new and talented teachers to educate the next generation of students. These bills would provide student loan forgiveness up to \$17,500 to a teacher who teaches for five years in a low-income school, rural school or in high-demand subjects such as mathematics, science, special education, foreign languages and bilingual education.

The Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 594), which would end unfair discrimination against Texas teachers and other public employees who currently are denied the Social Security survivors benefit. I strongly support this legislation, and have signed a discharge petition that would bring H.R. 594 to the House floor for a vote.

As a former educator and grandfather of three, I will continue to be concerned about providing the best educational opportunities to all American children. Yet, the successful education of this nation's children is inextricably tied to the quality of the teachers educating them. We must provide the proper financial