Art Stamper is the father of two sons and one daughter and husband of Kay Kawaguchi Stamper. Mr. Speaker, Art Stamper passed away on Sunday, January 23, 2005, but will always be remembered for his endless contributions to society and especially that of Bluegrass music.

COMMENDING PALESTINIAN PEOPLE FOR HOLDING FREE AND FAIR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

SPEECH OF

HON. HENRY J. HYDE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2005

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H. Res. 56, ''commending the Palestinian people for holding recent elections.'' This resolution is a reflection of our support for the Palestinian people and their determination to build a viable Palestinian State based on freedom and empowered democratic institutions.

I strongly support our President when he stated, ''The United States stands ready to help the Palestinian people realize their aspirations.'' The election of President Mahmoud Abbas is an encouraging step in that direction.

The election of new Palestinian leadership and Labor's entry into the Israeli Government have changed the circumstances and expectations surrounding the Middle East peace process. The newly elected Palestinian leadership and Israel should take advantage of this opportunity and implement concrete steps to support the emergence of a viable, credible Palestinian state.

The United States has a vital national security interest in a Middle East in which two states, Israel and Palestine, will live side by side in peace and security, based on the terms of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. A stable and peaceful Palestinian state is necessary to achieve the security that Israel longs for.

The Palestinian elections represent a vital part in that process. Over 800 international observers monitored the recent elections. Among them were 80 observers led by former President Jimmy Carter, who stated that,

> There is no doubt that the will of the Palestinians was adequately expressed, that Abu Mazen has the support and respect of his people, and that he is dedicated to the peaceful pursuit of a peace agreement. . . .

Palestinians from all walks of life participated in the Presidential elections, representing approximately 70 percent of eligible voters. Young and old, women and men, even those with serious physical disabilities, were determined to play their role in building a better future.

The Palestinian Central Election Commission should also be commended for its commitment to ensure free and fair elections and for facilitating a process whereby Palestinians could vote in a positive voting atmosphere. Commission representatives trained more than 16,000 electoral officials to staff the 2,800 polling sites throughout the West Bank and Gaza and conducted their operations in a professional way. Every election is a learning experience, and I support the Palestinian Central Election Commission in its request to apply lessons learned from the recent presidential election to the parliamentary elections scheduled later this year.

The Palestinian Presidential elections of January 9, 2005, and the upcoming parliamentary elections scheduled this July represent an historic opportunity for Palestinians to affirm their various political expressions and forge a government that can respond to their needs.

It is clear the Palestinians want institutions that are transparent and accountable. The United States, Israel, and the rest of the international community should do all they can to eradicate the sources of extremism that undermine moderate Palestinian leadership. Such actions will foster democratic development among the Palestinians and enable their elected institutions to produce constructive results for its people.

I am encouraged by Abbas' recent decision to ban the use of unregistered weapons by civilians. Such steps, matched by cooperation on the part of Israel, will assist President Abbas' determination to restore rule of law in the Occupied Territories.

I congratulate President Abbas and look forward to his success in achieving the national aspirations of the Palestinian people and his role in bringing peace to the Holy Land.

Mr. Speaker, I support this resolution and its passage.

HONORING SANDRA BATES, COMMISSIONER OF THE FEDERAL TECHNOLOGY SERVICE

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 8, 2005

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Sandra Bates for over 36 years of dedicated service to the Federal Government.

Sandra Bates has finished off an illustrious career in the Federal Government. She started out in 1969 as intern with the General Services Administration. She worked her way up as an agency liaison for telecommunications and automatic data processing acquisitions on the original governmentwide long distance services program, FTS, before moving on to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in 1979. While at NASA, she served in various telecommunications positions until 1993 when she was named chief of communications with responsibility for all NASA operational, command, and control networks worldwide.

She returned to GSA in 1996 and assumed the positions of assistant commissioner for service and delivery and deputy commissioner in the Federal Technology Service before taking over the role of commissioner of the Federal Technology Service in April 2000. As commissioner, she has, among other things, successfully guided the Federal Technology Service through the most recent edition of the governmentwide telecommunications program, FTS 2001.

Throughout her career as a civil servant, Sandra Bates has been active in the federal technology community, serving in leadership roles with a number of government and industry councils and associations. She has received numerous awards, including NASA's Exceptional Service Medal, the Presidential Rank Award of Meritorious Service, the Government Information Technology Award, the Fed 100 Award, 3 separate years, the Industry Advisory Council's Outstanding Individual Government Communicator Award, and the American Council for Technology's John J. Franke Award for Extraordinary Contributions to Long Term Federal Service. She leaves behind a long list of accomplishments in her distinguished career of service to our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to extend my best wishes to Ms. Bates on her retirement as commissioner of the Federal Technology Service. While I know that she will be greatly missed, her retirement is well deserved. I call upon my colleagues to join me in honoring Ms. Bates and in wishing her the best of luck in all future endeavors.

WE NEED TELECOM REFORM

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 8, 2005

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the anniversary of one of the hardest fought legislative battles of the last decade and to discuss the need for improving it this year.

It was 9 years ago this week that Congress last passed comprehensive telecom reform. The biggest issues then were how best to provide competition in both local and long distance telephone service and to ensure that everyone, including those in rural areas, has access to phone service.

In the last 9 years we have seen advancements in communication technology that could not have been envisioned. Near universal access to the Internet, development and deployment of broadband technology, more wireless phones in service than wireline accounts, e-mail on the go and cable, phone, and satellite companies all vying to deliver an entire suite of video and communications services to a growing marketplace. New technologies and industries unfettered by the constraints of old rules have competed vigorously for consumers' business, transforming forever the way business and consumers get information and communicate with one another.

Unfortunately, our telecom laws have not kept pace with growing demand for choice and competition in the marketplace. Some industries continue to operate under arcane regulations that stifle ingenuity, hinder job creation, and bottle up needed economic investment. These same regulations also place the burden of meeting our shared national priorities of universal phone service and 911 emergency services squarely on the shoulders of a single industry—the local phone companies.

Our Nation's telecom laws are due for some badly needed, free-market reforms, changes that will build upon the successes of the last 9 years in terms of innovation and product delivery while also addressing the issues of social responsibility and competition. Unlike what we did in 1996, these new telecom laws must do more to anticipate advancements and create a mechanism where the playing field is level for every company that wishes to compete.

Specifically, we face some daunting challenges. The United States—despite being the