

Lori Hirons has been a visionary and diligent leader of the city of Roeland Park during her tenure as a public servant. Individuals like her across America regularly make significant commitments of their time, resources and personal patience in order to fill these important roles in local government: we cannot thank them enough for doing so.

During her tenure as mayor, I was privileged to work with Mayor Hirons and Senator SAM BROWNBACK to bring to Roeland Park \$1.25 million in vitally needed Federal funds to improve that city's stormwater management facilities. Additionally, Lori and her husband, Frank, have been longtime advisors to me in my capacity as Representative of Kansas' Third Congressional District and I am proud to consider them close, personal friends as well.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD with these remarks an article recently carried by the Kansas City Star that summarizes Mayor Hirons' lengthy record of service and achievements for Roeland Park. I join with her neighbors in wishing her and Frank all the best as they consider new challenges and I hope she will hear the calling of public service again at a future time.

[From the Kansas City Star, Apr. 20, 2005]

HIRONS HAS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN HER CITY
(By Kara Cowie)

Much has changed in Roeland Park Mayor Lori Hirons' 13 years with the city.

City Council meetings no longer run until 1 a.m. and are more amiable than they used to be. Neighborhoods are now looking forward to much-needed street and storm water improvements. And instead of a vacant Venture plaza, a soon-to-be vibrant shopping center with a Lowe's home improvement store and brand-new Price Chopper is in the works.

It's taken many, many meetings to make it all happen, but Hirons is pleased with the results of her four years as mayor, eight years as a Ward 1 council member and one year on the city's board of zoning appeals.

Now she's ready for a break.

"I don't think I've done anything in government that's superstar status, but I do think I took the road less traveled," Hirons said. "And I always said I never wanted to be carried out of here in a box."

So, after more than a decade of Wednesday night meetings, tonight will be her last. Just after 7:30 p.m., Hirons is to pass on the gavel to Councilman Steve Petrehn, who ran unopposed for the position earlier this month.

City Administrator John Carter is sad to see her go.

"I've been doing this for 30 years, and the last four were the most enjoyable years working with a very good mayor," he said.

What makes Hirons so special, Carter added, is "her caring for her community, her ethics and her desire to do what's right," as well as her "doggedness." Hirons never gave up her dream of seeing the old Venture plaza redeveloped, and she pushed to expand RoeFest and to turn the Roeland Park Community Center into a true community hub, he said.

Hirons, too, is proud of those accomplishments and several others.

"I can look back 12 years and see a real difference," she said. "That gives you a feeling of pride and accomplishment."

But she is quick to point out the credit isn't hers alone. She's worked with several progressive council members who shared her vision for the city.

Councilman Scott Gregory has known Hirons for about 15 years and, although they don't always see eye to eye, Gregory said, they do share a mutual respect.

"Over the years, Lori and I have been just screaming at each other and yet we come through it being able to talk, being able to deal with each other," Gregory said. "I truly believe that she has remained focused and hasn't indulged in intrigue and manipulation."

Hirons is the first to admit that public service isn't a popularity contest, and some council members may think she's too brusque.

"I am very direct; I am very honest," she said. "You've got to be yourself."

Hirons' direct and honest nature is one of the things Mission Mayor Laura McConwell appreciates the most.

"She's approachable and she is straight; you can believe what she says, and she doesn't play games," McConwell said. "Whether I agree or not, it's a lot easier to know where someone's coming from."

Plus, McConwell added: "She's a lot of fun. She's just a dynamo."

Hirons joined the council in 1993 after a one-year stint on the board of zoning appeals and several years' involvement with her church and neighborhood. She was elected mayor in 2001 with 64 percent of the vote.

In that time she's helped secure professional management for the city and a new building for City Hall and the police department. She's also helped set up benefit districts for storm water projects, secure a \$1.2 million federal grant for drainage improvements and implement a city ethics ordinance, which she described as a moral compass for council members.

Still, Hirons said, her biggest accomplishment is the \$31 million Venture plaza redevelopment project, which is expected to boost the city's sales tax base.

"The work I did on that is hopefully my gift to the city," she said.

Now Hirons plans to devote more time to her career as the vice president for public affairs for Citi Cards, a division of Citigroup in Kansas City, and her husband, Frank.

As for politics?

"I don't believe this is the last time you're going to see my name on a ballot, but it won't be in 2006," she said.

INTRODUCING A BILL TO ENHANCE
THE SECURITY OF THE U.S. PAS-
SENGER AIR TRANSPORTATION
SYSTEM

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 26, 2005

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, today Congressman COSTELLO, Congressman DEFAZIO and I have introduced a bill to enhance the security of the U.S. passenger air transportation system—The Airport 5 Screener Technology Improvement Act of 2005. This bill will create a Checkpoint Screening Security Fund for the TSA that will fund \$250 million that has been authorized for the deployment of new checkpoint screening technologies. The bill also provides funds for \$650 million a year, which has been authorized for the installation of in-line baggage screening systems.

Mr. Speaker, last week the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General (DHS IG) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) both released reports that indicate improvements are still needed in the screening process to ensure that dangerous prohibited items are not being carried on aircraft, or enter the checked baggage system. While the trav-

eling public is more secure today than before September 11th, 2001, airport screeners are not detecting prohibited items at the level we need. Regarding the causes of poor screener performance, the DHS IG stated—

Despite the fact that the majority of screeners with whom our testers came into contact were diligent in the performance of their duties and conscious of the responsibility those duties carry, lack of improvement since our last audit indicates that significant improvement in performance may not be possible without greater use of technology. . . . We encourage TSA to expedite its testing programs and give priority to technologies, such as backscatter x-ray, that will enable the screening workforce to better detect both weapons and explosives.

In response to the DHS IG's findings, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) responded—

We agree with the IG's conclusion that significant improvements in performance will only be possible with the introduction of new technology.

Mr. Speaker, our screening system is failing us because this Congress and this Administration are failing both the screeners and the American traveling public. This Congress has arbitrarily capped the number of airport screeners at 45,000, and has provided neither the resources nor the technology for the screeners to get the job done. It is a failure of leadership and there are no more excuses.

Last year, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States ("the 9/11 Commission") specifically recommended that the TSA and the Congress "give priority attention to improving the ability of screenings checkpoints to detect explosives on passengers." The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (P.L. 108-458) authorized \$250 million for the research and deployment of advanced passenger screening technologies, such as trace portals and backscatter x-ray systems. To date, only about \$30 million has been appropriated specifically for the general deployment of these types of technologies.

The 9/11 Commission also recommended that the TSA "expedite the installation of advanced (in-line) baggage screening equipment." The Chairman of the 9/11 Commission testified before Congress that:

The Commission supports an effort to move explosives units out of airport lobbies and into a secured area where they can be integrated into the process of moving the bags from the check-in counter to the loading area in a seamless, in-line process. This will promote greater security, because: (1) screening machines will not be exposed to the public; (2) screeners will be able to focus on screening bags rather than moving them; and (3) fewer people will be congregated around machines in the public area. Moreover, processing bags from checking to loading through an in-line system is functionally more efficient making travel more convenient as well as more secure.

In addition to these benefits, in-line baggage screening systems have a much higher throughput than stand-alone systems. If we install in-line systems, more bags will be screened by explosive detection systems instead of less reliable, alternative methods.

The TSA and airport operators rely on commitments in letters of intent (LOIs) as their principal method for funding the modification

of airport facilities to incorporate in-line baggage screening systems. The TSA has issued 8 LOIs to cover the costs of installing systems at 9 airports for a total cost to the federal government of \$957.1 million over 4 years. The GAO reports that TSA has estimated that in-line baggage screening systems at the 9 airports that received LOI funding could save the federal government \$1.3 billion over 7 years. TSA further estimated that it could recover its initial investment in the in-line systems at these airports in a little over 1 year.

In total, the GAO reports that 86 of 130 airports surveyed are planning or are considering installing in-line baggage screening systems throughout or at a portion of their airports. Moreover, GAO reports that TSA officials have identified 27 additional airports that they believe would benefit from receiving LOIs for in-line systems because such systems are needed to screen an increasing number of bags due to current or projected growth in passenger traffic. TSA officials stated that without such systems, these airports would not remain in compliance with the congressional mandate to screen all checked baggage using EDS or ETD. Yet, the TSA has also acknowledged that it currently does not have sufficient resources in its budget to fund any additional LOIs. While \$650 million is authorized for the installation of in-line baggage screening systems, annual appropriations have not allowed for any new LOIs to be signed.

Our bill will ensure funding for the screening technology we need. We're collecting over \$1.5 billion a year from the passenger security fee. Our bill will put a portion of that fee into two funds that will guarantee that TSA will spend the authorized amount of \$650 million a year and \$250 million for the installation of in-line baggage screening systems and passenger checkpoint explosive detection respectively.

Mr. Speaker, there is overwhelming evidence in the recommendations, findings and statements of the 9/11 Commission, the DHS IG, GAO and TSA that technology is sorely needed to improve security at our airports. We can no longer plead ignorance nor stand idly by and criticize airport screeners working the front line defense in the war on terror. We must demonstrate the leadership and the political will to do what we know is right and deploy technologies that will help our screeners get the job done, and keep the American public safe and secure. I urge my colleagues to join me in working to pass this important legislation.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF DONNA WILLIAMS OF CANYON HIGH SCHOOL

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 26, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the numerous accomplishments of Donna Williams, Canyon High School Teacher of the Year.

Donna Williams earned both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Texas State University in San Marcos. She currently works as an Algebra II and Precalculus teacher in the Comal Independent School District.

Donna Williams believes that creative teaching methods work best for teaching math, especially in grades nine through twelve. Her approach is self-described as "open, loud and fun," allowing for an atmosphere that is friendly and conducive to learning.

She also spends her time teaching leadership skills and sponsoring the Student Council. Leadership and mathematics are two of the most important skills for success in later life, and Donna Williams works hard to ensure that our kids get the education that they need for success.

It is an honor to recognize the accomplishments of Donna Williams, Canyon High School Teacher of the Year. Her unique perspective on learning helps to make Comal Independent School District a better place for our students to learn.

CONGRATULATING THE NORTH SHORE MUSIC THEATRE

HON. JOHN F. TIERNEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 26, 2005

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the North Shore Music Theatre at Dunham Woods in Beverly, Massachusetts, which this year is celebrating its fifty-year anniversary.

The North Shore Music Theatre has been entertaining local audiences and visitors since 1955, presenting both classic and innovative musicals in its unique theatre-in-the-round style. When the Theatre first presented *Kiss Me Kate* in the summer of 1955, the audience sat outdoors in canvas seats. Today, theatergoers are entertained in a modern 1,800 seat facility.

For nearly half of its existence, Artistic Director and Executive Producer Jon Kimball has been at the Theatre's helm. In partnership with his dedicated staff and Board of Trustees, Mr. Kimball has turned the North Shore Music Theatre into a nationally-recognized venue, both in terms of its size and the quality of its productions. The theatre was named by *Boston Business Journal* as the 2nd largest performing arts organization in the state for three consecutive years.

As a non-profit organization, the North Shore Music Theatre's mission is to increase the awareness, significance and celebration of musical theater and the performing arts through superb entertainment and educational programs. Each year, the Theatre welcomes 400,000 patrons to its six musical subscription series, an original musical production of *A Christmas Carol* and an acclaimed celebrity concert series. In addition, its award-winning Theatre Arts Academy reaches over 100,000 young people annually, through workshops, outreach and youth performances.

It is appropriate that the House recognize this half-century milestone for the North Shore Music Theatre, which has become one of the anchors of arts and culture in our region. Its contribution to the quality of life for the people of the North Shore and beyond cannot be underestimated.

Congratulations to the North Shore Music Theatre for fifty years of entertainment and education. I'm sure I can speak on behalf of my constituents and neighbors when I say that

we all look forward to sharing in the Theatre's bright future.

RECOGNIZING BOB MANSANARES

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 26, 2005

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Bob Mansanares, one of my fellow Coloradans on the occasion of his retirement from government service. For 32 years Bob has been one of our State's most dedicated public servants.

He began his Federal career in 1973 as a claims representative for the Social Security Administration and went on to become the Regional Director of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs. At the time of his retirement and since July 2001 he has directed the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program.

Bob, born in Del Norte, Colorado, to Martin and Ernestine Mansanares, is the oldest of four siblings. Money was scarce in his home but there was always food, clothing and a roof over his head. Above all he had the things that money cannot buy, love and the support of his family and friends. So while Bob grew up poor he never considered himself a victim or disadvantaged. One of his fondest childhood memories is fishing the streams of the valley with his father. Del Norte is an agricultural rural community and Bob and the family did farm labor as a child, picking potatoes and picking peas for a penny a pound to make ends meet. It was there that Bob acquired his work ethic and his unshakable faith in the working men and women of this country. He went from those humble beginnings to be the first in his family to go to college. In 1968 he was recruited by the Migrant Action Program to attend the University of Colorado at Boulder earning his degree in 1972.

While he was a student in college, Bob was torn between making a lot of money and devoting his life to public service. Fortunately for us, he chose the latter and has spent his entire Federal career in programs that focus on workers benefits and entitlements. He chose to repay in some small measure the debt he felt he owed to the community and to those less fortunate than he. As a former farm worker he became keenly aware of the working poor who had little or no knowledge of the benefits and entitlements available to persons who suffered from work related injuries or disabilities.

Over the course of his 32 year career his work philosophy has always been to make the process easier, to avoid acronyms and technical terminology which many find difficult to understand. Under his purview the process has become more user friendly. This lay approach to claiming benefits has been the key to his many successes. Another of Bob's notable achievements is serving as Commissioner on the Veterans Claims Adjudication Commission to review and write the report of findings, conclusions and recommendations for the disposition of claims to the VA.

The joy of his life has been Mary, his wife of 34 years, and their four children, Nick, Elissa, and David. His oldest daughter, Christie, died tragically in an automobile accident in 2001.