

years. But also left them with hope for the creation of an avenue that would rightfully address the life altering negative injustice that black women have and continue to be confronted by while in performance of their military duties, as well as afterward as "veterans" seeking help through the VA. For many years they did not believe that anyone cared, or would ever be concerned about the injustice that black women have endured at the hands of the U.S. military.

Again, the generosity of Wayne Gatewood, Jr., President and CEO of Quality Support, Inc., and Amistad Associates paved the way for a gala evening of socializing, recognition and public acknowledgement for the following female veterans and groups from the Civil war to World War II to the war in Afghanistan and Iraq: Deborah Bretey, Antoniette Edwards, Mary Jackson Fears, State Representative Gloria Fox, Vernessa Franklin, Sgt. Casaundra Grant, Col. Delores Hampton, USA, Ret., Hattie Harris, Vera Haskins (now deceased), Lorenza Hilliard, Lt. Col. Patricia Jackson, USA, Ret., Sarah Jackson, Willette Jenkins, Lillie B. Johnson (known as Miss Lillie B, now deceased), Spc. Shoshanna Johnson, Pfc. Sarah L. Keys (Sarah Keys Evans), Noel Mitchell, Capt. Margaret Oglesby, MNG, Col. Marie Rogers, USA, Ret., Mildred Smith-Kidd, Willie Whiting; House of Imagene, Mozella's House, My Women Veterans Group, Black Women's Leadership Caucus, Center for Women Veterans (Department of Veterans Affairs), National Association of Black Military Women, Harriet Tubman Home, League of Women for Community Service, and the Colored Ladies Christian Relief Society of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteers.

In return, they especially thanked us for giving accolades to the female veterans of color, and for always remembering heroine Harriet Tubman. Some felt humbled to receive their awards, other felt good to read the words of acknowledgement and appreciation in addition to giving them motivation to continue on in both their personal and professional lives. As well as for providing one of the few venues that allows them to smell their flowers, or roses before they die.

In closing, I thank Sarah Ann Shaw, Drs. Brenda Moore, Laura Miller, Leisa Meyers, Robernia Gary, A.V. Hankins, Shari Miles and Ron Armstead for their continuing help in making the Veterans Braintrust an ongoing success. Also speaking on behalf of all my colleagues I thanked our African American veterans in the audience for coming and their service to our great nation. Needless to say, it was overwhelming to be in a room with so many true heroines and heroes, because it makes me very very proud that this is one of the best-attended issues forums during the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Annual Legislative Conference (ALC).

Lastly, Representative SANFORD BISHOP, Jr. and I agree Gen. George Washington had it right when he said, "the morale and strength of the nation's military forces would be directly proportional to how well veterans who already served and sacrificed for the country are treated and appreciated."

#### TRIBUTE TO DON CHALMERS

### HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 16, 2005

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise today in recognition of Mr. Don Chalmers, an outstanding citizen in my district. In acknowledgment of the successful management of his business, Don Chalmers Ford in Rio Rancho, N.M., Mr. Chalmers recently received the Zia Award, Quality New Mexico's highest performance excellence honor.

The New Mexico Quality Awards program is modeled after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards, a program initiated in 1987 when President Ronald Reagan signed the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement Act of 1987. Every year businesses that apply for New Mexico Quality Awards participate in training, education, and assessment programs. Throughout the year, performance levels are checked and commitment to quality business is assessed. Participants are then considered for three levels of recognition. The most outstanding of these is the Zia Award for performance excellence.

By participating in New Mexico Quality training and analysis programs, Mr. Chalmers dealership has become a benchmark for excellence in New Mexico. Mr. Chalmers demonstrated a commitment to improving his already very successful business by surpassing the needs and expectations of his employees and the residents of our New Mexico communities. Because of these accomplishments, Don Chalmers Ford received the most prestigious of performance awards, the Zia Award.

Beyond his business success, Mr. Chalmers has been an active and outstanding citizen of New Mexico over the last 10 years. Mr. Chalmers has participated in a number of community projects such as the Equal Access to Justice Campaign, the New Mexico Balloon Fiesta, and Women on the Move.

It is with pride an appreciation that I congratulate this outstanding citizen on his contributions to our great State and on receiving the one and only Zia Award granted by Quality New Mexico in 2005.

#### TRIBUTE TO RADM CHRISTOPHER WEAVER

### HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 16, 2005

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor RADM Christopher Weaver, United States Navy, who is retiring after more than 34 years of faithful service to our Nation.

A native of Harrisonville, MO, Rear Admiral Weaver began his career in 1971, when he graduated from the United States Naval Academy. He holds a bachelor of science degree from the Naval Academy and a master of public administration degree from George Washington University. He is also a distinguished graduate of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. Rear Admiral Weaver is an honorary Seabee and honorary master chief petty officer.

During the years that followed, Rear Admiral Weaver accrued an impressive operational career highlighted by command of USS *Exultant* and USS *Spruance*. Rear Admiral Weaver was designated a surface warfare officer in 1973. His sea tours also include duty aboard USS *Marvin Shields*, USS *Capodanno*, USS *Boulder*, and USS *Samuel Eliot Morison*.

Ashore he commanded U.S. Naval Station, Norfolk, VA, the world's largest Navy base, and served as an assignment officer in the Bureau of Naval Personnel, as head of the Seamanship and Navigation Department at the U.S. Naval Academy, as head of the Surface Combatant Branch of the Surface Warfare Division and as head of the Mine Warfare Branch of the Expeditionary Warfare Division. He also served as executive officer to the director of Logistics, J4, the Joint Staff.

He was selected for Flag rank in February 1997. Rear Admiral Weaver served as the 83rd commandant of Naval District Washington, the oldest continuously operated Navy installation in the Nation. In his most recent assignment as commander, Navy Installations Command, and director, Ashore Readiness Division, Rear Admiral Weaver led unprecedented organizational change amid an historic time of overall Navy transformation in the Navy's shore infrastructure.

Rear Admiral Weaver is an exceptional leader. He is an individual of uncommon character and his professionalism will be sincerely missed in the Navy. Mr. Speaker, I am certain that my colleagues will join me in thanking RADM Christopher Weaver for his honorable service in the United States Navy, and wishing him and his wife Chris all the best in the years to come.

#### EXPRESSING SENSE OF THE HOUSE THAT SYMBOLS AND TRADITIONS OF CHRISTMAS SHOULD BE PROTECTED

SPEECH OF

### HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this legislation is an excellent example of how the House Leadership politicizes non-issues to distract Congress from substantive issues.

The Federal Government is obviously not opposed to Christmas, an annual celebration that has deep significance for those of us from a Christian tradition. In that sense, a "Yes" vote is appropriate.

But Christmas is not under assault from the Federal Government; there is no need for this resolution. Therefore, a vote of "Present" could be appropriate; there is simply no controversy here.

I chose to vote "No," however, because the resolution is flawed. It misses the point. Christmas is not being threatened by the federal government. Instead, the season that celebrates Christ's humble birth in a manger has been commercialized and cheapened by those who celebrate it as the retail highlight of the year.

My sincere wish for the New Year is that House leadership sets aside its penchant for distracting and divisive issues to focus on solutions to problems that face Americans every day.