

2006 guarantees that the terms and conditions of Puerto Rico's future be developed jointly and democratically by the people of Puerto Rico and the Congress and not by the whims of an elite few.

In supporting this legislation, Congress would finally sanction a real opportunity for the people of Puerto Rico to exercise their right of self-determination with a process that would allow for a direct vote from the people. The first plebiscite, which would be held during the 110th Congress, but no later than December 31, 2007, would allow the people of Puerto Rico to elect whether to remain a U.S. territory, or to pursue a path toward a constitutionally viable permanent non-territorial status. It would not be until a second plebiscite during the 111th Congress that specific non-territorial status options would be defined, should the voters decide they want to opt for a permanent, non-territorial status.

Congress has a date with history. As a territory, Puerto Rico is subject to Congressional authority under the Constitution's Territorial Clause. After 89 years as U.S. citizens, we deserve the opportunity to provide the people of Puerto Rico with a process where, through their direct vote, they can choose the status of their choice. Congress must assume its constitutional responsibility and act now; otherwise the efforts of the Presidential Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status, established by President Clinton and President Bush, would have been in vain.

I wish to thank my many colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, who have agreed to become original co-sponsors of this bill, validating the recommendations made by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status to commence a democratic process under which the people of Puerto Rico will be able to exercise their inherent right to self-determination. The four million U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico deserve no less.

TRIBUTE TO RUSSELL GWATNEY

HON. HAROLD E. FORD, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 2, 2006

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, it is with honor I rise today to recognize the great achievement of Russell Gwatney, a noted and respected business leader in the great state of Tennessee and the nation at-large. Russell Gwatney, president for Gwatney Chevrolet, Chevrolet-Isuzu was recently named a finalist for the 2006 Time Magazine Quality Dealer Award.

The Time Magazine Quality Dealer Award is the automobile industry's most prestigious and highly coveted award for car dealers. The award recipients are among the nation's most successful auto dealers. Criteria for the award include recipients' demonstration of a long-standing commitment to effective community service. As a finalist, Mr. Gwatney is one of 66 automobile dealers from more than 19,500 nominees nationwide nominated for the annual award—now in its 37th year.

An Arkansas native, Mr. Gwatney grew up in the car business. His father became a Chevrolet dealer when Russell Gwatney was just 6 years old. Mr. Gwatney started selling cars in 1973 after an illness caused him to

leave the University of Arkansas during his junior year. After completing undergraduate studies in 1976, Mr. Gwatney returned to the dealership in sales management, where he later became general manager in 1979 and co-dealer in 1984.

In addition to his business successes, Mr. Gwatney and his dealership have supported a wide range of organizations and philanthropic efforts in the community. As well, he has served as chairman for the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank and also member to the executive committee of the Memphis Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Gwatney was nominated for the annual Time Magazine Quality Dealer Award by Robert V. Weaver, president of Tennessee Automotive Association. Mr. Gwatney lives in Germantown, Tennessee with his wife Elizabeth. They have three children, including their two sons John and David who have joined the family business.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives to join me in recognizing and commending Russell Gwatney and for this great achievement.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MAJOR R. OWENS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 2, 2006

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I was absent on Tuesday, February 28, 2006, due to unavoidable circumstances in my Congressional District. Had I been present, I would have voted: "yea" to H.R. 1096—Act Commemorating the LITE, or Lifetime Innovations of Thomas Edison; "yea" to H. Res. 668—Celebrating the 40th anniversary of Texas Western's 1966 NCAA Basketball Championship and recognizing the groundbreaking impact of the title game victory on diversity in sports and civil rights in America and "yea" to H.R. 1259, to authorize the President to award a gold medal on behalf of the Congress, collectively, to the Tuskegee Airmen in recognition of their unique military record, which inspired revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces.

IN RECOGNITION OF DR. WILLIAM L. LESTER

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 2, 2006

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember and pay tribute to Dr. William L. Lester, the longtime Provost at Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama, who passed away on February 6, 2006.

Dr. Lester was dedicated to academics. He first arrived in Tuskegee University in 1968 to work as a mathematics instructor, and later left in 1970 to pursue his doctorate at Southern Methodist University. He returned to Tuskegee in 1974 to head the Mathematics Department, and later served as Assistant Provost in the Academic Affairs office. He became Tuskegee's Provost in 1984.

Dr. Lester was truly a model citizen, both for the university community and his family. His

tireless work on behalf of Tuskegee helped make the institution the world-renowned university it is today. He will be sorely missed. His memory lives on through his wife, Virda, and their children.

I am privileged to have the opportunity to honor the late Dr. William L. Lester today, and appreciate the House's attention to the life and legacy of this important Alabamian.

TRIBUTE TO DEREK PARRA, CHAMPION SPEEDSKATER FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE WINTER OLYMPICS AND IN ADVANCE OF HIS RETIREMENT

HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 2, 2006

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, Americans have watched with great pride as our athletes have taken part in the 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino. The greatness of the Olympics comes from the spirit of friendly international competition, and we are inspired by our athletes as they strive for excellence and represent our country with honor. During the Games, not only have we seen amazing athletic accomplishments—but also we have learned about the lives of the athletes away from the arena, as they dedicated themselves to their training and preparation, made sacrifices, overcame challenges, celebrated victories, and sometimes suffered through defeat.

Among the many stars of America's Olympic team, one shines particularly bright to the people of my District and to me personally: speedskater Derek Parra.

Derek grew up on the west side of San Bernardino, California with his father Gilbert and his brother. He attended Roosevelt Elementary and Eisenhower High School in Rialto. In fact my son, Joe Baca, Jr., went to school with him, and I attended church with Derek's father, Gilbert Parra, at St. Catherine's in Rialto.

Southern California's Inland Empire is wonderful place for children to grow up and to get involved in sports, but with the sunny climate, it is hardly a winter sports haven. So not surprisingly, Derek grew up roller skating not ice skating. He first learned to skate at the Stardust Roller Rink in Highland, where he was an inline skater. Derek first set foot on ice when he was 17 years old and was 26 when he switched from inline skating to ice skating in 1996 to pursue his Olympic dreams.

Derek was determined, focused and relentless in this pursuit. Even among his fellow athletes in a demanding sport, he was respected for the work ethic that made him an Olympic hero.

Four years ago, I rose to honor Derek after his amazing performance at the 2002 Games in Salt Lake City. At those Games, he won a gold medal in the 1,500-meter race and a silver medal in the 5,000-meter race, breaking the previous world records for both distances.

Derek Parra was the first Mexican American to ever participate in the Winter Olympics, let alone win a medal. Derek also carried proudly the flag of the United States in the opening ceremonies at Salt Lake.

Since those exciting days four years ago, a lot has changed in Derek's life. He made great