

TMR, 41 years ago. The organization is a public service speaker series that was created to provide an environment where people who were interested in political and civic issues could discuss their ideas and opinions. Lee's foresight in founding TMR as a forum for thoughtful study and exchange laid the groundwork for other civic involvement initiatives in our community, like FOCUS Greater Syracuse and Syracuse University's Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today, TNT.

Mr. Lee Smith passed on February 6 of this year at the age of 88, and his life will be celebrated at a memorial service on February 18. Lee's commitment and dedication to serving the community and educating others has been, and will continue to be, an important asset to our community. I thank his wife Alice and the entire Smith family for sharing Lee with our community all these years.

FREEDOM FOR RAMÓN
VELÁZQUEZ TORANZO

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about Ramón Velázquez Toranzo, a political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba.

Mr. Velázquez is a pro-democracy activist and independent journalist for Libertad, a small independent news agency founded by José Luis García Paneque, a political prisoner jailed during the condemnable March 2003 "Black Spring" crackdown. His peaceful activities and truthful articles have helped expose the nightmarish reality that is the Castro regime. Unfortunately, for this very reason he has been targeted by the tyrant's machinery of repression, as part of its effort to silence the brave men and women of Cuba's pro-democracy movement.

On December 10, 2006, International Human Rights Day, Mr. Velázquez Toranzo, began a march for Cuban Dignity in Eastern Cuba at the shrine of Our Lady of Charity, Cuba's patron saint, demanding freedom for all Cuban political prisoners, respect for human rights, and the cessation of repression against peaceful pro-democracy activists. Mr. Velázquez Toranzo, who was marching with his wife, Barbara González Cruz, and his daughter, Rufina Velázquez González, intended to travel 950 kilometers by foot in hope of ending their march for freedom in Havana.

On their journey, Mr. Velázquez Toranzo, his family and other marchers were detained twice in Ciego de Ávila and Camaguey, Cuba, for peacefully advocating for the most basic freedoms for the Cuban people. Despite being detained, nearly being run over twice by State Security Thugs, and knowing full well the brutal consequences that await those who speak the truth under the nightmare that is the Castro tyranny, they continued their peaceful march for human rights and dignity.

On January 23, 2007, 18 days after beginning his peaceful march for dignity, Mr. Velázquez Toranzo and his family were arrested for a third time in the city of Ciego de Ávila. His wife and daughter were released but Mr. Velázquez Toranzo was held at a police station and then transferred to the "El Típico"

provincial prison. And there, after months of harassment by State Security thugs, Mr. Velázquez Toranzo was "sentenced" to suffer 3 years of horror in the squalor of a subhuman gulag for his supposed crime, "anti-social conduct."

Madam Speaker, Mr. Velázquez Toranzo is languishing in an infernal gulag just 90 miles from our shores. It is as inconceivable as it is unacceptable that, while the world stands by in silence and acquiescence, independent journalists who write the truth about totalitarianism are jailed and tortured simply for exposing truth. We must demand immediate freedom for Ramón Velázquez Toranzo and all political prisoners in totalitarian Cuba.

RECOGNIZING REV. RICHARD
DRANKWALTER ON THE OCCA-
SION OF HIS RETIREMENT

HON. GINNY BROWN-WAITE

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the Rev. Richard Drankwalter, the outgoing Pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Brooksville, Florida. For nearly 37 years, Pastor Drankwalter has served the Lutheran Church with honor and distinction, all in the name of Jesus Christ.

Born on July 4, 1944, in Queens, New York, Pastor Drankwalter has dedicated his life to serving the Church. Earning his Bachelor of Divinity and Master of Divinity from Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois in 1970, he spent an early part of his career as Pastor of the Peace Lutheran Church in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Pastor Drankwalter then moved on to serve the Church in Illinois and New York, eventually moving to Brooksville, Florida in 1986. Pastor Drankwalter has been a minister at Christ Lutheran in Brooksville for nearly 20 years.

Pastor Drankwalter joined Christ Lutheran following service as pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Silver Creek, New York. At the time of his appointment there were 168 members of Christ Lutheran; today there are over 600. A sure sign of his family's commitment to the area, both his wife Paula and his daughter Jennifer have served as teachers in Hernando County. The Pastor himself ran for Hernando County School Board and that is where I first met him.

In addition to this service, Pastor Drankwalter and his wife Paula have been very involved in local church and civic organizations, including the Brooksville Ministerial Association, the Hernando County Youth Association, the Brooksville Kiwanis Club, and served on the Board of Directors of the Committee Against Assaults on Law Enforcement Officers.

For nearly 37 years, Pastor Drankwalter has tended to the needs of his congregation. As a part of his ministry, he has gone above and beyond the call of duty to help families seeking guidance and support. On one occasion the Pastor dropped everything and drove to an area hospital to pray with a family following their father's stroke, even though they were not members of his congregation. His career has been built on working for Christ, not blindly following denominations and labels.

Madam Speaker, Pastor Drankwalter's dedication to the Lord and to the Lutheran Church has served as an inspiration to thousands throughout Hernando County. His ministry has touched the hearts of many, and the Church has continued to grow under his leadership. Pastor Drankwalter is to be commended for his years of service, his commitment to the Lord, and for serving the men and women who rely on his counsel and wisdom. Pastor Drankwalter is a shining example of the good that serving Jesus Christ can bring to our friends and families, and he will be sorely missed by the entire community.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND
IDEALS OF WORLD WATER DAY

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing a resolution supporting the goals and ideals of World Water Day, along with Congresswoman EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, the Chair of the Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee Water Resources and the Environment.

Every 15 seconds, a child dies from lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation. This resolution is intended to help us raise awareness of this leading cause of preventable death.

For the last 15 years, March 22nd has been designated as World Water Day in order to draw attention to the global water crisis and inspire action to alleviate this unnecessary tragedy. While over the past 20 years, two billion people have gained access to safe drinking water, approximately one in six people in the world are still without this most basic building block of life.

Last Congress, the House and Senate both passed the "Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act," which made safe drinking water and sanitation key priorities in U.S. foreign assistance. However, much more needs to be done both at home and abroad to ensure safe, affordable, and sustainable access to water for people everywhere.

I invite my colleagues to cosponsor this important resolution.

HONORING JOSÉ ARREDONDO

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the extraordinary career of José Arredondo. José has served as the Executive Director of the Spanish Speaking Citizen's Foundation (SSCF) in Oakland since 1986. Throughout his career, José has been known for his tireless work on behalf of the Latino community and the community at large. This year José celebrates his retirement after 20 years of unparalleled service to the SSCF, and many more to the entire Bay Area community.

José holds a B.A. in sociology and an M.S. in counseling from California State University,