

Appreciation Week, and Tuesday, May 6, as National Teacher Day. These days have been set aside as a time for honoring teachers and recognizing the lasting contributions they make to our lives.

Last year, the National Education Association (NEA) conducted an online poll asking teachers what kind of gift would most make them feel appreciated. The answer? A simple “thank you,” according to nearly half (48 percents) of all respondents.

Such humility comes as no surprise. My mother was a public school teacher, so I know firsthand how many sacrifices teachers make both with their own money, their time and their heart. They work long hours and are often underappreciated. Yet, few other professionals touch as many people as teachers do. I bet many of us learned life lessons that we carry with us today because of a special teacher. I don't know that we can ever say “thank-you” enough times to teachers who have made a difference in our lives. This week, I hope we'll all take a minute to tell a special teacher “thank you”—a simple thank you card, a quick phone call—it means a lot.

I recognize that these are small ways to honor teachers, and that we have to put our money where our mouth is. Teachers give so much to support Kansas students—it's high time that Congress repays the favor. Here are some of the ways I have made a commitment to helping teachers:

Providing tax relief for teachers. I co-sponsored H.R. 549, the Teacher Tax Relief Act to increase and make permanent a tax deduction of up to \$400 for elementary and secondary school teachers. I am also a co-sponsor of H.R. 3605, introduced after H.R. 549, which will increase the deduction to \$500. This deduction would help teachers recoup expenses when they use their own money to buy classroom supplies.

Funding Continuing Education for Teachers. I voted for the America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education and Science (COMPETES) Act, which became law in August, 2007. The act provides professional development for teachers, ensures more highly qualified classroom teachers in mathematics, science, engineering, and technology, and provides funding to improve laboratory equipment and facilities.

Student Loan Assistance. The College Cost Reduction and Access Act, which I voted for and was signed into law by the President in September, 2007, includes a tuition assistance program for public school teachers who commit to working in impoverished areas or in high-need subjects.

Public schools are at the heart of any community and I believe we all have to work together to make our schools the best that they can be. That means everyone in the community—parents, business owners, retirees, local government and students must pitch in.

This week is an opportunity for all of us to get involved. That apple on the desk or a thank you card is an important first step. But, let's use this week to learn about and advocate for high standards for our public schools and appropriate compensation for teachers. A community's active support of the work that teachers do, combined with that “thank-you,” can make changes that will last for generations to come.

HONORING CAREER OF DR. SARAH
N. DENMAN

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. Sarah N. Denman and her 33 years of service to the students and faculty of Marshall University. Marshall University is home to 14,000 of West Virginia's best and brightest students and one of the finest public universities in the Nation. For the last 9 years, Sarah has served as the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at Marshall University and is now set to retire on May 10, 2008, with Marshall's 171st Commencement.

Born and raised in Kenova, West Virginia, Sarah has devoted her life to improving our State's educational opportunities. She earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees from Marshall University and her doctorate in higher education administration from West Virginia University. She then taught for 6 years at Ceredo-Kenova High School before joining Marshall's faculty. At Marshall, she has served as Coordinator of the Communications Program, Associate Dean for the Community College, Higher Learning Commission Consultant Evaluator, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and since 1999, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.

During her tenure, Sarah has been a godsend to Marshall University, helping it expand and flourish, and has played a powerful role in transforming a once humble Marshall College into the internationally renowned university it is today. From Associate Professor to Provost, Sarah has left her mark on virtually every aspect of the University and touched countless lives of those around her.

Marshall's academic programs have been blessed by her guidance and, in turn, southern West Virginia has been blessed by Marshall. Thanks to her hard work and dedication at Marshall, the best and brightest of West Virginia's students have access to the higher education they need—without leaving the home they love—to succeed in the global economy.

Sarah's list of accomplishments far exceeds her years of service. She has nurtured generations of young minds and helped shape the higher education system in West Virginia. Her dedication to her work and commitment to helping others are examples to us all.

I again congratulate Sarah for her 33 years of dedicated service at Marshall University and wish her continued success in retirement and all her future endeavors.

NATIONAL FUNERAL DIRECTOR
AND MORTICIAN RECOGNITION
DAY

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res.

892, a resolution that designates March 11 as “National Funeral Director and Mortician Recognition Day.”

Funeral directors and morticians are vitally important in helping families mourn death, celebrate a life, and begin the process of closure. They also give advice on the decisions one needs to make as a caretaker and as a provider of a funeral service. According to the Minnesota Funeral Directors Association, “The funeral ritual is helpful and valuable for all who feel the loss of the deceased. It validates life and allows us to go on living. The ritual aspect is important for closure and social reasons. Attending the funeral allows us to deal with the loss, says goodbye, and reaffirms the importance of living.”

Mayor Bill Sandberg of North Saint Paul, who died on April 20, 2007, was one of my mentors. He spent his career as a funeral director in the St. Paul area and was active in the Minnesota Funeral Directors Association and a Heritage Club member of the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA). NFDA was established in 1882 in order to better serve the public and its members. Today, it is the oldest and largest national funeral service organization in the world.

I want to thank funeral directors and morticians for their dedication to this profession and urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

IN SUPPORT OF H. RES. 981—RECOGNIZING MARCH 6, 2008, AS THE FIRST-EVER WORLD GLAUCOMA DAY, ESTABLISHED TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF GLAUCOMA, A LEADING CAUSE OF PREVENTABLE BLINDNESS IN THE UNITED STATES

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 981, recognizing March 6, 2008, as the first-ever World Glaucoma Day, established to increase awareness of glaucoma, a leading cause of preventable blindness. I want to congratulate my colleagues Congresswoman TAMMY BALDWIN for introducing this important resolution and together with Congressman PETE SESSIONS for bringing this measure forward. As a cosponsor of this resolution, I am proud to speak out in favor of adequate Federal funding, legislation when indicated, greater support for glaucoma education and awareness, screenings, regular eye examinations, follow-up, treatment and research. Raising the level of awareness about the effects of this devastating eye disease, and drawing attention toward taking the necessary steps to preserve sight has been of great importance to me, and a special mission for many years.

The resolution expands awareness by calling attention to this dreadful disease that can rob individuals of the priceless gift of sight. Glaucoma, an eye disorder that damages the optic nerve, is a leading cause of irreversible blindness, and affects more than 3 million people. It is often referred to as the “sneak thief of sight,” as many are not aware that they have the disease because it has no noticeable early warning signs, symptoms or