

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HOLT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SHERMAN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING CONGRESSMAN JOHN PETERSON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, it's a rare privilege for me to rise here tonight.

As the senior Republican in the Pennsylvania delegation, I have certain opportunities and certain obligations. The one that I'm exercising this evening is one that I am particularly pleased to do, not without a certain reluctance, because I'm rising to honor a colleague of ours who is retiring and who has done a great deal for the State of Pennsylvania.

I have known Representative JOHN PETERSON, really, since 1981. JOHN PETERSON came to this body in 1996, and he has served with distinction for the last 12 years, but when I first knew JOHN PETERSON, he was then a member of the State House. He had been elected in 1977. He was recruited by local Republicans as the obvious choice when that vacancy occurred, and I first knew him as one of the most energetic members of the State House within the district of my boss and mentor who was then serving in the State Senate.

When Senator Kusse retired in 1984, again, JOHN PETERSON was the obvious person to succeed him into the State

Senate. There, JOHN PETERSON became known as one of the authorities on rural health care and as one of the strongest advocates for transportation improvements in western Pennsylvania.

So it was an obvious thing in 1996 when Congressman Bill Clinger decided to retire that JOHN PETERSON was an obvious but not an uncontested candidate for that seat. After a vigorous primary, which included some fairly famous names, JOHN PETERSON won the Republican primary, and went on to win a convincing election in the fall.

My colleague JOHN PETERSON has made a great mark on this institution in 12 years.

When he came to the House, he, rather rapidly, established himself as an advocate for rural issues, not only in western Pennsylvania but all over the country, and he has always been a prominent member of the Rural Caucus. Surprisingly, for a member of a delegation from one of the States, from a Commonwealth that was one of the original 13 colonies, he has also been a leading member of the Western Caucus because of the infinity of the issues within his district with western concerns.

Perhaps one of the great distinctions about JOHN PETERSON is his representing one of the largest districts, if not the largest district, east of the Mississippi. He has brought an extraordinary energy to the job of representing a district that runs from the Titusville area, in my neighborhood, all the way down to some of the farthest bedroom communities within our State capital area.

JOHN PETERSON, after a term in the House, naturally gravitated to a higher assignment, and he was selected by our party to be a member of the Appropriations Committee.

I have to tell you he has served there with extraordinary distinction. Early on, he has become an advocate and an expert in rural health care, and he has played a particularly critical role in increasing Medicare reimbursements for many rural health care providers.

As the individual who has represented the area that covers the Allegheny National Forest, one of the gems of our national forest system, he has become a strong advocate consistently for that area and for its potential to be an economic driver as well as a source of natural beauty in the region. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, he has been a strong and consistent advocate of resources for the Allegheny National Forest and for recreation in the region.

He has also been recognized as one of the strongest advocates of rural economic development, particularly in western Pennsylvania but particularly with a focus on job training. He has played consistently a critical and active role in encouraging local economic development organizations to develop a regional outlook and to become effective advocates across county lines.

He has been a strong advocate in this Chamber of a pro-growth energy policy, and it was JOHN PETERSON who before most other Members of this body had focused on the issue, and he became a strong and consistent advocate of opening up new opportunities for drilling within the United States to reduce our energy dependence.

It was JOHN PETERSON who repeatedly brought up within the Appropriations Committee, in the face of opposition from some Democrats and also from some Republicans, legislation to open up the Outer Continental Shelf for drilling, initially for natural gas but also for petroleum.

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JOHN PETERSON, before most people in this Chamber saw the critical importance of this issue as a way of driving down prices in the United States, became a strong advocate of addressing this issue head-on in lifting the ban that had been created by both Congress and the executive branch on drilling.

And I think it is a great tribute to him and, as he retires, must be a great source of satisfaction to see that this Congress has not continued that ban. This, I realize, is a controversial issue, but the beauty of my colleague is he's been able to engage people on both sides of the aisle on this issue and in a way that has even reached out to many people who he has initially disagreed with.

I, myself, have never seen my colleague more engaged than on the issue of tolling Interstate 80. I partnered with JOHN PETERSON just last year when this issue came up in this body in the wake of a decision by leaders in Harrisburg in our State capital and by the Turnpike Commission to attempt to toll the length of Interstate 80 utilizing a pilot project provision embedded in our Federal law. I had the privilege of seeing firsthand JOHN PETERSON's advocacy and his energy as he aggressively engaged both State officials and, ultimately, our U.S. Department of Transportation.

I must say the fact that we have recently received a decision from the U.S. Department of Transportation that effectively bars the tolling of Interstate 80 is a great tribute to his advocacy and also his ability to work with people like me and others to make the case.

JOHN PETERSON has decided this year to retire. I think that is a tribute to the love he bears for his family above everything else. But he leaves behind him a truly remarkable record as a public servant, as someone who's made his mark first in the State legislation, now in this body, someone who has always retained the vision and the inventiveness that comes from having been a small business man.

It's been a great privilege to serve with JOHN PETERSON, and my distinguished colleague from Pennsylvania will very much be missed. Certainly if there were ever a solution to the energy crisis, it would be to tap into his