

and Masters degree in Education. She continued her educational pursuits, receiving her Professional Degree in Administration and Supervision from St. John's University, and a PhD in Educational Leadership from Fordham University.

In 2003, Dr. Nimmons began an eight year career as Principal of Granville T. Woods Public School 335, which serves the predominantly African American, Crown Heights and Bedford Stutvesant Brooklyn neighborhoods. In this time Dr. Nimmons increased the passing rates in both mathematics and English courses by 67% and 61% respectively. With the guide of Dr. Nimmons P.S. 335 made the transformation, showing most gains of any other 4th grade students in New York State in mathematics and English. This earned the school the distinction of a National Blue Ribbon Award.

Prior to becoming Principal at Granville T. Woods School, Dr. Nimmons was the director of curriculum and instruction for Community School District Sixteen. In this capacity she directed elementary and middle school Principals and teachers in professional development activities in all curriculum areas. The district that was once one of the lowest performing in the city, now boasts better gains than many other New York City school districts in similar socioeconomic communities.

Dr. Nimmons has been awarded many prestigious awards for her dedicated service: the Terrell Bell Award for Excellence in Leadership, Educator of the Year Award in 2009 and 2011 from Education Update Magazine, and the 2010 Outstanding Educator of the Year from the Association of Black Educators in New York. Dr. Nimmons is currently a member of the Cahn Fellows Program for Distinguished Public School Principals at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Dr. Nimmons' leadership, compassion and knowledge make her an example to all in our community. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing the vast achievements of Dr. Laverne Nimmons.

THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE FOR THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

**HON. KATHLEEN C. HOCHUL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 8, 2011*

Ms. HOCHUL. Mr. Speaker, even though we are approaching the conclusion of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, we still live in a dangerous world. But if we look back over the past two decades we can see that considerable progress has been made.

In 1991 the Soviet Union disintegrated, according to our late, great Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a victim of ethnic tensions among the various and diverse republics that made up the USSR. Two decades later, much change has taken place in the former Soviet Union. Independent democracies have begun to emerge where once there were just brutal dictatorships. The Cold War is now over and we no longer have the same types of demands on our defense infrastructure prevalent of that era.

There is one former Soviet Republic that I would like to single out today and congratulate

on the 20th anniversary of its independence, the Republic of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan has been a good friend of the United States, cooperating with us on the war on terror and the program to prevent former Soviet nuclear weapons from falling into the wrong hands. Azerbaijan has also provided important logistical support to our forces in Afghanistan and sent over 150 soldiers to assist us in our efforts in that country.

As a secular Shiite Muslim country, Azerbaijan has been a role model. Before Azerbaijan was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1918, after the Russian Revolution, the country enjoyed a brief period of independence, and was the very first Muslim country to grant women the right to vote in 1918, two years before the United States did so with the ratification of the 19th Amendment.

Azerbaijan has also enjoyed strong relations with Israel and the over 12,000 Azeri Jews are treated as full members of that society. Unlike most Muslim countries, Azerbaijan has full diplomatic relations with Israel and has hosted Israeli President Shimon Peres on a state visit in 2009. Israel is also Azerbaijan's 5th largest trading partner, and Azerbaijan provides over one-sixth of Israel's oil supply. As a result of these strong relations, when almost 600 Israeli citizens were stranded in Georgia at the beginning of the Russian invasion of that country and the Tbilisi Airport closed, Azerbaijan sent buses to the Georgian border to help evacuate the Israelis.

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to concur with President Obama's statement on October 20, 2011 that "This 20th anniversary of independence, and Azerbaijan's achievements during this time, demonstrate the extraordinary promise and determination of the Azeri people. The United States is committed to developing greater opportunities to work with the Government and people of Azerbaijan."

TRIBUTE TO BEN MCKINNON,  
"GODFATHER OF BIRMINGHAM  
RADIO"

**HON. JO BONNER**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 8, 2011*

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to one of Alabama's radio pioneers, Mr. Ben McKinnon, who recently passed away at the age of 89. An influential force in broadcasting throughout the Southeast, Ben was perhaps best known as the "Godfather" of Birmingham radio.

Born in Maxton, North Carolina, Ben graduated from the University of North Carolina with an AB in Journalism. As the nation became involved in the Second World War, Ben answered his country's call to duty by serving as a line officer in the U.S. Navy. Seeing action in both the Atlantic and Pacific theatres, Ben led one of the major assault waves on Yellow Beach in Okinawa.

Upon returning home from the war, Ben traded his service pistol for a typewriter as editor of three weekly newspapers in his home county. But it wasn't long before his gaze turned toward the growing broadcast industry. He soon joined the staff of legendary Charlotte radio station WBT as local sales manager. Three years later he was hired as general

manager of television station WGVL in Greenville, SC. His skills as a manager quickly brought him down to Alabama where he took the reins of Birmingham radio station WSGN. From that point on, he would call Alabama's largest city his home.

As vice president and general manager and later president of WSGN, Ben transformed the radio station into a dominant player in Birmingham and north Alabama broadcasting. Under his leadership, WSGN—known as "The Big 610"—thundered across the airwaves with the Magic City's first full-time "top 40" format. For those who listened to radio in the 50s and 60s, rock 'n roll was king. Under Ben's direction, WSGN proudly wore the crown in Birmingham radio and earned a spot as one of the nation's top rock 'n roll stations.

Upon his retirement after 28 years with WSGN, Ben remained a strong voice in the state's communications industry. As executive director of the Alabama Broadcasters Association, he was a frequent visitor to Washington, DC to advocate on behalf of our local radio and television stations. He led the ABA for 18 years before retiring a second time.

Mr. Speaker, Ben's awards and accomplishments are, frankly, too extensive to list here. He was active in numerous major Birmingham area community service organizations for decades, ranging from board member of the Jefferson County March of Dimes and the Birmingham Chapter of the American Red Cross, to president of the Jefferson County Chapter of the American Cancer Society—to name but a few.

His remarkable career and many contributions to society are further highlighted by an impressive array of recognitions including the Thad Holt Distinguished Broadcaster Award from the University of Alabama School of Communications, the Silver Plate Award from the South Carolina Association of Broadcasters, the Broadcaster of the Year Award from the Alabama Broadcasters Association, and the National Association of Broadcasters State Executive of the Year Award.

On behalf of the people of Alabama, I wish to offer condolences to Ben's daughters, Sharon Bruns, Ellen McKinnon and Lisa McKinnon; and grandchildren and many friends. You are each in our thoughts and prayers. Ben was well loved and will be sorely missed.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE CAREER AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE HONORABLE NETTIE MAYERSOHN

**HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 8, 2011*

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the exceptional achievements and outstanding career of New York State Assemblywoman Nettie Mayersohn. Nettie was the political midwife to a generation of young politicians in New York. She spent decades working tirelessly for the people of Queens, and I know I speak for many when I say that her recent retirement from the Assembly has truly marked the end of an era. Nettie is being honored this week for her innumerable accomplishments over many years by the Stevenson Regular Democratic Club at its