

also be afforded the fullest protection of our legal system.

I urge a no vote and I hope that the Majority comes to its sense, embraces bipartisanship, and comes back with a bill I can support.

CELEBRATING STEVE TOTH, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF TROY, MI

HON. GARY C. PETERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2012

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Steve Toth, the Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Club of Troy, on the occasion of his retirement, after 16 years of service.

Steve's service to the Troy community has extended well beyond the walls of the Boys and Girls Club. He has been a leader—taking action and bringing elements of Troy's diverse groups together to build a stronger, more connected community. For the last 15 years, he has been a member of the Troy Kiwanis Club and served terms as its Treasurer and President. Furthermore, he has volunteered his time mentoring youth in sports and spent the last eleven years as a soccer referee and trainer for middle school students. Steve has also been active in his church and has taken time each of the last three years to deliver food containers to seniors living in Troy.

Steve's passion and dedication for helping others have not only earned him the respect and praise of other community leaders, but a number of awards and recognitions. Among those honors is a 2004 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Keep the Dream Alive Award" from the Archdiocese of Detroit for his support of the South Oakland Shelter project and his Parish's Giving Tree Programs. Steve has also been recognized by Leadership Troy as Troy's Outstanding Citizen of the Year in 2009 for his volunteer work in the community.

However, among all of his endeavors in the last 16 years, there is nowhere Steve's passion, vision and service have been more profoundly felt than at the Boys and Girls Club of Troy. When Steve arrived at the Club, he brought with him his 18 years of prior experience as an Executive Director for two of the YMCA's centers in Michigan. In 2006, after a decade of work at the Boys and Girls Club, Steve used his knowledge and experience to engage its board and the broader community in a campaign to construct a new 18,000 square foot, state-of-the-art, facility. This facility had allowed the Club to offer an innovative and comprehensive set of programs that help its 30,000 annual attendees build their leadership skills and take an active role in shaping their futures for the better.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating Steve's impact not only on the Troy community, but on the youth whose futures he has helped to build. I know he will surely be missed by all who have benefitted from his wisdom, his passion and his determination to engage our youth. I wish Steve many years of happiness in retirement, with his wife Ann and their family and I know he will continue to heed the call to serve the Troy community.

CELEBRATING THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF BOYER LODGE NO. 1 FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS PRINCE HALL AFFILIATION OF NEW YORK CITY

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2012

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of National Black History Month to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of Boyer Lodge No. 1 of the Free and Accepted Masons Prince Hall Affiliation of New York City. February 16, 1812, marked the birth and beginning of Prince Hall Freemasonry in the State of New York. The Charter was issued by Peter Lew, Grand Master of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.

History notes that Boyer Lodge No. 1 was named after Jean Pierre Boyer, a native of Saint-Domingue, who was born around February 15, 1776. He was a courageous soldier and leader of the Haitian Revolution, who served as a General under Toussaint L' Ouverture in the Haitian War of Independence against the French Government. Jean Pierre Boyer served as the fourth President of Haiti from 1818 to 1843, and managed to rule for the longest period of time of any of the revolutionary leaders of his generation. He reunited the north and south of Haiti in 1820 and also invaded and took control of Santo Domingo, which brought all of Hispaniola under one government by 1822. Under President Boyer's leadership, Haiti declared independence from France in 1825, becoming the only free Black nation, then in existence.

As stated by Worshipful Master Carlo Smith-Ramsay, "The daring price that our ancestors paid to boldly and audaciously decide to become Freemasons at a time in history when men of color were not entirely free men and the laws of the land provided them very little protection is the reason why we should humbly and reverently celebrate our Bi-centennial Anniversary of Boyer Lodge No. 1."

President Jean Pierre Boyer recruited freed American blacks to immigrate to the Republic of Haiti, using advertisement opportunities in newspapers, promising free land and political opportunity to black settlers. He sent agents to black communities in the United States to convince them that Haiti was a sovereign state and open to immigration only for blacks. In September of 1824, nearly 6,000 Americans, mostly free people of color, migrated to Haiti within a year, with ships departing from New York, Baltimore and Philadelphia. Unfortunately, due to the poverty of the island and the inability of President Boyer's administration to help support the new immigrants in the transition most returned to the United States. Boyer ruled the island of Hispaniola until 1843, when he lost the support of the ruling elite and was ousted. He was later exiled to France where he died in 1850.

Since its founding, Boyer Lodge #1 has met continuously for One Hundred and Ninety Four years. In 1826, The Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts helped further expand Black Freemasonry in New York State by the Chartering of Celestial Lodge, Rising Sun Lodge and Hiram Lodge. On March 14, 1845, further progress was achieved when Boyer Lodge #1, Celestial Lodge #2, Rising Sun Lodge #3 and

Hiram Lodge #4 convened and erected Boyer Grand Lodge of New York. Thus becoming, "The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the State of New York."

Prince Hall Freemasonry derives from historical events which led to a tradition of separate predominantly African-American Freemasonry in North America. It consists of independent Grand Lodges, which are considered regular by the United Grand Lodge of England. Prince Hall was born in 1735 and was a tireless abolitionist and a leader of the free black community in Boston. Hall tried to gain New England's enslaved and free blacks a place in some of the most crucial spheres of society, Freemasonry, education and the military. He is considered the founder of "Black Freemasonry" in the United States, known today as Prince Hall Freemasonry. Prince Hall formed the African Grand Lodge of North America.

On March 6, 1775, Prince Hall was made a Master Mason in Irish Constitution Military Lodge No. 441, along with fourteen other African Americans: Cyrus Johnston, Bueston Slinger, Prince Rees, John Canton, Peter Freeman, Benjamin Tiler, Duff Ruform, Thomas Santerson, Prince Rayden, Cato Spain, Boston Smith, Peter Best, Forten Howard, and Richard Titley, all of whom apparently were free by birth. Prince Hall was unanimously elected its Grand Master and served until his death in 1807. Most Worshipful Grand Master Prince Hall is considered the first black community activist of his time, who made many appearances before the Boston City Council and Massachusetts Colony Legislature. Prince Hall had a passion for learning and education and operated a school in the basement of his home. He also lobbied tirelessly for education rights for black children and a back-to-Africa movement. Many historians regard Prince Hall as one of the more prominent African American leaders throughout the early national-period of the United States.

The Prince Hall Lodge, formerly known as the African Lodge is the oldest fraternal organization in the country and has been a leading influence in the lives of black men in America. During the abolitionist movement, African American churches and the Prince Hall Lodges emerged at the forefront of the struggle. As stated by Most Worshipful Grand Master Reverend Dr. Gregory R. Smith, "In essence, and more often than not, members and church members were one and the same. This was the case with both Lattion, who was the First Worshipful Master of Boyer Lodge and a member of Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and James Varrick, the first Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and charter member of the Boyer Lodge."

Both the church, particularly the Mother AME Zion Church, formerly known as the "Freedom Church" and the Masons played prominent roles in the Underground Railroad. Many Masons were captains and conductors on the Railroad and Mother Zion earned its "Freedom Church" name by being one of the major stops on this complex network, which contributed to the freedom of more than 100,000 slaves. Today, the Mother AME Zion Church is the oldest existing African American institution in New York—and Boyer Lodge is the oldest lodge in the Prince Hall fraternity and the third oldest African American institution in New York State.