

Mr. Speaker, we owe a debt of gratitude to each and every one of them and to all who defend our freedom by serving in the United States Armed Forces. It is my honor to recognize these young leaders here today.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF HUGH
M. FLANAGAN

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 23, 2013

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Judge Hugh Michael Flanagan who will retire from the Merced County Superior Court after thirteen years of service. His service and dedication to the people of central California is to be commended.

Judge Flanagan was raised in Fortville, Indiana where he completed his grammar and high school education. He received his Bachelor's degree in Engineering from Purdue University and his Master's degree in Engineering from Michigan State University. Judge Flanagan is also a graduate with distinction from the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

While in the United States Navy, Judge Flanagan worked as a Senior Systems Engineer with the Deep Submarine Rescue Vehicle Program and the Omega Navigation System. He completed his career with the United States Navy as a Captain, JAGC, USNR. Following his service in the military, Judge Flanagan earned his law degree from Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. He worked as a lawyer for five years in Los Angeles before opening his private practice law firm in Merced in 1975, which he maintained for 25 years. He was elected to the Merced County Superior Court in 2000, where he was able to continue his lifelong tradition of public service.

Being an active member of his community is something of utmost importance to Judge Flanagan. He is a Past President of the Merced County Bar Association and the Merced Rotary Club and has been active in numerous other civic organizations and fundraising activities. His invaluable service to our community illustrates his helpful nature and commitment to the betterment of Merced County.

In 1962, Judge Flanagan married his beautiful wife, Norma Colegrove Flanagan in Champaign, Illinois. Together, they have four grown, married sons and six grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in honoring Judge Hugh Michael Flanagan for his efforts and dedication to the Superior Court of California and the County of Merced. He exemplifies the best of what our nation has to offer and his dedication to justice is truly admirable.

TRASH REDUCTION ACT OF 2013

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 23, 2013

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, our 315 million American citizens throw away nearly 496 billion pounds of trash each year, a staggering

amount by any analysis. And a sizable contribution is from disposable items, including plastic and paper bags. That's why today, one day after Earth Day, I am introducing the "Trash Reduction Act of 2013" along with my colleagues Representatives ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, EARL BLUMENAUER and JOHN GARAMENDI.

The legislation is modeled after the District of Columbia's "bag tax." Five cents would be levied on each disposable paper or plastic bag. Revenue from the tax would support the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Just how bad is the trash problem? According to the U.S. EPA, the average American throws away about 4.4 pounds of trash each day or 1,600 pounds per year. That's nearly 248 million tons of American garbage each year. To put that in perspective, it's enough trash to fill a football-field-sized hole over 93 miles deep. Or create a similar-sized stack of garbage that reaches low earth orbit. This amount of trash could cover the state of Texas two and a half times or fill enough trash trucks to form a line to the moon.

We consume an estimated 12 million barrels of oil and copious amounts of natural gas annually to make plastic bags that are used once or twice, then tossed into the garbage. The U.S. International Trade Commission reported in 2009 that 102 billion plastic bags were used in the U.S. Much of the oil and natural gas used in those bags comes from foreign countries and it's all non-renewable. Once it's used for plastic bags and thrown away, that energy is gone forever.

Disposable paper bags are no better. In 1999, 14 million trees were cut to produce the 10 billion paper grocery bags used by Americans that year alone. Paper and paperboard products made up 28.5 percent of the municipal waste discarded in 2010—more than any other type of refuse measured by tonnage. According to the Environmental Paper Network, the pulp and paper industry is the fourth largest emitter of greenhouse gases among manufacturing industries, contributing 9 percent of total manufacturing-related carbon dioxide emissions. Most of energy use comes from powering paper mills.

There is no doubt that disposable retail plastic and paper bags are bad for the environment. Both paper and plastic bags consume valuable natural resources, generate profuse waste, and pollute the environment. They keep us dependent on nonrenewable resources like foreign oil and impose burdens that Americans bear in the form of higher garbage costs, visual blight, and the destruction of wildlife. Millions of animals are entangled in or ingest plastic waste. That same waste leaches toxins into the ground and our drinking water.

While recycling efforts should be applauded, recycling rates are dismally low. Only between one and three percent of all plastic bags are recycled, with a slightly higher ten to 15 percent paper-bag-recycling rate. Plus, the recycling process uses energy, water, and generates additional greenhouse gasses.

But we can do something about this gargantuan garbage nightmare. We can reduce the number of bags we use with market-based incentives. Requiring shoppers to internalize the costs of disposable bags has been shown to dramatically reduce their use and substantially increase reusable bag utilization. For example, after placing a fee on plastic bags, Ire-

land reportedly reduced consumption by 90 percent. China, after banning the use of ultra-thin plastic bags, is estimated to have eliminated 40 billion bags in the first year.

Critics have called this a regressive tax that falls on poor communities. This is simply untrue. Wealthy Americans consume substantially more resources and disposable shopping bags than the poor. Additionally, Americans of all incomes can purchase or be given a reusable bag and avoid this fee altogether. Plus, this fee is good for business. Business will be able to recoup their investment of time and effort through a tax credit and profits from reusable bag sales.

One need look no further than the District of Columbia to measure success. In 2009 the District imposed a five-cent tax on plastic bags that led to spectacular reductions in disposable bag use. The number of plastic bags dropped from the 2009 monthly average of 22.5 million to just 3 million per month by the end of 2010. River cleanup volunteers reported over a 60 percent decrease in the volume of plastic bags they collected during cleanup activities—and this was only three months after the fee took effect.

D.C. businesses approve of the fee as well. 78 percent of businesses interviewed report either a positive or neutral impact on their business. People keep shopping and keep buying. 58 percent of D.C. business owners say the law has not affected their sales. And it's those dire predictions of falling sales that were used to scare business owners into opposing the fee. It's one of the many false predictions of bag-fee opponents like the American Chemistry Council.

The public and many elected officials are not always in sync with what we need to do to improve this great country. High-pressure lobbying by powerful chemical interests sometimes stops us from doing what's right. While we can be proud of our environmental achievements and landmark laws, we need to do more to reduce our mountains of trash madness. Nothing is more fitting for this year's Earth Day celebration than helping reduce garbage.

This small disposable bag charge helps people understand that paper and plastic bags are not without cost. They impact the environment, support foreign dictators, and make Everest's of trash. Our bill begins to shift America away from its current disposable culture back to a simpler time when Americans understood the value of reusing what they bought.

IN HONOR OF THE SIXTH GRADE
CLASS OF LAUREL SPRINGS
SCHOOL

HON. ROBERT E. ANDREWS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 23, 2013

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the efforts of the sixth grade class of Laurel Springs School. These students took it upon themselves to honor the centennial of their hometown by writing and performing in a historical play last week.

The sixth graders involved with putting on the play to honor the history of their town are Olivia Baldino, Kejsi Bocaj, William Brandley, Elizabeth Brown, Joelle Burns, Craig Caruso,