

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ART CONTEST WINNER JESSICA CHAI

**HON. PETE OLSON**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 10, 2015*

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jessica Chai of Katy's Roosevelt Alexander Elementary School for being one of only thirteen winning students of the Don't Mess with Texas Elementary School Art Contest.

Jessica, currently in the fourth grade, is one of the thirteen winners selected from the 8,228 elementary school students from across Texas who entered the contest. Keep Texas Beautiful and the Texas Department of Transportation selected the contest winners who displayed tremendous artistic talent, dedication, and creativity. Jessica's submission will appear in the 2016 Don't Mess with Texas Calendar and will be displayed on the Keep Texas Beautiful and Don't Mess with Texas websites. Her work will even be showcased at the Keep Texas Beautiful's 2015 Annual Conference.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, congratulations again to Jessica for being selected as one of the winners of the Don't Mess with Texas Elementary School Art Contest.

IN RECOGNITION OF DÍA DE PORTUGAL

**HON. JIM COSTA**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 10, 2015*

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my colleagues Mr. VALADAO of California, Mr. CICILLINE of Rhode Island, Mr. NUNES of California, Mr. LANGEVIN of Rhode Island, Mr. MCGOVERN of Massachusetts, Mr. KEATING of Massachusetts, and Mr. HONDA of California to recognize Día de Portugal and to champion the strong bond between the United States and Portugal. Celebrated on June 10 each year, Día de Portugal recognizes Portugal's beautiful heritage and culture.

Día de Portugal honors the death of the revered Portuguese poet Luis Vaz de Camões in 1580. Camões is famously known for *Os Lusíadas*, one of Portugal's most treasured literary works. The poem pays tribute to Portugal's golden age of exploration and celebrates the many monumental discoveries made by Portuguese explorers in the 15th century.

Vibrant Portuguese American communities can be seen across our nation from Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island, to California and Hawaii. These communities are filled with over 1.3 million Americans of Portuguese descent who have been making positive contributions to our society for generations. We are a nation of immigrants, and celebrations like Día de Portugal remind us all that it is important to remain connected to our own individual heritage.

The United States and Portugal maintain a robust relationship, and have been connected ever since the Portuguese were among the

first to recognize the U.S. as an independent nation at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. President George Washington formalized diplomatic relations on February 21, 1791, and our oldest continuously-operated U.S. Consulate in the world is located in Ponta Delgada on the island of São Miguel in the Azores.

Mr. Speaker, on this Día de Portugal, we are reminded that our special relationship with Portugal must be continuously strengthened. As U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has said, "The strong partnership between our two countries is more vital than ever." This day celebrates the accomplishments of Portuguese and Portuguese Americans, and we congratulate these communities on their global impact and achievement.

IN HONOR OF ALAN SLOBODIEN, UPON HIS RETIREMENT FROM VERNON YOUTH SERVICES

**HON. JOE COURTNEY**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 10, 2015*

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize an exceptional public servant from my hometown of Vernon, Connecticut, Mr. Alan Slobodien, and mark his retirement from Vernon Youth Services.

Over the past 20 years, Alan has ably served as the director of Vernon Youth Services, an organization devoted to ensuring that "all Vernon children birth to age 18 are safe, healthy, and productive." It is with this goal in mind that Alan has developed forward-thinking programming and policies to engage young people in our town, ensure that they have safe places to learn and play, and have opportunities for success in the future. His commitment to Vernon's youth is unparalleled, and his optimism about Vernon's future has resulted in real, recognizable benefits for our community. With Al at the helm, Vernon Youth Services through summer nutrition programs, tutoring, to homework support, has continued to make Vernon an ideal place to raise children.

On a personal note, I first met Al over 30 years ago when I was the Assistant Public Defender at the Rockville Superior Court and Al was an invaluable contact to get help for young clients. He was incredibly resourceful, sizing up the needs of young people in trouble with the law and designing treatment programs that helped both the community and the person. He had a wonderful combination of compassion and smarts that I really admired. Despite the sometimes hopeless circumstances he tried to fix, he never lost his optimism about people and their potential to change for the better. What an inspiration to all of us.

Please join me in congratulating Alan on his decades of remarkable service to his community, and wishing him and his family a rewarding, and well-deserved retirement.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL MESSINA

**HON. JUDY CHU**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 10, 2015*

Ms. JUDY CHU of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary life

and achievements of my friend, Michael Messina, former Mayor and City Councilmember of Alhambra, who passed away on April 10, 2015.

Michael was devoted to his city and his community. A lifelong resident of Alhambra who attended Ramona Elementary School and Alhambra High School, he graduated from California State University Los Angeles, and remained a resident of Alhambra until his passing.

In 1979, Michael began his public service career, serving on the Alhambra City Council from 1979 to 1986, and as Mayor in 1982 and 1986. During this time, Michael dedicated himself to improving the city and community he loved.

Michael was driven to help businesses to flourish in Alhambra and thanks to his efforts, downtown Alhambra is now a thriving commercial center with restaurants and businesses, giving the intersection of Main and Garfield streets a "Main Street USA" feel. Michael worked to expand development, tackling things as instrumental as repaving streets and sidewalks to paving the way for Price Club (now Costco) to come to Alhambra, which has become the largest retail tax producer in the city. He also personally led a city delegation to meet with the founder and CEO of Mervyns Department stores, as he was convinced that such an addition would bring even more business to the city center, and he was right. Mervyns planted its roots in Alhambra, and stores followed, including the Alhambra Place shopping center, which is still the center of retail in the city today, and every year hosts the "Taste of Alhambra" Festival. This is all thanks to Michael's vision for his city.

As the population of Los Angeles County grew in the past 20 years, Michael fought to increase his community's access to transportation and to bring down congestion in the area. He was a champion of seniors, expanding programs like Senior Ride and Senior Housing, and he believed deeply in the public spaces of Alhambra, increasing the capacity of the Parks and Recreation department, so everyone in the city could enjoy the beautiful outdoor spaces in the San Gabriel Valley. For him, civil service was about the people and the community he loved.

Even when he left the Alhambra City Council, Michael remained as a key figure in the community, eventually sitting on the Oversight Board for the city. He was a devoted parishioner of All Souls Church, and volunteered with Meals on Wheels, Knights of Columbus, the Alhambra Exchange Club, the Foundation for the Blind, and was president of the local St. Vincent de Paul Society. No matter what he did, Michael was determined to give back. Michael's dedication to Alhambra was an inspiration, and when I was first elected Mayor of the neighboring city of Monterey Park in 1988, I looked to Michael as an example of a true public servant.

There is no doubt that Alhambra has lost one of its most devoted citizens and most stalwart champions. We are thankful for his many years of service, and will continue to honor his legacy of leadership and commitment to our community.