

Armenia's growing tourist industry prides itself on the nation's fascinating history.

Armenian-Americans are contributing to the development of their homeland by investing and promoting the nation on the international stage. Today is a great day for them and their homeland. I congratulate Armenia on 15 years of freedom and progress and trust that our nations will grow even closer in the future as we seek to promote liberty around the world.

ANOTHER NASA SUCCESS

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 21, 2006

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) successfully completed another space shuttle mission with this morning's landing of the Space Shuttle *Atlantis* and the completion of the STS-115 mission. Launched on September 9, STS-115 is the 116th space shuttle mission, and the first since 2002 to include work on assembling and expanding the International Space Station. The successful completion of the STS-115 mission puts the space station back on the road to completion.

The major accomplishments of the STS-115 mission include the delivery and installation of the massive P3/P4 truss—an integral part of the space station's backbone—and two sets of solar arrays that will eventually provide one quarter of the space station's power. The crew's other accomplishments include preparing an important radiator for later activation, installing a signal processor and transponder that transmit voice and data to the ground, and performing other tasks to upgrade and protect the space station's systems.

The STS-115 mission is the first time a procedure called "camp out" was implemented. A "camp out" is where astronauts sleep in the Quest airlock prior to their space walks. The process shortens the "prebreathe" time during which nitrogen is purged from the astronauts' systems and air pressure is lowered so the space walkers avoid the condition known as the bends. The "camp out" procedure enabled the astronauts to perform more than the number of scheduled activities on each of the mission's three space walks.

The *Atlantis*'s crew preformed unprecedented robotics work on this mission. The crew used the shuttle's arm in a delicate maneuver to hand off the school bus-sized truss to the space station's arm, and also moved the space station's robotic arm to a position where it will assist in the next phase of station construction. Perhaps most significantly, the *Atlantis* crew preformed the first full fly around of the space station since before the Space Shuttle *Columbia* accident. Thanks to the fly around, ground crews now have a better perspective on the space station's environment and overall exterior health.

Coming less than 2 months after the successful mission of the Space Shuttle *Discovery*, the *Atlantis* mission is another demonstration of the skills and dedication of all NASA personnel. I therefore urge all my colleagues join me in extending congratulations to NASA for the successful completion of the *Atlantis* mission. And extend a special thank you to *Atlantis*'s crew of Commander Brent

Jett, Mission Specialist Joe Tanner, Mission Specialist Steve MacLean, Pilot Chris Ferguson, Mission Specialist Dan Burbank, and Mission Specialist Heide Stefanyshyn-Piper, and the ground team that worked with the shuttle crew to make this mission a success.

RECOGNIZING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF BETTY BUCK

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 21, 2006

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I want to offer my congratulations today to my good friend and Fifth District constituent, Betty Buck of Upper Marlboro, Maryland, who was recently elected as the Chairman of the National Beer Wholesalers Association. Betty is well known for her leadership in the State of Maryland, and this week she made history by being elected the first woman to lead this important national business trade association.

Betty is the President of Buck Distributing, a beer wholesaler in my District, where she oversees a business with annual sales of more than \$40 million and employs more than 100 workers. This is not the first time that Betty's professional vision and competence have elevated her to a leadership position. She has been recognized for her business acumen by serving on the Committee of America's Women Business Leaders and as a past Director of the Greater Washington Board of Trade. In addition, she was named one of the Most Powerful Women in Washington in 1997, and was selected to be a member of the Top 500 Women Owned Business Group and the Top 25 Women Who Mean Business by the Washington Business Journal.

Betty is also a dedicated public servant who is deeply concerned about our community. She has served on numerous boards and foundations in the greater Washington, D.C., area, including the Prince George's Hospital Foundation, the University of Maryland's Foundation Board of Directors, and United Cerebral Palsy.

In addition to her charity work, Betty has also given her time and expertise to her community by serving as a member of the Maryland Judicial Compensation Committee, the Anne Arundel Planning Advisory Board, and the University of Maryland Commission for School Cooperation.

It is a testament to Betty's talents that she has accomplished so much in the professional world while also raising a wonderful family, including her children Kelly, Erin, Tim and Dan.

Mr. Speaker, Betty Buck is an inspiration to all those who desire a career in business and who also want to raise a family and be engaged in their community. I salute her efforts, as she rises to the position of Chairman of the National Beer Wholesalers Association.

CONGRATULATING SILVER STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ON CELEBRATING 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF NEW ALBANY, INDIANA

HON. MICHAEL E. SODREL

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 21, 2006

Mr. SODREL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a minute to recognize an elementary school in my district for a truly significant occasion. Silver Street Elementary School in New Albany, IN will celebrate its 90th Anniversary on September 11, 2006, and will welcome another class this year to continue its history of educating the youth of New Albany.

Silver Street Elementary first opened its doors in 1916. Since then, many generations have passed through its halls. The long history of Silver Street allows grandparents to watch their grandkids walk the same halls they once did years before.

Silver Street has continued to be an excellent education institution. Last month, the school received the first Exemplary Award from the State for improving each year in the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress test scores.

The philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau once wrote, "We are born weak, we need strength; helpless, we need aid; foolish, we need reason. All that we lack at birth, all that we need when we come to man's estate, is the gift of education." Silver Street Elementary has provided this gift for 90 years and the teachers, administrators and parents involved who provided this valuable service to the New Albany community should be commended.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize this fine elementary school that has educated many Hoosiers from Southern Indiana. It is an honor to have a historic building still being utilized for educational purposes in the district I represent. Congratulations to Silver Street Elementary for 90 years of success.

MILITARY PERSONNEL FINANCIAL SERVICES PROTECTION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 20, 2006

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, as a supporter of ensuring our service personnel have access to a wide range of financial products I am concerned with the provision of the Military Personnel Financial Services Protection Act, S. 418, enacting a complete prohibition on so-called contractual or periodic payment mutual funds, which, according to testimony received by the House Committee on Financial Services, are sold voluntarily with full disclosure to officers at individual meetings held off base.

This is the first time in recent memory that this committee has ever proposed banning a product that is fully permissible under current law and that—again according to testimony received by the committee—is used by thousands of senior military officials to facilitate their financial security. Specifically, we were told that the clients of First Command Financial Planning, the Texas-based company principally involved in this market, has invested

\$734.4 million aggregate in these accounts in 2004. The sales charge on that amount was about \$44 million, or about six percent. What is the basis for outlawing a product that over half a million individuals, including half the flag officers on active duty at the time, had freely chosen? Do we really believe that individuals charged with the deployment of billions of dollars of military equipment, are not sophisticated enough to make their own financial decisions?

When the Congress last looked at this product in 1970, we recognized periodic payment mutual funds are a valuable means to help encourage savings by people who do not have large amounts of discretionary income. I have seen no evidence in the record indicating that the judgment then was incorrect. In fact, testimony received by the Financial Services Committee indicates that these periodic payment mutual funds are working for those military members choosing to utilize them.

Before voting on S. 418, Congress should consider whether it is in the best interests of our armed services to substitute our judgment for theirs by banning a financial product that the armed services deem well-suited for their financial security.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Enhanced Options for Rural Health Care Act. This legislation allows critical access hospitals to use beds designated for critical access use, but currently not being used for that purpose, for assisted living services financed by private payments.

This bill will help improve the financial status of small rural hospitals and extend the health care options available to people living in rural areas without increasing federal expenditures. Currently, fear that rural hospitals will lose critical access status if beds designated for critical access are used for another purpose is causing rural hospitals to allow beds not needed for a critical access purpose to remain unused. This deprives rural hospitals of a much-needed revenue stream and deprives residents of rural areas of access to needed health care services.

My colleagues may be interested to know that the idea for this bill comes from Marcella Henke, an administrator of Jackson County Hospital, a critical access hospital in my congressional district. Ms. Henke conceived of this idea as a way to meet the increasing demand for assisted living services in rural areas and provide hospitals with a profitable way to use beds not being used for critical access purposes. I urge my colleagues to embrace this practical way of strengthening rural health care without increasing federal expenditures by cosponsoring the Enhanced Options for Rural Health Care Act.

HONORING SEAN T. CONNAUGHTON

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 21, 2006

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor for Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia and myself to recognize The Honorable Sean T. Connaughton, former Prince William Board of County Supervisors chairman. Sean was recently confirmed as Maritime Administrator in the Department of Transportation and his education and experience will serve him well at the federal level.

We want to take this opportunity to recognize the dedication that Mr. Connaughton showed the people of northern Virginia as Prince William chairman. At a time when northern Virginia was experiencing heavy population growth, Mr. Connaughton took his responsibilities as an elected official very seriously. Prince William's financial resources were well managed and Mr. Connaughton made significant improvements in terms of education, economic development, public safety, and transportation. On behalf of Virginia's 10th and 11th districts we want to thank Chairman Connaughton on his exemplary service.

Mr. Connaughton is a U.S. Naval War College graduate and alumni of the Merchant Marine Academy. While serving as Prince William chairman he also worked as an attorney dealing with maritime laws and is a part of the Maritime Law Association. A U.S. Naval Reserve commander and former active-duty member of the U.S. Coast Guard, his accomplishments speak for themselves. We have every reason to believe that Mr. Connaughton will be an asset to the Department of Transportation and want to congratulate him upon his confirmation.

IN RECOGNITION OF
JAMES BARR III

HON. MARK GREEN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 21, 2006

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor and pleasure to recognize before this House TDS Telecommunication Corporation's President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) James Barr III.

For seventeen years, James Barr has been an exemplary leader of a growing Wisconsin business and has served the telecommunications industry with both integrity and distinction. He has played an integral role in the development of TDS Telecom, quintupling annual revenue to more than \$900 million and successfully elevating the company to the sixth largest independent telephone company in the country.

Not only did Barr build a customer-focused organization that has won many awards for customer care, he touched the lives of numerous employees which helped him create a vibrant organization with 3200 employees serving 1.2 million customers in 29 states.

But beyond his hard work and dedication on the job Barr is above all else an upstanding person. Barr has been an excellent leader of several telecommunications boards and service organizations including the United Way of Dane County as well as a caring and supportive husband, father and grandfather.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Barr should be commended for his outstanding contributions to the telecommunications industry as well as the great state of Wisconsin. I congratulate him on his years of service and exemplary citizenship and wish him the best in his retirement.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION
OF H.R. 4844, FEDERAL ELECTION
INTEGRITY ACT OF 2006

SPEECH OF

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 20, 2006

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this bill in its present form.

Having taken an oath to uphold the Constitution, I have a solemn responsibility to vote against even the most politically popular proposals when there are serious doubts about the constitutionality of the legislation. And this bill, transparently brought forward to help the Republican majority whip up public emotions on the eve of a tough election, poses serious constitutional problems—in short, I think it violates the 24th Amendment.

That amendment, added to the Constitution in 1964, says that the rights of Americans to vote in federal elections “shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax” and that Congress “shall have the power to enforce” that part of the Constitution.

But instead of enforcing that constitutional bar on making voting a taxable event, this bill would require states to choose between making some people pay to vote and paying to provide them with the identification that the bill says will be required if they want to exercise that right.

The bill's supporters say the bill is constitutional because it says that states cannot make everyone pay for identification—they have to provide it free to people who cannot afford the “reasonable cost” of providing it.

But the 24th Amendment is not ambiguous on whether it is permissible to make some people pay to vote, so long as they can afford it. Instead, it makes clear that no Americans—regardless of their income—can be forced to pay “any . . . tax” in order to vote.

And while some may argue that paying for a government-issued ID is not a tax, but just some kind of “user fee,” I am not persuaded—and I would remind them of the words of Richard Darman, OMB Director under President Reagan, who said that “if it looks like a duck and walks like a duck and quacks like duck, it is a duck, [and] euphemisms like user fees will not fool the public.”

That's one of the reasons the National Association of Counties (NACo) opposes the bill—because, as they say in their letter to the Speaker and Minority Leader, “we fear that any fee imposed on other voters [besides those claiming to be too poor to afford an ID] could be characterized as a poll tax and be subject to challenge in court.”

Further, aside from the constitutional questions, both NACo and the National Conference of State Legislatures oppose the bill because it would impose a burdensome unfunded mandate on every state and every local government. And, as the Conference points out, the bill “is duplicative” and “adds bureaucratic burdens that are completely unnecessary. The REAL ID Act, flawed though it is, already requires a new state identification system based on legal presence . . . This second identification system would be used only for voting [but the Help America Vote Act] . . . and state and local election procedures