

and compiling documents which resulted in authoring a book entitled, "Black America Series: Orlando, Florida," in 2003. She is also credited with preserving one of Orlando's unique landmarks, The Wells' Built Hotel, which housed some of America's most prominent citizens, including Justice Thurgood Marshall, Ray Charles, Ella Fitzgerald, Jackie Robinson and many more. She helped to secure funds to convert the hotel into a museum which is known today as The Wells' Built Museum of African American History.

In November of 2006, she was elected by the constituents of District 39 in Orlando to serve as the first African-American female to represent Orange County in the Florida House of Representatives. During her tenure in the House she has filed legislation to outlaw the mutilation of young women, increase penalties for hate crime perpetrators, provide \$1.8 million in trust fund monies for a student who was injured in a local public school, and increase access to healthcare for women diagnosed with breast cancer. On November 18, 2008, she was unanimously selected by her legislative colleagues to serve as the Democratic Leader Pro Tempore, the second highest ranking Democrat in the Florida House of Representatives.

Madam Speaker, as Black History Month comes to a close, it is with great honor that I highlight my friend and fellow champion for human and civil rights Geraldine "Geri" Thompson. State Representative Thompson has been a crucial advocate for women's rights and the African-American community. She is a true role model and example of what a public servant should be. Her numerous contributions will leave a lasting legacy in our central Florida community, in the state of Florida, and for her family. I know her husband, the Honorable Emerson R. Thompson, Jr., and her three children, Laurise, Emerson III, and Elizabeth, and her four grandchildren are proud of what she has accomplished. We all benefit from her service and dedication.

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 78TH BIRTHDAY OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Ms. ESHOO. Madam Speaker, I offer these few words in observation and in celebration of the birthday of a man who remains very much with us as we go about the people's business—Senator Ted Kennedy.

No one fought harder for the causes in which he believed, but he also believed in working across the aisle and in reaching out to find common ground.

No one believed more deeply in providing universal health care to all Americans and I know that if he were still in the United States Senate, he would have been working overtime to help us find a way to make health care a reality for everyone.

Those of us who are blessed to have known him and to be wrapped in his special embrace of friendship miss him deeply.

But we can feel him at our shoulder, urging us on, helping us find joy in battle, satisfaction in doing our best, and taking inspiration from

the people who need us most and who cannot speak for themselves. And we can still be touched by his example, his belief in a common respect that each of us is here to do our best to make our nation better.

On this day when Senator Kennedy would be 78, let us give ourselves a gift—let us be worthy of his unfailing optimism—let us work together a little harder, get along a little better, and spend the few precious moments we are allotted bringing all Americans freedom to live a healthy life.

Happy birthday, my friend, and God bless you.

HONORING ANN LAM WONG AND SHARON DRAVVORN, RECIPIENTS OF THE MILKEN NATIONAL EDUCATOR AWARDS

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Ann Lam Wong and Sharon Dravvorn, recipients of 2009 Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards. The Milken Foundation honors teachers, principals, and specialists throughout America with \$25,000 individual awards. Criteria for individual awards include exceptional education talent based on student results in the classroom, educational accomplishments outside of the classroom, and professional leadership. All of the recipients of the awards will attend the Milken Educator Forum in Los Angeles, Calif., in May.

Ann Lam Wong is a biology teacher at West Springfield High School in Springfield, Va. She teaches several sections of biology, and 100 percent of her students passed the Virginia Standards of Learning tests in biology with 68 percent passing at an advanced level. Wong also teaches AP biology, where 75 percent of her students passed the AP examination with a score of 3 or higher.

In addition to teaching biology, Wong mentors students who are having a hard time transitioning to high school. She started an AP summer academy, which increased AP enrollment requests at West Springfield High School by 27 percent. Wong also is the advisor for her students' Asian American Student Association.

Sharon Dravvorn teaches 9th and 10th grade mathematics at Woodbridge High School in Woodbridge, Va. Dravvorn incorporates a broad range of tools in her classroom, including the use of classical music, logic games, and visual aids. She focuses on teaching students that failed their 8th grade Standards of Learning exams. Ninety-five percent of those students who have received additional instruction from Dravvorn went on to pass their exams.

Along with teaching mathematics, Dravvorn is a role model for other teachers in the area. She mentors fellow teachers, leads a book club for teachers, and teaches training courses for her peers.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Ann Lam Wong and Sharon Dravvorn as examples of outstanding educators through their exceptional work in and outside of the classroom. They are role models for both their students and other teachers.

170TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AVENUE L MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH IN GALVESTON, TEXAS

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, February 28th marks the 170th anniversary of the Avenue L Missionary Baptist Church in Galveston, Texas. The Avenue L Missionary Baptist Church will commemorate this anniversary with a series of events through this month, including a grand parade and old fashioned picnic on February 20th.

One of the oldest black churches in Texas, Avenue L Baptist is the mother church of African-American worship in the entire state of Texas. Texas Avenue L Baptist began as the Colored Baptist Church, a congregation organized by Reverend James Hutchinson to serve Galveston's slave population. In 1855, First Baptist trustees Gail Borden, Jr., John S. Sydnor, and Reverend Huckins purchased land from the Galveston City Company for use by the congregation of Colored Baptist's successor, the African Baptist Church. After the Civil War, the property was formally deeded to the African Baptist Church, who where reorganized under Reverend Israel S. Campbell as the First Regular Missionary Baptist Church in 1867. The church adopted the name Avenue L Missionary Baptist in 1903.

In 1916, construction of the present brick church building commenced. Many fund-raising activities where undertaken by the people of Galveston to raise the funds for the church. The new structure included art glass windowpanes, a furnace to supply steam heat, and a baptizing pool. A pipe organ was installed in 1921. Reverend H.M. Williams spoke for all of his congregants when he said "Our Church is a most beautiful one." Today, almost ninety years later, Avenue L Missionary Baptist remains a most beautiful church.

In 1973 work began on renovations, including the additions of air-conditioning, and central heating. In 1977, the Church's stained glass windows where refurbished and covered with a protective shield. Reverend R.E. McKeen, who served as pastor of Avenue L Missionary Baptist, during the renovation also began broadcasting sermons on local radio.

Among the prominent pastors who have served at Avenue L Missionary Baptist Church are Reverend H.M. Williams, who served as moderator of the Lincoln District Baptist Association and led the rebuilding of the church after the hurricane of 1900 and the Reverend G.L. Price who served as President of the National Baptist Convention of American and the Mary Allen College. Reverend Andrew Walker Berry, who served as Pastor from 1985 to 1990 was a noted composer and prolific writer of prospectuses and pamphlets. Reverend Berry also has over 100 gospel songs published through his company "Musico."

The Avenue L Missionary Baptists Church remains a pillar of the Galveston Community. Every Sunday hundreds gather in the church for services. In addition, Avenue L Missionary serves the Galveston community with a variety of missionaries including the Young Adult Christian League, the Logos Bible Class, Midweek prayer and Bible study, the General Mission, Jr. Melodic Messengers, and the Young

Adult Ushers. I am pleased to congratulate the Avenue L Missionary Baptist on its 140th anniversary, and wish for its continued success in serving the people of Galveston.

HONORING THE LUNAR NEW YEAR—THE YEAR OF THE TIGER

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I rise today to join with the millions of Asian-Americans who are celebrating the Lunar New Year and welcoming year 4708, the Year of the Tiger. The origin of Lunar New Year is centuries old and is the most important celebration in the Lunar Calendar. It is also recognized as the Spring Festival. The celebrations traditionally last for 15 days and provide an opportunity to give thanks for one's blessings, celebrate family, resolve arguments, and prepare the community to embark on a new year with hope and charity.

In Chicago, the Lunar New Year was celebrated on February 14, 2010 with the 27th annual Chinese Lunar New Year celebration in Chicago's Chinatown, which I am proud to say resides in my Congressional District. Approximately 40,000 Chicagoans enjoy a Chinese heritage. Restaurants celebrated the holiday by serving special dishes, and thousands of people attend multiple events to commemorate and cherish the traditions of the New Year.

Every year, thousands of Asian-Americans will gather with their families and friends to enjoy the New Year festivities and the company of loved ones. The New Year offers a time for sweeping away misfortune and welcoming the New Year with hopes of prosperity and good luck. We should all take advantage of the opportunity to explore and share in this treasured tradition with family and friends. Embracing this tradition honors the richness of our diversity as Americans.

I congratulate the Asian-American community for their successes and thank them for their contributions to our country this past year. And I wish you all a very happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year. I wish all a Gong Hay Fat Choy.

RECOGNIZING THE 2010 CHINESE LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION SPONSORED BY THE ASIAN COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER IN VIRGINIA

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the celebration of Chinese New Year. This year marks the 4,708th year in the Chinese Lunar calendar.

In Virginia's 11th District, constituents of different backgrounds—including Chinese, Indonesian, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Malaysian—gathered on February 13th and 14th to ring in the New Year.

The celebration that many of my constituents attended was sponsored by the Asian

Community Service Center and hosted by Luther Jackson Middle School in Falls Church, Virginia. This celebration was a testament to the rich cultural traditions that are often practiced by the residents of Northern Virginia.

To my constituents and all those who celebrate Chinese New Year, I wish you a prosperous Year of the Tiger.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Madam Speaker, today our national debt is \$12,402,054,835,588.68.

On January 6th, 2009, the start of the 111th Congress, the national debt was \$10,638,425,746,293.80.

This means the national debt has increased by \$1,763,629,089,294.88 so far this Congress.

This debt and its interest payments we are passing to our children and all future Americans.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Madam Speaker, I missed rollcall Vote Nos. 17–19 on January 26, 2010. Had I been present, I would have voted:

Rollcall Vote No. 17, Expressing support for designation of January 2010 as "National Mentoring Month", "aye."

Rollcall Vote No. 18, Recognizing the importance of cervical health and of detecting cervical cancer during its earliest stages and supporting the goals and ideals of Cervical Health Awareness Month, "aye."

Rollcall Vote No. 19, Expressing support for the designation of January 10, 2010, through January 16, 2010, as National Influenza Vaccination Week, "aye."

RECOGNIZING THE 2010 CHINESE LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION SPONSORED BY THE HAI HUA COMMUNITY CENTER IN VIRGINIA

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the celebration of Chinese New Year. This year marks the 4,708th year in the Chinese Lunar calendar.

In Virginia's 11th District, constituents of different backgrounds—including Chinese, Indonesian, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Malaysian—gathered on February 13th and 14th to ring in the New Year.

The celebration that many of my constituents attended was presented by the Fair Oaks

Mall and sponsored by the Hai Hua Community Center in Virginia. This celebration was a testament to the rich cultural traditions that are often practiced by the residents of Northern Virginia.

This year, the Lunar New Year celebration also included a Lantern Festival celebration. The festivities consisted of cultural performances, demonstrations, and arts and crafts activities. To my constituents and all those who celebrated Chinese New Year, I wish you a prosperous Year of the Tiger.

THE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SAFETY PROGRAM ACT OF 2010

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, together with Highways and Transit Subcommittee Chairman PETER A. DEFAZIO and the gentlewoman from Maryland (Ms. EDWARDS), I rise today to introduce the "Public Transportation Safety Program Act of 2010", by request of Secretary of Transportation Raymond H. LaHood. I commend the Department of Transportation (DOT) for focusing its first legislative proposal on improving transit safety, and I am pleased to work together with Secretary LaHood and Federal Transit Administrator Peter M. Rogoff on this important initiative.

Currently, public transportation remains one of the safest modes of passenger travel. In recent years, the fatality rate for rail transit systems—such as subways and light rail—has decreased to just .002 fatalities per 100 million passenger miles. This is one of the lowest fatality rates of all surface transportation modes. At the same time, Americans are riding transit at record levels. The growth in transit ridership is almost triple the growth rate of the population, and substantially more than the growth rate for vehicle miles traveled on our nation's highways. This public transportation renaissance taking place in cities large and small across America further elevates the importance of transit safety, while also spotlighting an issue that is inextricably linked to safety—the state of good repair of public transit systems.

Unfortunately, the state of good repair of many transit systems has not kept up with the influx of new riders. Maintenance levels at many public transit agencies have decreased to a point where older, less safe rail cars, tracks, electrical equipment, and other assets are left in service long after their useful life. According to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), more than one-third of the total assets of the largest rail systems in the country are in either marginal or poor condition, and the estimated maintenance backlog for the nation's rail transit systems exceeds \$80 billion. According to DOT's 2008 Status of the Nation's Highways, Bridges, and Transit: Conditions and Performance, an average of \$21.1 billion in annual capital investment is needed to bring all transit assets to a good condition by 2026. This level of investment represents an annual increase of \$8.3 billion—an increase of 64.8 percent—above current capital investment levels.

In addition to addressing this maintenance backlog, the Federal Transit Administration