

EXPLANATION OF MISSED VOTES

HON. VIC FAZIO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 19, 1996

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, because of illness, I missed 6 recorded votes on September 17 and 18. Had I been present, I would have voted in the following manner.

H.R. 3803—AYE; H.R. 3723—AYE; H.J. Res. 191—AYE; H.R. 3802—AYE; H.R. 3675—AYE; and H.R. 3923—AYE.

IN HONOR OF THREE OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS: BLANQUITA VALENTI, EDWIN GUTIERREZ, AND ANTHONY VEGA

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 19, 1996

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to three outstanding individuals, Blanquita Valenti, Edwin Gutierrez, and Tony Vega who are making a difference in the lives of their fellow community members through their work with the Puerto Rican Action Board. A celebration dinner will be held for these deserving people on September 20, 1996 at the Spain Inn in Piscataway, NJ.

The Puerto Rican Action Board, a nonprofit organization which seeks to improve the quality of life of low and moderate income families in New Jersey, has benefited from the exceptional efforts of Blanquita Valenti. Ms. Valenti has a distinguished record of service as a public official and educator. She has a strong educational background consisting of a masters degree in Spanish and Latin American literature, and certification by the American Translators Association. Ms. Valenti is a founding board member of a number of organizations, including the Puerto Rican Action Board, ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey, and the Puerto Rican Congress. She has also served on the city council for an 8-year term and as city president for 4 years.

Edwin Gutierrez, former president and executive director of the Puerto Rican Action Board, is a notable community activist. He has contributed his expertise to a number of worthwhile projects such as the New Brunswick Neighborhood Preservation Program, Community Block Grant and Homeowner Affordability Program, Rental Rehabilitation Program, and the Buy-it Fix-it Program. Mr. Gutierrez has also exhibited a commitment to excellence in education. He established the first bilingual-bicultural day care center in New Brunswick, instituted an English as second language [ESL] program for adults and initiated a bilingual high school equivalency program.

The Puerto Rican Action Board has received invaluable service from its former chairperson, Dr. Anthony Vega. He has had a long and distinguished career as a university educator and labor activist. Dr. Vega's educational efforts include earning the title of professor emeritus in labor studies at the labor education center of Rutgers University, establishing scholarship funds for labor studies, and

the procuring funds to sponsor research programs like the Parent, Recruitment, Involvement, Education project [PRIDE], Rutgers' OSHA Center, and the Children's Development project. One of Dr. Vega's most prized accomplishments was the raising of \$1 million for a multifaceted educational and manpower development program in 1980.

It is an honor to be able to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of Blanquita Valenti, Edwin Gutierrez, and Anthony Vega. They exemplify the enormous positive difference individuals can make in our communities. I am certain that my colleagues will rise with me and honor these remarkable community leaders.

TRIBUTE TO DIANA LEWIS

HON. L.F. PAYNE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 19, 1996

Mr. PAYNE of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Diana Lewis, an outstanding Virginian and a hard-work American. Ms. Lewis has overcome great personal odds and now serves in her community as a certified nursing assistant in Charlottesville, VA. On October 8, 1996, she will be honored at the Annual Training Conference of the General Council of Industries for the Blind and National Industries for the Blind as the 1996 private sector employee of the year.

The path to her well deserved recognition, however, has not been an easy one. Born with congenital cataracts, Ms. Lewis suffered additional setbacks as a child undergoing several eye surgeries resulting in her delayed entry to school. Undeterred, Ms. Lewis attended Romney School for the Blind in West Virginia, but left school before completing her education in order to marry, become a homemaker, and, eventually a mother of two sons.

By 1986, Ms. Lewis' circumstances had changed dramatically. She had moved to Virginia and found herself an unemployed single mother with two young boys to support, lacking education or employment skills. With the help of training program through Virginia Industries for the Blind, a division of the Virginia Department for the Visually Handicapped, Ms. Lewis rose to the challenge confronting her by training for and mastering numerous sewing operations. Before long, she had become an accomplished seamstress.

Her desire to seek new challenges and improve her circumstances inspired her to earn her GED and complete training as a certified nursing assistant. Ms. Lewis met her personal and professional challenges head on, in the face of long odds, and is now giving back to her community working in the skilled care unit of Westminster Canterbury of the Blue Ridge. As a certified nursing assistant, she selflessly gives comfort to elderly citizens who require constant care.

Ms. Lewis credits her employment at Virginia Industries for the Blind with instilling in her an unquenchable sense of self-confidence, enable her to continually seek new challenges and responsibilities. For her, the future is full of promise, as she seeks to fulfill her goal of one day becoming a physical therapist.

Ms. Lewis is truly representative of our country's ethic of service and its unflinching commitment to self-improvement.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Diana Lewis, the 1996 private sector employee of the year.

TRIBUTE TO VIRGINIA ANDERSON BOONE

HON. E. CLAY SHAW, JR.

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 19, 1996

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the late Virginia Anderson Boone of Miami, FL, and to share in the festivities of a special event held in her honor.

As the founding principal of Highland Oaks Elementary School in North Miami Beach, FL, Virginia Boone tirelessly devoted 31 years of her career to the thousands of children who studied under her tutelage.

During Mrs. Boone's tenure, Highland Oaks Elementary became one of the finest schools in all of Dade County, the fourth largest county in these United States. Year after year, Highland Oaks ranked among the top schools for the best test scores which are compared to other schools across the Nation. Thanks to the strength and commitment of a woman who expected nothing less than the very best from her faculty and her students, Highland Oaks set standards which are still beyond the grasp of most other schools.

Although childless, Virginia Boone became a parent to her faculty, staff, and students. She treated those who worked for her, as well as those who studied in her school, as though they were her own children, caring for their health, attending their weddings and the myriad of bar and bat mitzvahs. Many of her former students, now adults, would often stop by for a visit. She even hired a teacher who had been a student in her first graduating class.

For decades it became near-impossible to find an opening on the Highland Oaks' faculty. Those who were the lucky ones because the envy of many who wanted to share in the good fortune of working for a woman who would become a mentor and a friend, sharing in the success of watching thousands of children benefit from their years at Highland Oaks Elementary.

It is a true gift for one to watch a child excel in life and know that they have played an important part. I am told that is what Virginia Boone lived for.

After her passing earlier this year, the faculty, the PTA, the northeast Dade community and the Dade County School Board unanimously voted to rename the school to honor the woman who touched so many lives. I am delighted to have the privilege of representing this involved, outstanding community on this very special occasion.

On September 25, 1996, Highland Oaks Elementary will be officially renamed, "Virginia A. Boone Highland Oaks Elementary." Congratulations and best wishes for continued success.

I ask unanimous consent that these remarks be included in the RECORD.