

1975, we have resettled approximately 249,000 Lao refugees (mostly Hmong) out of Thailand. We have provided a large share of the support that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has received to maintain refugee camps and we and non-governmental organizations assist programs in Laos for refugees who have elected to return home. With only some 6,000 Lao refugees remaining in camps in Thailand we are committed to these same two solutions: voluntary repatriation and third country resettlement.

As you state in your letter, we have for some time requested permission of the Royal Thai Government to be allowed to interview those remaining Hmong and other Lao refugees in camps in Thailand who may wish to resettle in the United States. In November, a team of officers led by Department of State Deputy Assistant Secretary Charles Sykes went to Bangkok specifically to discuss this issue. I am pleased to report that we reached an agreement in principle with the Royal Thai Government for U.S. access to Hmong and other Lao in the first asylum camps in Thailand. We are now working to finalize the agreement and hope to begin processing this population in early January. Within the FY 1996 refugee admissions ceiling there are sufficient numbers available for approved Lao-tian cases to be admitted to the U.S. this fiscal year.

We would also like to assure you that, contrary to reports, to date, no asylum seekers or refugees have been forced to return to Laos. Approximately 23,000 Lao (mostly Hmong) have returned voluntarily to Laos since 1980. From all reports, including non-governmental organizations working in Laos and from U.N. officials, there is no persecution of returnees. The United States and other governments contribute to reintegration programs which assist returnees to resettle in Laos. UNHCR has Hmong- and Lao-speaking monitors who travel throughout the country to assist returnees and to monitor their situation. These monitors have reported no persecution of returnees.

We hope that the above information addresses your concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact this office again if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

WENDY SHERMAN,
Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs.

SALUTING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF FELIX LODGE NO. 3

HON. LOUIS STOKES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an esteemed historical institution in the District of Columbia, Felix Lodge No. 3. The Felix Lodge, the second oldest Prince Hall Masonic Lodge in the District, will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 1996.

The Felix Lodge has traveled a long and distinguished road from its inception, when meetings were held in the loft of a stable just outside Washington. Chartered on April 4, 1846, by the Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, the Felix Lodge was named in honor of Brother Felix Dorsey, who was a deputy grand master of the Hiram Grand Lodge. Brother Dorsey was pivotal in the advent of Masonry for African-Americans in the District of Columbia.

Through the bravery of men seeking freedom and fraternity, the birth of the Felix Lodge

was quite an accomplishment, especially before the Civil War. Several other sites in Washington, including a carpenter's shop and personal residences, became the lodge's surreptitious meeting sites throughout the 19th century and into the 20th. In 1922, the lodge moved to the Masonic Temple on U Street, in Northwest Washington.

Many prestigious members of the Felix Lodge have served in greater roles of the Masonic hierarchy. George W. Brooks, the first African-American doctor licensed in Washington, became most worshipful grand master in 1878. The Felix Lodge also produced 10 Grand Masters. In addition, the lodge has a proud tradition of trailblazing activities, such as conducting Washington's first black Masonic funeral in 1849, and involvement in civic ceremonies like the opening of Union Station.

Mr. Speaker, the long and eminent history of Felix Lodge No. 3 deserves our attention and respect. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring their 150th anniversary and saluting the gentlemen, past and present, of Felix Lodge.

TRIBUTE TO DONALD BROOKS

HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my condolences to the many friends and family of Donald Brooks, a leading businessman from my congressional district, who recently passed away.

Donald Brooks, a resident of Western Springs, IL, and owner of Marcia's Hallmark Card Shop, was a longtime pillar of the La Grange, IL, business community. He was a leader in the La Grange Business Association, serving as its treasurer, and he spearheaded efforts to make the downtown retail shopping area among the finest in suburban Chicago.

Mr. Brooks, a pharmacist who owned a drug store for 24 years, was an early organizer of the Endless Summer Festival that brings tens of thousands of residents into the community each summer. In addition, he was an important nuts and bolts organizer who coordinated the LGBA's cable television advertisements and served as the group's pointman on downtown parking issues with village government.

In addition, Mr. Brooks, a graduate of Lyons Township High School in La Grange, served his country as a member of the Air Force Reserve during the Vietnam war.

Mr. Speaker, I extend my sympathy to Mr. Brooks' wife, Marcia Jane, and all his friends and family on the untimely passing of this true community leader.

CONDOLENCES TO THE FERRE FAMILY

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Ms. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest condolences to the Ferre family, a distinguished and dedicated family within the

Miami community and to Metro Dade commissioner and Miami's ex-mayor, Maurice Ferre, who suffered the tragic loss of his son, Francisco Ferre Malaussena, his daughter-in-law, Mariana Gomez de Ferre, and the couple's newly born son, Felipe Antonio Ferre Gomez, on the fatal American Airlines Boeing 757 en route to Cali, Colombia on December 20.

It is at moments such as these when one asks God for strength and guidance in order to overcome this tragedy that took the life of this young aspiring attorney, his beautiful and well-educated wife, and their adorable, newly born son who were all on their way to the infant's christening in Cali, Colombia.

Francisco, who was a graduate of Boston University Law School and practiced at a prestigious law firm in Madrid, Spain before coming to Miami, was also a young man of noble sentiments who did his best to keep very close ties with his family and befriend all of those he met. Mariana, a native of Cali, was a graduate of Wellesley College where she had pursued a degree in political science and French. Upon graduation from this prestigious institution, Mariana obtained her MBA from the University of Miami.

The newlywed couple, who this January would have celebrated their third wedding anniversary, will be sorely missed by both of their respective families and by all of those who had the honor and pleasure of knowing them and the newest addition to their family.

Surviving Francisco in addition to his father and mother, the Honorable Maurice A. Ferre and Mrs. Mercedes Malaussena de Ferre, are his five siblings: Jose Luis, Maurice, Carlos, Mimi, and Florence. Immediate family members who survive Mariana are her parents, Mr. Gustavo Gomez Franco and Mrs. Maria Cristina Vallecilla de Gomez, and her six brothers and sisters: Enrique, Luciano, Maria Cristina, Roxana, Gustavo Felipe, and Julian.

Once again, I extend my deepest condolences to the Ferre family in these very trying times.

TRIBUTE TO RETIRING CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKIE SPEIER

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the distinguished assemblywoman of the 19th assembly district of California, Ms. Jackie Speier. Many of the same communities in San Mateo County that are included in her State assembly district are also within the boundaries of the 12th Congressional District, which I have the privilege and honor to represent.

This coming weekend, the San Mateo County Democratic Party will salute Jackie Speier at a special appreciation dinner held to recognize the service she has rendered to the people of California. After a successful career in the California assembly, Jackie Speier will retire at the end of this legislative session. She will have completed her fifth term in the assembly and is not permitted to run again because of term limitations.

Jackie Speier was born in San Francisco—the daughter of a German immigrant and an

American mother. She attended local schools in south San Francisco and graduated from Mercy High School in Burlington. She received a B.A. from the University of California at Davis and received a law degree from the University of California's Hastings College of the Law in 1976.

Following the completion of her education, Jackie served on the staff of our late colleague and my predecessor, Congressman Leo J. Ryan. In November 1978, Jackie accompanied Congressman Ryan to Jonestown, Guyana, to investigate the cult community led by the Rev. Jim Jones. As my colleagues know, Congressman Ryan was killed during that visit to Jonestown, and Jackie Speier was seriously injured at the same time. That was followed by the tragic suicide-murder of over 900 cult members.

After returning to California, Ms. Speier was elected to the San Mateo County board of supervisors in November 1980, where she effectively served the people of San Mateo County for 5 years. During that time she served 1 year as chair of the board. In November 1986, she was elected a member of the California State Assembly. During the decade that she represented the 19th assembly district, Jackie led the assembly's Committee on Consumer Protection, Governmental Efficiency and Economic Development. She was a constructive and articulate spokesperson and advocate for consumer interests and government efficiency for the people of San Mateo County.

Jackie is the mother of two delightful children—Jackson Kent Sierra and Stephanie Katelin Elizabeth Sierra. Her husband, Dr. Steven Sierra, was killed in a tragic automobile accident in early 1994, a few months before the birth of their last child.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Jackie Speier as she completes 10 years of distinguished service in the California State Assembly. The people of San Mateo County and the people of California have been well served by her leadership and advocacy in the State assembly.

TRIBUTE TO ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACQUELINE SPEIER

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Jackie Speier, Assemblywoman of the 19th District of California, an extraordinary, history-making public servant who has protected the rights of many, with special attention to women, children, and consumers.

Jackie Speier has brought a new meaning to the word "courage" as she has overcome tragedy in her own life and dedicated herself to public service. In November 1978, as legal counsel for the late Congressman, Leo J. Ryan, she accompanied the Congressman to Jonestown, Guyana to investigate charges that people were being held hostage by cult leader Rev. Jim Jones. On November 18, cult followers shot and killed Congressman Ryan while Jackie Speier was struck by five bullets. Later that day 911 cult members died.

Two years later, Jackie Speier became the youngest elected member of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors. She served a

second term and was chair of the board in 1985.

In 1986, she became the first woman elected to the 19th Assembly District of California, continuing to break new ground legislatively. As the chair of the Assembly Committee on Consumer Protection, Governmental Efficiency, and Economic Development, she led the fight to uncover numerous acts of inefficiency, waste, and abuse of public resources by State bureaucrats who subsequently resigned from office. She also led investigations into unfair and illegal practices of auto manufacturers and dealers, and championed many proconsumer laws.

Jackie Speier's record of having bills signed into law is unprecedented. Among her accomplishments, she has ensured the advancement of women's rights and the protection of children. Some of her legislative achievements include the requirement of insurers to allow women to use their obstetrician-gynecologists as their primary care physicians, creating a voluntary California income tax check-off fund to support breast cancer research, creating the Women's Business Ownership Act and Council, and legislation which would deny professional and drivers licenses to those who fail to pay child support.

Along with her extraordinary work in the legislature, she is the devoted and proud mother of two children. Jackie Speier made legislative history in 1988 when she became the first member of the California Legislature to give birth while in office.

For her accomplishments, she has received a plethora of awards including Legislator of the Year by the California State Bar Association, Women Construction Owners and Executives, Leadership California, National Mobilization Against AIDS, California Women Lawyers, the National Organization for Women, and the Family Service Council.

Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of Jackie Speier's friendship and have had the honor of working with her as a colleague on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors. Few legislators are as effective, as respected, and as history-making as Jackie Speier. She is truly one of California's most distinguished women and I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring her today.

TRIBUTE TO LYONS POLICE OFFICERS JAMES RITZ, CHARLES WRIGHT, AND ROBERT COOK

HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to three police officers from my district who recently went above and beyond the call of duty to save a man from his burning home.

In the early morning hours of January 29, 1996, Sgt. James Ritz, Officer Charles Wright, and Officer Robert School of the Lyons Police Department responded to a 911 call from the home of Charles Schmidt, 77. Upon arriving, they discovered smoke pouring out of the house and learned that Mr. Schmidt, who has vision problems and is a partial amputee, was trapped inside. Without a second thought to their own safety, the three entered the building

and groped through its smoke-filled rooms until they found Mr. Schmidt and carried him out of the house.

As Lyons Deputy Fire Chief Gordon Nord said of these three heroes, "To go in with no protection was above and beyond the call of duty. If it wasn't for the three police officers, we would have had one fatality."

Mr. Speaker, I commend Sergeant Ritz, Officer Wright, and Officer School for their incredible bravery. All Americans owe these three officers, and all those who risk their lives to protect ours, a debt of gratitude.

LEGISLATION TO ADJUST FEDERAL DEFERRED ANNUITIES FOR INFLATION

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing legislation that indexes Federal annuities for inflation at the time the employees separates. Currently, if an employee leaves the Federal service before retirement he has the option of taking his pension contributions back in a lump sum or keeping them in the retirement trust fund. If he leaves the contributions in, he will receive an annuity when he turns 62. If he takes them out, he can reinvest them in an IRA.

It would be more beneficial for the employee and the Government if the employee left his contributions in the retirement system and earned an annuity at 62. The current system, however, does not encourage the employee to leave the contributions in since the annuity is not indexed for inflation. Thus if an employee with 20 years of service leaves the Government to take another job at age 45, he has the option of taking his money out of the trust fund, the 7 percent of his salary that he contributed over the past 20 years, or leaving the money in the trust fund and receiving his earned annuity when he turns 62, 36 percent of the average of highest 3 years of salary. Since the annuity is not indexed, there is no reason to leave the money in. If the high three averages \$50,000, in the above case, the annuity would be \$17,000 at separation. But after 17 years of average inflation, this \$17,000 would have the spending power of only about \$9,000. Under the legislation I am introducing today, an annuity of \$17,000 would maintain the spending power of \$17,000.

The proposal would break the "golden handcuffs" that keep older Federal employees in the civil service. Since the old Civil Service Retirement pension is not transferable, older employees with significant years of service cannot afford to leave the civil service. If they did, they would have to enter a new pension service and begin saving for retirement anew. They would not have the years of investment in Social Security or a 401(k) to rely on. So they stay in the civil service. FERS was created specifically to address this portability problem but it is not enough. Currently, approximately 50 percent of the Federal work force is in FERS. Those who are not are the older employees we want to leave.

Under this legislation, older CSRS employees can leave the Federal Government and take a job elsewhere because they will not