

yesterday. The militant Islamic organization Hamas that has brazenly taken responsibility for this sinister act and demands that Israel free Palestinian prisoners must be dealt with appropriately as any other terrorist organization would be.

The agony and carnage that is now becoming an almost familiar scene on our television screens is a frightening reminder of the fragile peace that remains following the Oslo accord. The scenes of hell with bodies, blood, and horror strewn about in the old Mahane Yehud market in western Jerusalem surely wears on the souls of the Israeli people. The pictures of sobbing mothers and grief stricken children are once again trying to be used to shatter the forces of peace in the Middle East. Many Israelis in their anguish may even want to link the bombings with the peace process.

True tragedy like this strikes at the heart of the politics of peace that we have tried to forge since former President Jimmy Carter brought the parties to the table at Camp David. We Americans are separated from the terror and horror that has become a way of life in Israel. It is difficult to comprehend what Houstonians would feel like had this happened there.

But, somehow the shreds of peace need to be put back together. The peace process cannot evaporate in the blood of terrorist attacks. We cannot let these forces of evil gain the upper hand. We must keep the faith that the forces of good and the forces for peace can be revived. While the attention of the moment is focused on evil and death, peace and security needs to fill the void created by this nightmare.

I agree with President Clinton that, "There is no excuse and there must be no tolerance for this kind of inhumanity. The slaughter was aimed directly at innocent Israelis. And make no mistake, it was aimed at the majority of Israelis, Palestinians, and Arabs who want a lasting and just peace." The Clinton administration has certainly done a very credible job of trying to break the gridlock of the peace process.

In order to find security which is the underpinning of peace in the area, there has to be sustained cooperation by the Palestinians. There can be no revolving door policy when it comes to the capture and detainment of terrorists. Trust must be regained on both sides. To prevent the peace talks from collapsing we must begin to help to rebuild the trust that was exploded in the outdoor marketplace yesterday.

125TH ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH IN PORTAGE, PENNSYLVANIA

HON. JOHN P. MURTHA

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 1997

Mr. MURTHA. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take this opportunity before the House to pay tribute to an historic church community in the 12th Congressional District of Pennsylvania.

There were only 15 houses in the village of Portage, PA, when the Reverend Mr. Samuel Croft of Wilmore, MD, arrived to begin his missionary work in 1872. On August 21 of that year, 125 years ago next month, Luther's

Monumental Lutheran Church was chartered with 10 members. Two months later, on October 20, a small frame building, 28'-45', was dedicated. It now stands as the oldest church in Portage, PA.

In 1892, under the direction of the Reverend Mr. B.B. Collins, the congregation sought and was granted admission into the Allegheny Evangelical Lutheran Synod. One of the conditions for admittance to the synod was the forming of a parish relationship with another church nearby, St. Luke Lutheran Church in Lilly, PA. These two churches today are known as the Lilly Portage Lutheran Parish.

In 1916, the Reverend Mr. B.R. Sheeder and the congregation had the frame building moved to its present site where a narthex and larger sanctuary was built and the entire building was bricked. Stained glass windows were installed. The original building now contains the nursery-primary Sunday school rooms. The original roof beams can be seen in the loft.

Luther's Monumental Lutheran Church became the First Evangelical Lutheran Church and is now known as the First Lutheran Church of Portage, PA. The longest pastorate, of 23 years, was served by the Reverend Mr. George I. Uhler (1925-48).

Serving as the church's pianist, choir director, and organist for over 50 years, Ms. Viola Hess is fondly remembered for her lifelong dedication. She passed away in the church while doing the work she loved.

Notably, the Reverend Ms. Karen Stiles was the first female pastor to serve the church, from 1987-89, followed by the Reverend Ms. Rochelle Melander.

Currently, under the Reverend Mr. Steven Claycomb, the church registry lists over 300 members and is continuing to grow. The membership is active in both the religious and the civic secular activities of the area. An array of church artifacts is displayed at the Portage Station Museum and will later be returned for display at the church.

Portage is located less than 20 miles from Johnstown, legendary for its tragic floods. The First Lutheran Church of Portage has endured through the horrible flood of 1889 in which over 2,000 lives were lost; since then it has helped to see its community through many types of hardship—from the hardscrabble days of the Industrial Revolution, when the area's miners and steelworkers endured long work hours, low pay, and abysmal working conditions, to the Great Depression. It has held its community together through the Nation's wars and seen it through more modern hardship—the decline of the steel industry that brought lasting economic hard times and crippling unemployment. It also saw another devastating flood, in 1977. Through it all, the First Lutheran Church has been a source of support and sustenance, spiritually and otherwise, to generations.

On Sunday, August 31, 1997, a dinner and mass of celebration commemorating the church's 125th anniversary will be held.

I'd like to congratulate the First Lutheran Church of Portage, its pastor and his congregation as they celebrate a 125 year tradition of serving God and their community. May the church grow and prosper for another 125 years.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

SPEECH OF

HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 22, 1997

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill, H.R. 2160:

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Chairman, today I rise in support of the Wynn amendment to increase funding for equal opportunity complaint resolution in the Department of Agriculture. With over 1,400 discrimination cases pending, the USDA's Office of Civil Rights is underfunded, understaffed, and unable to fulfill its purpose. This amendment would transfer \$1,500,000 in revenue to the program for administrative and staffing assistance, and would enable the Department to fulfill its goal of eliminating racism within.

For years, the USDA has been discriminating against minority farmers. While the Secretary of Agriculture has acknowledged the problem and created the Civil Rights Program, it seems like little has been done. There are continued delays in investigations of discrimination complaints, inadequate minority representation in the Office of General Counsel, and an ongoing tension between the Office of General Counsel and the Office of Civil Rights. The number of discrimination complaints has more than tripled since 1991. It is time to put a halt to this disturbing statistic.

The Wynn amendment would provide money for additional staff to help combat the backlog of discrimination cases. The amendment simply caps the Market Assistance Program funding level and transfers its additional allocation for fiscal year 1998 to the Civil Rights Program. It is a small price to pay for such an important oversight.

In addition, we must continue to keep pressure on the Secretary of Agriculture to ensure that this funding is put to good use and that the problem is attacked immediately. He must put his money where his mouth is.

I urge my colleagues to support the Wynn amendment.

TRIBUTE TO ERIC K. FEDERING

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 1997

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, today marks the last day of House service for Eric Federing as the Democratic director of communications for the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

Eric began his service to the House 10 years ago this week. In 1987, his first position was as press secretary and speechwriter to our former colleague, Norm Mineta. When Norm became chairman of the Public Works and Transportation Committee in 1993, he moved Eric to the committee to open and modernize its information services to better serve all of our colleagues and the news

media. In addition, in Norm Mineta's last year in Congress, Eric also served as his congressional liaison to the Smithsonian Institution's Board of Regents. Starting tomorrow, however, after more than 4½ years of service to our committee, Eric will move to the other body and take up the post of press secretary to Senator JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN of Connecticut.

Eric has provided great service to our members and staff. Daily he provided a news summary of more than two dozen newspapers, trade periodicals, and major wire services—all arriving on our members' desks before the start of every hearing or markup. He also organized news events in concert with the personal staffs of our members and with the Democratic leadership, and responded professionally and quickly to numerous press inquiries. In the last Congress, he led our way along the information superhighway by instituting our site on the World Wide Web. In addition to his communications expertise, his political counsel and information strategy have been very much appreciated.

On his own time, Eric also worked for the best interests of our Democratic Party and for our national interests abroad. He distinguished himself with senior positions at the last two Democratic National Conventions—serving as manager of press information center operations in Chicago last year.

Overseas, Eric embarked in a unique association with the United States Information Service whereby he undertook four month-long trips to Australia in as many years to lecture on American Government, the Congress, our elections, our news media, and civil rights. As a voluntary visitor working with USIS, he has visited just about every university on that continent and spoken with numerous journalists, business leaders, government officials, and students.

Amidst all this, Eric has also found time to dabble in the arts. Last year, he signed a contract with the Farber Literary Agency of New York, which is representing him on a novel he has written about Hollywood and politics. Through much of the 1980's, Eric founded and led an independent effort to restore the 1963 motion picture "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World." That effort gained Eric a touch of national fame and a greater appreciation for America's cinema heritage. He has been active in the effort to preserve some of our Nation's remaining motion picture palaces of the 1920's and 1930's.

Mr. Speaker, many people come to work in this institution for as many reasons as there are staff positions. As a teenager, Eric was greatly influenced by watching the Watergate hearings. While at George Washington University, where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa while working half-time at the State Department, Eric knew then that he wanted to work in Congress to help communicate the Nation's business to the world. As I said, he began to do that 10 years ago, and has done so with consummate skill and impeccable integrity.

For all his hard work, dedication, and counsel, I ask that all of our colleagues join with me in thanking Eric for his great service to this House, particularly to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and to our Nation. We wish him well now and in the future.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2014, TAXPAYER RELIEF ACT OF 1997

HON. DAVID E. SKAGGS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 1997

Mr. SKAGGS. Mr. Speaker, I am voting for this conference report. Its provisions for education and tax relief for families with children, in particular, will make a difference in the lives of millions of hard-working Americans.

Many of the worst aspects of the House-passed bill, which I opposed, have been removed or improved, and the bill includes many other provisions that will benefit our country. So, on balance, I have decided that it deserves to be supported. That said, it is not without faults. It includes some things that I don't like, and there are other things that I would have liked to have seen included.

To begin with, the bill deserves support because it will help make education more affordable for millions of our people. It includes tax credits for the tuition costs of college students as well as graduate students and workers who are continuing to pursue lifelong learning. It will allow people who have gone into debt to finance their educations to deduct some of the interest charges on their student loans.

In addition, the bill extends until June 20, 2000, the tax exclusion for employer-provided educational assistance. I would have preferred making this permanent, but this is a great improvement over the House bill, which extended the exclusion only for the rest of this year.

Further, this bill dropped the pernicious section of the House-passed bill that would have taxed tuition discounts earned by graduate students who serve as teaching assistants and the tuition discounts provided to families of school employees. That very shortsighted and unwise provision was one of the worst features of the House bill, and I am very glad that the conferees did not include it in the conference report.

The conference report also will help our schools and colleges in several important ways. It will encourage corporations to donate up-to-date computer technology and equipment; will give a tax credit for purchases of bonds issued by local governments where the business community is also assisting the schools; and it will repeal the limit on qualified 501(c)(3) bonds used by colleges, universities, and other charitable institutions.

The environment also will benefit from the conference report. Unlike the House-passed bill, the conference report includes tax incentives to help accelerate the cleanup of contaminated areas in economically distressed areas. This so-called brownfields provision has great promise for improving both the environment and the economy in these areas.

Science and health will benefit as well, because the conference report extends expiring research tax credits and makes permanent the tax credit for research and development of so-called orphan drugs that are desperately needed, but for which the potential market is relatively small.

And the conference report's provisions related to Amtrak provide a foundation upon which it may be possible to build an improved and financially sound national rail passenger system.

Also, of course, there are some provisions that will benefit families in more general, less-targeted ways. For me, the most positive is the \$500 child credit, which will provide a significant financial boost to the country's most hard-pressed working families. Its benefits will be distributed reasonably fairly—especially as compared with the original House-passed bill, which would have excluded many of the low-income working families to whom this credit will be most helpful.

The conference report's changes in estate taxes are also better than those in the House-passed bill, because they focus more directly on family-owned farms and businesses, as well as phasing in what's essentially an inflation adjustment to the basic tax-exemption amount.

The capital gains provisions are improved but still troublesome. They of course are inherently much more beneficial to those with the resources to make large-scale investments than to those of more limited means.

Also, in combination with other provisions like those involving IRA's, they have the potential for making this balanced budget tax bill the cause of renewed and greatly increased deficits in a few years. For me, this is a serious prospect. I recall Senator Howard Baker's description of Reaganomics as a "riverboat gamble", and I recall that the payoff of that tax-cutting spree was trillions of new national debt.

I am not eager for another spin of that roulette wheel, and if I was convinced that the risk this time was as great as it was then, I would not support this bill. But this is a more modest bet, and a more carefully-drawn bill. I do think that we have learned from that experience, and I think President Clinton and his administration were able, in the negotiations that produced this conference report, to notably reduce the odds on repeating it. In short, while there's still a serious risk of renewed deficits, they've been lessened—and can be avoided if we will recognize them and are ready to take corrective actions in the future in the way Democrats did in 1993.

Mr. Speaker, I did not come early or quickly to a conclusion about this bill. But I have decided that its strengths outweigh its weaknesses, and its promises outweigh its risks—and my vote is for its passage.

WELFARE TO WORK

HON. STEVE LARGENT

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 1997

Mr. LARGENT. Mr. Speaker, last year Congress passed historic welfare reform legislation, establishing a program which combines social responsibility with economic opportunity. By setting work requirements and offering incentives to employers hiring workers from the welfare rolls, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, provides the help needed to lift individuals out of poverty and off the welfare rolls.

While the average stay on welfare is only 2 years, the typical recipient at any one time has been receiving benefits for 8 years. The Welfare Reform Act, by setting a 5-year maximum time limit for receiving welfare payments, will end long-term abuse of the welfare system,