

Grouse Society, Safari Club International, Wildlife Forever, and the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America. It has also been endorsed by the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, which has a membership of more than 200 Members of this body.

Finally, this legislation is an improvement over the President's Executive Order of March 25, 1996. While the Executive order contains nonbinding "directives" to the Secretary of the Interior, our legislation statutorily establishes six purposes for the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Executive order is also deficient in that it does not stipulate that 511 individual refuge units should be managed as a national system or that conservation plans should be completed. Furthermore, like all Executive orders, it suffers from the inherent problem that unlike statutory law, it can be easily modified, replaced or ignored by future administrations.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation's Wildlife Refuge System must be managed more effectively in the future. This System needs to have a statutory list of purposes, uniform guidelines to determine what activities are permissible, comprehensive conservation plans, and the enthusiastic support of the American people who finance this System with their hard earned tax dollars.

These are the goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. It is a sound piece of conservation legislation that reaffirms the legacy of President Theodore Roosevelt and the vision of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966.

I would urge my colleagues to join with me, JOHN DINGELL, JIM SAXTON and JOHN TANNER in this important effort to improve our National Wildlife Refuge System. This legislation will ensure that this system is alive and well for all our constituents for many years to come. It is interesting to note that the year 1997 has been designated as the "Year of the National Wildlife Refuge System". It would, therefore, be fitting to enact the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act this year.

#### THE HIGHWAY RAIL GRADE CROSSING SAFETY FORMULA ENHANCEMENT ACT

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 6, 1997*

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to introduce the Highway Rail Grade Crossing Safety Formula Enhancement Act, which is designed to provide a more effective method of targeting available Federal funds to enhance safety at our Nation's most hazardous highway rail grade crossings. This bipartisan legislation, which is the companion bill to legislation sponsored by Senators Lugar and Coats, will provide a more effective method of targeting available Federal funds to enhance safety at our Nation's most dangerous highway rail crossings.

Specifically, this bill would improve the Federal funding formula to account for risk factors that identify which States have significant grade crossing safety problems. The factors considered in the bill include a State's share of the national total for public highway rail grade crossings, its number of crossings with passive warning devices, and its total number

of accidents and fatalities caused by vehicle-train collisions at crossings.

The Rail-Highway Crossing Program, also known as section 130, currently provides States with crossing safety funds as part of a 10 percent set-aside in each State's Surface Transportation Program [STP] funds. The program's goal is to provide Federal funds for State efforts to reduce the incidence of accidents, injuries, and fatalities at public railroad crossings. The States use these funds to build underpasses and overpasses, install passive or active warning devices, and improve pavement surfaces and markings.

Several hundred people are killed, and thousands more injured, every year in the United States as a result of vehicle-train collisions at highway rail grade crossings. A significant number of these accidents occur in rail-intensive States, such as Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Kansas, and Texas. More than one quarter of the Nation's 168,000 public highway rail grade crossings are located in these five States. One third of deaths caused by vehicle-train collisions nationwide between 1993-95 occurred in these states.

With 6,587, my home State of Indiana ranks fifth in the Nation for the number of highway rail grade crossings, and Indiana is annually among the top five States nationwide in terms of accidents and fatalities caused by vehicle-train crashes. Just 2 weeks ago, a 15-year-old boy from Valparaiso, IN was struck by a train while traveling to school. Several years ago, my own mother, fortunately, survived a vehicle-train collision at a crossing where there were no warning devices. This legislation will help prevent senseless accidents like these.

Maximizing the return from Federal funds requires that they be targeted to areas with the greatest risk. In a 1995 report to Congress on the status of efforts to improve railroad crossing safety, the General Accounting Office [GAO] found anomalies among the States in terms of the funds they received in proportion to three key factors: Accidents, fatalities, and total crossings.

With the legislation I am introducing today, we have a unique opportunity to maximize existing resources, improve safety at highway rail grade crossings, and save lives. The establishment of a new funding formula is an innovative step in that direction. By targeting funds to States on the basis of risk factors, we can put scarce resources to work and use a commonsense approach by allocating Federal dollars where the need is greatest. This legislation does not call for new Federal spending, but rather a more equitable and effective distribution of existing highway funds to states to enhance safety at dangerous highway rail grade crossings.

States that would benefit under the revised formula are: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin.

Finally, I would point out that my bill addresses the grade crossing safety problems by refining a key provision of the existing Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act [ISTEA]. Using my proposal as a foundation, I will work with my colleagues to help assure that Congress passes highway reauthorization legislation that makes the best use of available Federal resources for rail crossing safety.

In the 104th Congress, I introduced a similar measure, in conjunction with the entire Indiana delegation, which I testified in support of last July during Surface Transportation Subcommittee hearings regarding ISTEA policy. I believe that continued emphasis on finding new and better ways to target existing resources to enhance safety at highway rail grade crossings will contribute to the overall effort in Congress and in the States to prevent accidents and save lives.

#### THE FEDERAL OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION ACT

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 6, 1997*

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing important legislation that I hope will further our efforts to preserve land and open space.

I believe that our current tax law discourages individuals from conserving land, and our estate tax structure sometimes provides the financial incentive to sell land for the purpose of development, rather than maintain or donate land for conservation purposes.

The legislation that I am introducing today, the Federal Open Space Acquisition and Preservation Act, will credit the value of land donated to a Federal agency, for conservation purposes only, against the estate taxes owed on the property. This will create an incentive, absent before, for heirs to donate undeveloped land to the Federal Government, rather than choose the route of selling to developers.

As many individuals who live in the northeastern metropolitan areas know, the amount of open space is dwindling each day. However, there is some beautiful undeveloped land that needs to be preserved as such. I believe that this legislation will provide the incentive to maintain those open spaces.

I urge my colleagues support for this legislation.

#### ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL OF WEST ORANGE 40TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. BILL PASCRELL, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 6, 1997*

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to your attention the 40th anniversary of St. Joseph's School of West Orange, NJ. I am very proud to have a school of this caliber in my district, and I am thrilled to play a part in honoring this institution.

St. Joseph's Church was established in 1931, with its first pastor being Monsignor Thomas Glover. In 1955, due to the very popular and well-attended CCD and Catholic Youth Organization programs, the decision was made to construct a school. In the fall of 1956, St. Joseph's School opened with a nine-room building for eight grades and a Kindergarten. The initial enrollment of 165 students doubled by November 1959. St. Joseph's School became an important part of the community, with nearly 95 percent of the parents belonging to the parents-teacher guild. The

school also did not believe in overloading classes just for the sake of having a large enrollment. In contrast to the other schools, St. Joseph's maintained a limited enrollment in order to facilitate the development of each individual student.

St. Joseph's has been blessed with tremendous leadership since its inception. The school's founder, Monsignor Glover led the congregation for 35 years until his death in 1966, upon which Monsignor Lang succeeded him, serving with distinction until 1976. Father McCloskey, who runs the school to this day, has additionally served this church and school admirably. He has weathered financial difficulties, dealt with staffing problems by recruiting the sisters of charity to perform teaching duties, and maintained unparalleled standards of excellence.

Throughout the years, the school developed a highly-respected sports program, with many of its students going on to become high-school stars. In 1981, the school's baseball program won the Essex County CYO championship. The school also developed other extra-curricular programs, such as the school choir which has since become a highly respected aspect of the school. When the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York appeared at Newark's Symphony Hall, members of the St. Joseph's school choir were given the honor of joining them.

In the 1990's, the school began renovations to accommodate the growing academic programs. Glover Hall was renovated to house the seventh and eighth grades, the library, and the computer room. A science and technology lab was completed in 1996.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me, our colleagues, the students of St. Joseph's past, present, and future, in recognizing the accomplishments of this fine academic institution, and wishing them even greater success for the next 40 years.

#### TRIBUTE TO THE LATE CONGRESSMAN FRANK TEJEDA

SPEECH OF  
HON. VIC FAZIO  
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
*Wednesday, February 5, 1997*

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, today the House mourns the loss of one of its most respected Members, Congressman Frank Tejeda. Frank Tejeda was a true hero—the son of immigrant parents who raised himself out of the southside of San Antonio to become a decorated veteran, a distinguished scholar, and an honored statesman.

During the Vietnam war, Frank Tejeda volunteered to join the U.S. Marine Corps, where he earned the Silver Star for valor, and received the Purple Heart for wounds sustained in action. As a Marine Corp officer candidate, he demonstrated his extraordinary leadership and academic excellence. In fact, he still holds the highest academic average in Marine Corps history.

Frank went on to graduate St. Mary's University with a bachelor of arts in government, a juris doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley, a master of laws degree from Yale University, and a masters degree in public administration from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

In 1977, Frank was first elected to the Texas House of Representatives for 10 years. He then served 6 more years in the Texas Senate before being elected to represent Texas' 28th District in 1993.

Congressman Tejeda never forgot where he came from or who he represented. As a member of the National Security Committee and the Committee on Veteran's Affairs, Frank fought vigorously for health care access for veterans and for a strong military. Whether it was getting the Environmental Protection Agency to clean up soil pollution at the San Antonio Alamodome or working with Federal officials when Wilson County residents were about to lose their homes in a Federal property sale, Frank was always willing to lend a helping hand.

Frank Tejeda leaves behind three children, Marissa, Sonya, and Frank III. He was a good friend, a valued colleague, and a great American. Frank Tejeda will be sorely missed.

#### CONGRATULATIONS TO ROCCO AND NORMA FERRARO

HON. MICHAEL P. FORBES

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 6, 1997*

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Rocco and Norma Ferraro, of Lake Grove, Long Island, NY, a truly devoted couple who will be celebrating their 50th glorious wedding anniversary this Saturday. This romance, grown out of a winter's blizzard, has now reached the half-century mark, so I rise to congratulate Rocco and Norma Ferraro in the celebration of this, their golden anniversary.

While a snowy blizzard raged outside, Rocco and Norma were married at St. Monica's Church in Jamaica, Queens, NY, on February 8, 1947. Over the past half-century, Rocco and Norma have rarely failed to demonstrate their true devotion and commitment to each other, to their family and community.

During their years of marriage, the hallmark of their lives has been a relationship based on faith in God, love of family and mutual respect for each other. Rocco and Norma have been blessed with two children, Vito and Donna, and are also the proud and devoted grandparents of four wonderful grandchildren, Christopher, Michael, Matthew, and Stephanie.

Rocco and Norma's enthusiasm, generosity, good humor, and fellowship have touched all that have come to know them. The Ferraros are longtime residents of Lake Grove, living in and contributing to the surrounding communities that I am privileged to represent in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, Rocco and Norma are two individuals who exemplify what is good and right about our Nation. Through their love of God, family, and this great Nation, they have shown the rest of us the true meaning of love. As we begin 1997, it is with great pleasure that I ask my colleagues to join with me in extending to Rocco and Norma Ferraro our warmest wishes for a wonderful 50th anniversary and fervent hope for health and happiness for many years to come. Congratulations.

#### TRIBUTE TO THE ASIA OBSERVER ON ITS FIRST ANNIVERSARY

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 6, 1997*

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the month of February 1997 marks the 1-year anniversary of the inaugural edition of The Asia Observer. In the 12 months since the launching of this weekly newspaper, the Asia Observer has provided timely and insightful coverage and analysis of the South Asia region, including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal. In addition to its coverage of overseas news, The Observer also provides information on domestic issues and trends affecting the immigrant community.

I value the information provided by The Observer, ranging from security issues, to trade and investment to cultural matters. The paper has proven itself to be a solid addition to the ever-growing ranks of what is often referred to as the ethnic media—a term I use with great reluctance because it does not do justice to the truly multicultural quality and international outlook of the excellent publications addressing issues confronting the Asian-American community. We live in an era when relations with Asia are assuming ever-greater importance in United States international concerns. Here at home, people who trace their ancestry to Asia constitute a growing force in our business, professional and cultural life. Yet, I regret to see that there has recently been unfair scrutiny directed at Asian-Americans, while people of Asian descent continue to grapple with discrimination and mistreatment. Thus, while the Asia Observer is targeted primarily for a South Asian-American readership, I hope that the larger American community will make a better effort to understand this important part of the world—and to get to know the people of South-Asian descent who are making such a positive contribution to our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, as a nation of immigrants, we should value the contributions of people who come to America seeking a better life for themselves and their families, who come into our country legally, who work hard and play by the rules. As the founder and cochairman of the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans, I believe we should devote more attention to improving and expanding relations between the world's two largest democracies, India and the United States, and redouble our efforts to represent the needs and concerns of the more than 1 million Americans of Indian descent.

Last year, when the Asia Observer published its first issue, I joined with other elected leaders—including Members of this Body—in extending my congratulations and well wishes. I am delighted to be doing the same on the newspaper's first anniversary. I wish to express my appreciation for Mr. Surinder Zutshi and his talented, hard-working staff, and urge them to keep up the good work. I look forward to reading the Asia Observer for many years to come.