

students, implement school choice, increase school accountability, empower parents and improve the Florida education system. At the forefront of education reform in Florida are the state's charter schools. Specifically, the Terrance Community School (TCS) is an outstanding example of what education can, and should, be.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share with you a few facts about TCS and its successes. First, TCS bills itself as a "public school of choice." To some, that may be a contradiction in terms, to others, a threat, but to me, it represents the first step toward a free-market education system whereby parents can choose the best school for their child. TCS will only remain a "public school of choice" if it remains free of federal government intrusion and regulation, and if it satisfies its customers—parents and students.

To date, these two criteria are being met. In terms of freedom to educate, Florida Governor Jeb Bush and Lt. Governor Frank Brogan have been national leaders in liberating education from the shackles of government regulation. In addition, Members of Congress like Chairman HOEKSTRA and me have worked tirelessly to ensure charter schools remain free from the tangled web of federal government involvement. And, TCS is clearly meeting the needs of its customers. According to its 1998–1999 annual shareholder report, or education prospectus, of the 118 students who completed the 1998–1999 school year, 112 have re-enrolled for 1999–2000, a return rate of 95 percent. This is an unequivocal demonstration of value. Further, when surveyed by TCS, the parents clearly endorsed the education taking place there. Ninety-five percent of parents are very satisfied with their child's experience at TCS, while ninety-three percent felt the teachers and administration are fulfilling the mission of the school.

Second, the mission of TCS is crucial to its success. The very first objective of TCS is to provide a foundation of knowledge which will allow students to have successful academic careers. Elaborating on that point, TCS states, "We believe that all children can learn and that children will rise to the high expectations of their parents and teachers." And what does TCS teach? "We offer the students the opportunity to be challenged by a rigorous, classic core curriculum taught in a planned progression by teachers who stress abundant practice and careful feedback." Finally, recognizing that education involves more than just books, the TCS "founders believe that, in addition to a strong academic program, a school should help guide each child to develop his or her character." This is clearly a blueprint and commitment to effective, excellent education.

Third, I am pleased to report TCS has been successful in meeting its stated goals. For example, the class of 2002 raised their median national percentile on CTB/McGraw-Hill's "Terra Nova Multiple Assessments Test" in every category tested—reading, language, math, science and social studies. In math, TCS students jumped a remarkable 13 percentage points. The class of 2001 also achieved exceptional results on Terra Nova, showing gains in all subject areas, and an 11 point increase in science. Finally, the class of 2000 demonstrated growth in all but one subject area, and improved its overall Terra Nova score by 10 percentage points. On another measure of student performance, the math

FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test), TCS fifth-graders outperformed a majority of their peers in the county and across the state.

Charter schools must prove they are fulfilling their educational goals and that their students are, in fact, learning. They must do so, first and foremost, to meet their responsibility to educate children, to satisfy the terms of their charters, and to keep their customers, the parents, satisfied and willing to reinvest their most precious resource, their children, in the school. There can be no question TCS is achieving its goals and meeting its customers' needs.

As catalysts for positive change in children's learning, parents' options, school system quality and state reform efforts, charter schools are the vanguard. As exemplified by the Terrance Community School in Tampa, Florida, or the Liberty Common School in Fort Collins, Colorado, charter schools provide a desperately needed alternative to the failing government-owned monopoly schools. However, we must guard against overzealousness at the federal level. Charter schools have been successful because they have been free of the U.S. Department of Education and federal bureaucrats. Charter schools succeed and thrive today because of the strength of state charter school laws and because of the leaders in these schools.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the efforts of Mr. Laurie, the teachers, parents and students of TCS, and hope their achievement, optimism, and freedom continue unabated for many years to come.

THE NEW MEXICO FIRES

HON. JOE SKEEN OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 18, 2000

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, as most of you know New Mexico has had a series of terrible fires sweeping throughout forests in the past few weeks. My good friends and Members of Congress from New Mexico, HEATHER WILSON and TOM UDALL, have done an excellent job of informing us of the impact the Los Alamos fire has had on the citizens of northern New Mexico. As the fires continue to burn, we hear stories that make the New Mexico Congressional delegation proud and honored to represent and serve the citizens of the Land of Enchantment. In the days and weeks to come, many stories will surface regarding the efforts of the citizens of New Mexico and we will be relaying them to our good friends in the U.S. Congress.

Today I'd like to talk about the United States Post Office and the work and sacrifice they made to help keep our New Mexico communities together. Following the evacuation of Los Alamos and the surrounding area, thousands of residents were displaced to shelters, hotels, motels and homes across northern New Mexico. They were separated from their neighbors, their friends, their pastors and priests. They were separated from their children's teachers, coaches, scout leaders and den moms. They did not know what they would find when they would be allowed to return home.

However, something wonderful happened. Congress was not involved, an Executive

Order was not issued, and no declaration was made by a public official. Instead, the United States Post Office decided to begin operating an outdoor Post Office where these refugees from the fire could come each day and collect their mail. They could meet their neighbors, their friends, their ministers, and the countless numbers who had been displaced. They could share information, they could console those who have lost their homes and they could provide support to each other. This temporary outdoor Post Office became the heart and soul of a city in exile.

Each day the Postal Service Letter Carriers, their supervisors, the window clerks and the leadership of the US Postal Service stepped up to the plate for New Mexico. I think all the citizens of New Mexico support me when I say thanks to the United States Postal Service for insuring that the mail got through and thank you for your help in holding a community together.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 18, 2000

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, May 17, 2000, I traveled to Michigan to be with my friend and colleague, BART STUPAK and attend the funeral of his son, BJ. Over the past few years, I had the opportunity to meet BJ and play some baseball with him. He was a fine young man, and his death comes as a great shock to all of us. My thoughts and prayers continue to be with BART and his family as they struggle to cope with this tragedy.

As a result of my travel, I missed four votes. Had I been present, I would have voted in the following ways.

Rollcall vote No. 190—"no"; rollcall vote No. 191—"aye"; rollcall vote No. 192—"aye"; and rollcall vote No. 193—"no."

A CELEBRATION OF NORTH BAY VILLAGE 55TH BIRTHDAY

HON. E. CLAY SHAW, JR.

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 18, 2000

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, today, I recognize a special birthday celebration within Florida's 22nd congressional district. On Sunday, May 21st, 2000, residents and friends of North Bay Village will celebrate its 55th birthday.

For my colleagues unfamiliar with North Bay Village, it is a wonderful little community in Miami-Dade County consisting of three islands, North Bay Island, Harbor Island and Treasure Island. Incorporated in 1945, North Bay Village is the home to 5,650 Floridians.

Mr. Speaker, North Bay Village was home to the Shaw family for many years. In 1943, two years prior to incorporation, I along with my parents, Dr. E. Clay Shaw, Sr. and Rita Walker Shaw called this community home. We settled in North Bay Village before two of the islands had yet been created, and we lived in one of the 10 original homes built on the island. At that time, the bridges connecting the island to the mainland were made of wood

and we had many vacant lots on which to play ball.

After incorporation in 1945, North Bay Village began rapid growth; yet one could still stand on high ground and count the houses.

Today, under the leadership of Mayor Ignacio Diaz, City Manager Rafael Casals, and the North Bay Village Council, I am proud to call North Bay Village the home of Clay and Rita Shaw.

Mr. Speaker, my congratulations to the 5,650 residents and Mayor Diaz on this wonderful day.

TRIBUTE TO VERA LEE CLARK
OF MADISON COUNTY, ALABAMA

HON. ROBERT E. (BUD) CRAMER, JR.

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 18, 2000

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, I pay tribute to Verna Lee Clark, Director of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program of Madison County. Ms. Clark is being honored today at a retirement reception and I wanted to express my gratitude for her 24 years of dedicated service to the senior citizens of Madison County, Alabama.

Through her work with each senior at the Huntsville-Madison County Seniors Center, she has given to her community tenfold. By providing service opportunities for senior citizens, she gives them a sense of accomplishment and self-worth. She allows them to remain connected to their community and other parts of society. By finding the right match for their individual talents and skills, she has reaffirmed countless seniors in North Alabama.

For nearly a quarter of a century, she has recognized the individual assets of each person before her and matched him or her with a service need in our community. I wish to take this opportunity to thank her for her exemplary role with the Senior Center. For her hard work, loyalty and kind heart, I feel that this is an apt honor.

On behalf of the Congress of the United States, I pay homage to Ms. Clark and thank her for a job well done. I know her seven children and fourteen grandchildren will relish the extra time with Ms. Clark. I congratulate Ms. Clark on her retirement and wish her a well-deserved rest.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FIRST
ACCOUNTS ACT OF 2000 (H.R. 4490)

HON. JOHN J. LaFALCE

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 18, 2000

Mr. LaFALCE. Mr. Speaker, today I'm proud to introduce legislation to bring more low-income Americans, those who remain "unbanked," into America's financial mainstream. This legislation reflects an initiative proposed by President Clinton in his FY 2001 budget, which is referred to as the "First Accounts" initiative. I am pleased to note that a number of my colleagues, including JIM LEACH, MAXINE WATERS, and BARNEY FRANK, have joined me as original co-sponsors of this legislation. With their support, I look forward to en-

acting this important initiative into law in this session of Congress.

The bill I am introducing today, the First Accounts Act of 2000 (H.R. 4490), will help bridge the financial divide in America through the implementation of innovative strategies by the Department of the Treasury. This initiative complements the Treasury's Electronic Transfer Accounts, or ETAs, which are low-cost electronic accounts offered to recipients of Federal benefits. President Clinton proposed \$30 million from the FY 2001 budget for the First Accounts initiative, which unlike ETA, applies to non-recipients of Federal benefits. The First Accounts Act of 2000 consists of the following three basic elements: (1) Providing financial incentives to depository institutions to create low-cost bank accounts for low- and moderate-income individuals; (2) expanding access to ATMs in safe, secure and convenient locations, including U.S. Post Offices in low-income neighborhoods; and (3) implementing a financial literacy campaign to educate low- and moderate-income Americans about the benefits of a bank account for managing household finances and building assets over time.

Mr. Speaker, we often take for granted the significance to our daily lives of being part of the financial mainstream—that is, having the ability to direct-deposit our paychecks, write checks to pay our bills, and withdraw cash from ATMs. Unfortunately, roughly 8.4 million low-income Americans, according to the Federal Reserve, do not enjoy the simple privilege of a low-cost transaction or savings account that the rest of us enjoy. As a consequence, their financial condition, and ability to fully participate in the nation's current economic prosperity, suffers greatly.

The First Accounts Act of 2000 represents a meaningful effort to redress the imbalance between those of us who can afford and enjoy the convenience of readily available basic financial services, and those less fortunate American families who can't. Providing low-cost access to bank accounts would help save the scarce resources of America's less fortunate working families, many of whom pay more than \$15,000 over a lifetime for check-cashing and bill-paying services from less-regulated financial institutions, such as check-cashers and payday lenders.

The First Accounts initiative also represents sound economic policy. Research indicates that once "unbanked" families enter the doors of depository institutions as regular account holders, they are likely to become savers and begin to accumulate assets. Mainstream depository institutions will also benefit from the First Accounts initiative. A Federal Reserve study indicates that many low-income families with bank accounts also routinely used other bank products, including credit cards, automobile loans, first mortgages and certificates of deposits.

Mr. Speaker, the First Accounts Act of 2000 is good policy and makes good sense. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bill.

FIRE FIGHTER DIES

HON. JOE SKEEN

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 18, 2000

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, New Mexico suffered an even greater tragedy on Monday, May 15. As much of the attention of the nation has been on the fire that burned portions of Los Alamos, New Mexico, a blaze was sweeping across the Sacramento Mountains in the south central portion of my state. Two men died in a spotter plane that was being used to help fight the Scott Able fire. The following story by Diane Stallings, a staff writer with the Ruidoso News, captures the essence of what the life of Sam Tobias, a career employee with the United States Forest Service was all about:

[From the Ruidoso News, Wed., May 17, 2000]

TOBIAS REMEMBERED

(By Diane Stallings)

When local forester Sam Tobias died Monday, he was doing a part of his job he especially enjoyed.

"Going on (fire) spotter planes was something that he loved," said longtime friend Ron Hannan with the U.S. Forest Service in Alamogordo.

Tobias, 47, was a passenger on a fire-spotting airplane that went down two miles northeast of the Alamogordo-White Sands airport at about 12:30 p.m. Monday. The pilot, who was from Columbia, Calif., also died in the crash. The two men were scheduled to fly over the Scott Able Fire in the Sacramento District southeast of Cloudcroft, according to authorities.

"He always had a smile on his face," said wildlife biologist Larry Cordova, who worked with Tobias on the Smokey Bear Ranger District with headquarters on Mechem Drive in Ruidoso.

District Ranger Jerry Hawkes said, "We're just in shock that we won't have Sam here with us anymore. He was here 12 years and everyone has grown so close. This is pretty hard for us."

"He was such a strong part of our district and the Forest Service. He was the peacemaker with that big smile, always helping and giving good advice. He had a lot of wisdom, enjoyed helping the community and trying to make things work out."

Tobias grew up in southwestern Pennsylvania, earning a bachelor of science degree from Pennsylvania State University.

He worked in recreation management his entire career, starting in the Tonto Basin Ranger District from 1975 to 1988 and then joining the Smokey Bear District.

"Sam helped out fighting fires and through the years, he was trained as an air attack coordinator," Hannan said. "He assisted many people fighting fires with his skill in coordinating air tankers, helicopters and fire crews."

Tobias knew every corner and cave of the Lincoln National Forest in Lincoln County. He loved the outdoors and enjoyed hiking, fishing and hunting.

His mark can be found on many of the decisions regarding use of forest land.

He's credited with improving the ski area, campgrounds and picnic areas that are considered models of design, district officials said.

He also worked with summer cabin owners, miners, outfitter guides and telecommunication specialists.

"Life-long friends of his have been calling in," Hannan said. "My wife worked for him