

Woodland Beautification Committee, which is a volunteer organization formed to facilitate murals in places previously plagued with graffiti.

I am honored to recognize an individual who has committed his life to the protection of his fellow citizens. Men and women who put their lives in harms way everyday on our streets and cities merit our admiration, and deserve our appreciation. Please join me in congratulating Chief Del Hanson for a lifetime of hard work and a job well done.

THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO CHINA

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 14, 2002

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, as the President makes his first state visit to China later this month, I wish him well and a productive trip. The United States and China will have many issues to discuss, such as counter-terrorism, human rights, arms proliferation, Tibet and Taiwan. It is my hope that President Bush will stand on his principles regarding Taiwan. As a long time observer of the Republic of China on Taiwan, I have noticed that Taiwan is a country that has taken great strides towards democracy. With U.S. assistance, Taiwan is now a major economic power in the world, and a member of the World Trade Organization. Although it has embraced democracy, it faces a formidable adversary—the People's Republic of China. From time to time, China threatens Taiwan militarily. It is important that Taiwan has the capability to defend itself against outside forces. Therefore, I consider President Bush's trip to China vital, but believe that Taiwan's interests must not be compromised.

BIPARTISAN CAMPAIGN REFORM ACT OF 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 13, 2002

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2356) to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to provide bipartisan campaign reform:

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the Shays-Meehan Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2001. This legislation will close the soft money loophole which currently allows unlimited and regulated funds from corporations, labor unions, and wealthy individuals to be funneled into Federal election campaigns. In addition, it will require the clear and full disclosure of those who sponsor election-related advertisements.

As a member of the Government Reform Committee, I have watched with growing concern the insidious influence that soft money plays in our Nation's election process. The questionable fund-raising activities of the 1996 election and the record levels of money spent in 2000 points toward a disturbing trend that should be addressed and brought under control.

It has been nearly 30 years since Congress last corrected the abuses of the campaign finance system. In those 30 years, political loophole artists have learned how to exploit the shortcomings of our Nation's current campaign laws. It is therefore our duty to revise and adapt those laws to current realities and ensure that the intentions of our laws are upheld.

The Shays-Meehan bill is our best hope for true and meaningful campaign reform. It is time for the Congress to act in the best interests of our Nation. Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to support the Shays-Meehan bill.

INSURANCE INDUSTRY MOD- ERNIZATION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

HON. JOHN J. LaFALCE

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 14, 2002

Mr. LaFALCE. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Insurance Industry Modernization and Consumer Protection Act. This legislation will give insurance companies the ability to overcome the cumbersome inefficiencies of the current system through an optional Federal insurance charter. Companies that choose the optional federal charter will be able to bring new, innovative insurance products to our national markets much more quickly, giving consumers and businesses more choices in insurance products. It will also introduce strong federal oversight and consumer protections that should be required for an industry of such economic importance.

Importantly, for the first time in over half a century, the Insurance Industry Modernization and Consumer Protection Act will make the Federal antitrust laws generally applicable to the business of insurance, something I first called for in the 1970s. This will greatly enhance the ability of consumers and regulators to ensure a fair and evenhanded insurance market.

The domestic insurance industry, with assets of over \$4 trillion held by both life and property and casualty insurers, plays a major and central role in the U.S. economy. All businesses depend on insurance for protection from both known and unknown hazards. Without insurance, banks and other lenders would have to bear the risks of the hazards that befall their customers. Credit would be both harder to obtain and more expensive.

The events of September 11th underscore the crucial part that insurance plays in ensuring U.S. domestic economic security and stability. Without an estimated \$40 to \$70 billion in insurance benefits, the businesses and individuals affected by the terrorists attacks could not begin to rebuild their financial lives.

The health of the U.S. insurance market has a significant global impact as well. The U.S. represents over one-third of the world insurance market. In the year 2000, U.S. consumers and companies paid \$840 billion of the world's \$2.4 trillion in premiums.

Despite the industry's central role in the national and global economy, the business of insurance is regulated solely at the state level, with absolutely no federal oversight. Since 1976, I have called for giving the Federal government a role in the regulation of the insur-

ance industry. The Insurance Industry Modernization and Consumer Protection Act will strengthen the competitiveness of the U.S. insurance industry and provide the national government a voice in regulating an industry that is so vital to our national interests.

The current state-by-state regulation of the insurance industry does not reflect either the economic centrality of the industry or the reality of today's market. Many of the domestic insurance companies are heavily engaged in interstate commerce, and sell insurance products to a global, national or, at the very least, a multistate market. However, in the United States, we subject insurance companies to the burden and cost of being licensed in every jurisdiction in which they choose to sell policies. This checkerboard of inconsistent and inefficient regulation impairs strong regulatory oversight and increases the costs of doing business. It also has the potential of putting U.S. domestic insurance companies at a serious competitive disadvantage in what is an increasingly global insurance market. The current system unnecessarily increases costs, impedes the efficient delivery of products and services and, too often, inadequately protects consumers.

Over 50 different insurance departments, each with its own peculiar laws and procedures, regulate insurance companies that operate on a national basis. This current regulatory system adds to the cost of operating insurance companies in two ways. First, an insurance company is required to invest considerable resources to comply with the laws of each of these jurisdictions and to interact with all of these regulators. Secondly, the delay in approving insurance products results in lost profits. Insurance companies have testified before the Financial Services Committee that they can experience delays of up to 18 months in obtaining the approval of the 50 plus state insurance departments. One national life insurance company estimates that it loses \$50 million per year in lost profits because of these delays.

Consumers also suffer from the inability of insurers to bring their products to market quickly. Regulatory delays often translate into consumers' inability to obtain the best price or the most favorable product features. A well-designed regulatory scheme will create efficiencies and creativity that will benefit both consumers and insurance companies.

The Insurance Industry Modernization and Consumer Protection Act also benefits consumers by establishing a strong regulatory scheme to combat unfair and deceptive practices. Currently, some states do a very good job in protecting consumers. But, unfortunately, other states do not have a tradition of vigorous protection of consumers.

To raise the standards of those states with inadequate consumer protections and to prevent a competition in laxity between the Federal insurance regulator and the state insurance regulators, my legislation will require that all state-regulated insurers meet certain standards that the Act applies to federally chartered insurers. The Insurance Industry Modernization and Consumer Protection Act currently requires all state-regulated insurers to meet the same market conduct standards that the Act applies to federally chartered insurers. It is my intention to expand these minimum standards to other areas, including adequate information disclosure and effective means of redress for

consumers who have been harmed by illegal practices.

I do not view optional federal chartering as a means to escape vigorous state regulation of the insurance industry. The last thing I want is to encourage a "race to the bottom," as state and federal regulators compete for the participation of insurance companies by progressively weakening the quality and effectiveness of their oversight. I have indicated to the National Association of Insurance Commissioners that this bill should not be used as an excuse to weaken existing state consumer protections, or to scuttle attempts to improve these protections.

Establishment of an optional federal charter is intended to provide for a strong, efficient, and effective insurance regulatory system. Providing for Federal oversight of the insurance industry will lead to a healthy regulatory competition that can enhance efficiency, spur innovation and expand consumer protection in a way that will benefit both the insurance industry and its customers.

Mr. Speaker, the current, state-based system of insurance regulation is inadequate—and it is in the best interests of insurers and their consumers that it be augmented. Failure to enhance insurance regulation will keep in place a system that could threaten the viability of the insurance industry in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. I urge my colleagues to join with me in taking this important step toward facilitating the modernization of the insurance industry. It is decades long overdue.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S VISIT TO CHINA

HON. STEVEN R. ROTHMAN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 14, 2002

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that President Bush will be making a state visit to the People's Republic of China in late February.

As Secretary of State Colin Powell has said, the United States and China have many common interests. Among several large and continuing disagreements are religious freedom and the issue of Taiwan. I hope that President Bush will urgently raise the issues of freedom of religion and also stand firm on the issue of Taiwan in his discussions with the Chinese.

According to a report in yesterday's Washington Post, Chinese government documents show detailed efforts on the part of the Communist leadership to target religions including the use of secret agents to infiltrate Protestant religious groups, crushing underground Catholic churches, and the use of force against the banned Fulan Gong spiritual movement.

It is nothing less than a nationwide campaign to stamp out religion so that all the Chinese people can worship is the state. When Secretary Powell appeared before the Foreign Operations Subcommittee yesterday, he stated that when the United States and China have disagreements over religious freedom, "we do not hold back our criticism." It is therefore imperative for President Bush to speak out loudly and strongly against this denial of this basic human right—freedom of religion—when he is in China next week.

Regarding Taiwan, the United States and the Republic of China on Taiwan have been maintaining strong relations for decades. In recent years, despite the lack of formal diplomatic relations between the United States and Taiwan, Taiwan has been unwavering in its support of the United States. In the wake of September 11, Taiwan shared our mourning and its government ordered all flags lowered at half staff for two days. Taiwan stands with the United States on nearly all issues including safeguarding human rights and fighting terrorism around the globe.

Mr. Speaker, Taiwan is not an issue that divides the United States from China. As long as we stand firm on our principles of providing what Taiwan needs militarily, there will be stability in the Taiwan Strait and that is in everyone's best interests.

I wish President Bush best of luck in his journey to China.

RECOGNITION OF MS. ROSEANNE LUTH

HON. DARRELL E. ISSA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 14, 2002

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ms. Roseanne Luth of San Diego, California. I would like to join with the Muscular Dystrophy Association in honoring her as the recipient of the inaugural Joseph L. Hertel Memorial Award. This award was inspired by Joseph Hertel and is a tribute to his exceptional life and his courageous battle against Lou Gehrig's Disease.

Roseanne Luth is a successful business owner in San Diego. Roseanne was the first elected president of the 70-year-old Executive Association and the San Diego Book of Lists ranks her custom research company, Luth Research, among the top 25 San Diego Women-Owned Businesses. She also served a five-year term as a board member of the San Diego Better Business Bureau and served as the Bureau's first woman chairman in 1998. In addition, to being an extraordinarily successful entrepreneur she is also an asset to the community.

I would like to wish Ms. Luth continued success as she continues to team with the Muscular Dystrophy Association and her brother, Bob Baker, to work towards the elimination of Lou Gehrig's Disease.

WRITING OF ASHLEY HECKER

HON. JAMES H. MALONEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 14, 2002

Mr. MALONEY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honor for me today to bring to the attention of my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives the writings of Ms. Ashley Hecker. Ashley is a fifth grade student at Doolittle Elementary School in Cheshire, Connecticut. She composed this poignant poem just moments after the terrorist attack on September 11th.

WE STAND STRONG

As the cry of American reaches my ears

I must try to hold back my tears.

The plane crashed along with the crew

You may have lost someone too.

Under the rubble some survived

Sadly, many died.

Your heart may hurt but do not blame

Don't give into this twisted game.

New York will never be the same,

The terrorists will live with a life of shame.

Please don't give up on the Red, White and Blue

We'll keep on fighting through and through.

Ashley's poem came to my attention shortly after Veterans Affairs Commissioner Eugene A. Migliaro Jr. awarded her a citation for her "dedication, expression and patriotic views."

Mr. Speaker, it is both a personal pleasure and privilege to honor Ashley Hecker, a young lady who's writings exemplify the American spirit.

IN RECOGNITION OF OPERATION COOKIE BAKE

HON. DOUG OSE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 14, 2002

Mr. OSE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the hard work and thoughtful consideration of many of my constituents for their involvement in organizing and carrying out a mass donation of baked goods, "Operation Cookie Bake", for the active duty, reserves and civilian employees at Travis Air Force Base in Vacaville, California.

Operation Cookie Bake, originally sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary Unit 165 of Vacaville, was created as one way in which the local community could show support for the hardworking men and women who defend our freedom around the world and at home. On October 22, 2001, the community hosted the first phase of Operation Cookie Bake, resulting in the donation of twenty-one large and medium sized boxes or approximately 5,000 cookies and another 1,500 brownies, fudge and other treats. The second phase of Operation Cookie Bake on December 11, 2001, produced over 10,000 cookies and 3,000 brownies, fudge and breads, or approximately 800 individual bags of goodies.

I would like to recognize the hard work of so many of my constituents who have truly made me proud: the ladies of the American Legion Auxiliary Unit 165 who sponsored the first phase of the project and supported it; as well as the ladies of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary Unit 84 and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary Unit 7244; the employees, students and members of Sutter Health, Central Billing Office, Meek's Lumber, St. Mary's Parish, Rainbow Girls, Vacaville Bible Church, Boy Scout Troop 195, Girl Scout Troops 80 and 93, Vanden High School Interact Club, Will C. Wood Culinary Club, Faith Academy, Xi Tau Delta of Beta Sigma Phi, American Legion Auxiliary 550 of Vallejo, American Legion Post 165, Brotherhood of Vietnam Veterans, Disabled American Veterans Chapter 84, United Veterans Memorial Association, and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7244.

I would also like to recognize the Veteran Liaison for the 60th Air Wing, Airman first Class Brooke Gardner, for her efforts in facilitating the smooth operation and delivery of the