

who came to visit him. But we will also remember George Washington and how, on a dark December 25th he led his improbable army across an ice-choked river to give a people struggling for independence hope that they might one day be free.

Thank you very much, Professor George, for having me here this afternoon. James Madison told us, in words that I understand are now inscribed in Corwin Hall, that a well-instructed people alone can be permanently a free people. The gatherings you have here at Princeton under the auspices of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions contribute to our instruction—and to our freedom.

HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF JOHN “CHIP” ROBERTS

HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 29, 2002

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the retirement of John “Chip” Roberts, Director of the Colorado Division of State and Veterans Nursing Homes.

John “Chip” Roberts retired on January 15, 2002. He served older Americans for nearly twenty-two years. For the past eleven years, Chip worked for the Colorado Department of Human Services as Director of the Colorado Division of State and Veterans Nursing Homes. Previously, he worked in the private sector as both a nursing home administrator and a regional director. As Division Director of the Colorado State and Veterans Homes, Mr. Roberts oversaw the operations of five State nursing facilities totaling 582 beds. Four of the State homes provide skilled nursing care to military veterans and their spouses and widows. Under Mr. Roberts’ leadership, the State homes program made numerous improvements in service delivery. Chip was always quick to credit the dedicated staff at each facility for the overall success of the program.

Since 1997, in response to legislation authorizing the construction of a new State veterans home at the former Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in Aurora, Colorado, Chip was deeply involved in the design and development of the new 180 bed facility. Throughout the project, Chip continually encouraged the need to be highly flexible in the design in order to allow for the future health care needs of the residents. In addition, to skilled nursing care, the Fitzsimons facility will offer dementia services and adult day care.

During his years of service to the State of Colorado, Chip’s dedication to veterans and their families was readily apparent. He made frequent presentations to publicize the State and veterans homes programs and to inform various organizations of the services available. He has been steadfast in his commitment to “serve those who have served.”

Chip and his wife of twenty-seven years, Judith, are looking forward to retirement with the shared desire to continue serving others, especially in their local church and the city of Arvada. The Roberts’ have one daughter, Vanessa, a recent graduate from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Besides volunteer service, Chip is looking forward to enjoying the great Colorado outdoors: hiking, hunting, and fishing. I wish them Godspeed.

IN COMMEMORATION OF INDIA’S REPUBLIC DAY

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 29, 2002

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor for me to rise today in commemoration of India’s Republic Day. As the adoption of our constitution and declaration of Independence in the 18th Century are among the most important days in the history of the United States, so too is January 26, 1950 in India. In the Central Hall of Parliament in New Delhi, India joined the community of democratic nations by adopting its Constitution that embodied many of the principles, including equality and secularism, put forth by our own founding fathers.

It gives me great pleasure to celebrate this event, as this is not simply a day for Indians, but for Indian-Americans as well. The streets of my district in Jackson Heights, New York will be filled tonight with thousands of my constituents honoring this important day.

The bond that India and the United States share is not simply rooted in the democratic foundations, but also in democratic practices. Allying the world’s oldest democracy with the world’s largest democracy is a natural fit. I believe that India’s Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said it best when he spoke of the adoption of India’s Constitution: “There is one great test for a Constitution, for any system of Governance. It must deliver and it must be durable. Our Constitution has stood this test. And one reason it has been able to do so is that it embodies a mastery balance: between the rights of the individual and the requirements of collective life; between the States and the Union; between providing a robust structure and flexibility. Our Constitution has served the needs of both India’s diversity and her innate unity. It has strengthened India’s democratic traditions.”

The shared history and common conception for the future of our relationship has allowed our nations to cooperate in times of prosperity and assist each other in times of tragedy. This year’s Republic Day is bitter-sweet as it also commemorates the one-year anniversary of the devastating earthquake that struck India on January 26, 2001. The earthquake, centered in India’s state of Gujarat and measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale, killed more than 20,000 people. During those difficult times, we were there for India both in spirit and in practice. Shortly after the earthquake, the United States Congress adopted a Resolution expressing condolences for the victims and support for providing assistance. I am proud to report that Congress also responded to my efforts in increasing the funding for the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, specifically targeting the efforts in India.

Just as we came to the aid of India, they were among the first to condemn the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. Since that horrific day, high-level contacts between the U.S. and India have increased, reflecting the close cooperation between the world’s two largest democracies in the struggle against international terrorism. Unfortunately, the scourge of terrorism is another characteristic that our countries now have in common.

The December 13, 2001 attack on India’s Parliament hit very close to home. As nine police officers and a Parliament worker were killed we were forced, once again, to redefine the scope and definition of the war on terrorism. This attack sought to destroy the heart of India’s democracy, but will fail in that endeavor.

The common interests of the United States and India transcend the boundaries of the international war on terrorism. There has been ever-increasing cooperation in dealing with the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, preserving stability and growth in the global economy, protecting the environment, combating infectious diseases and expanding trade.

As a member of the Indian Caucus with a growing Indian constituency, my interest in the region has grown exponentially during my time in Congress. I have to say, however, that nothing was more eye-opening than my visit to India a few weeks ago. To get a true sense of the interests of the people and the government on the ground was invaluable, and will surely help me represent the views of my constituents more completely in the future.

With that, I wish to salute India for fifty-one years of work in pursuit of preserving democracy. It is my honor to join you as you continue that journey into the new millennium.

KAHLI RIES: A YOUNG PATRIOT FOR A BETTER FUTURE

HON. JAMES A. BARCIA

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 29, 2002

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Kahli Ries of Mayville, Michigan, upon the occasion of her winning the 2001–02 statewide Voice of Democracy Program speech-writing contest sponsored by the Department of Michigan Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its Ladies Auxiliary.

At a time when our country is engaged in a war against terrorists who threaten our American way of life, it is especially gratifying to honor Kahli for displaying in the words she has written a brand of patriotism to which all citizens should aspire. In her award-winning essay, Kahli expresses the hopes and dreams of our nation’s younger generation and she calls on her peers to take the responsibility to shape a better future. Her simple yet powerful words are reassuring to those of us in older generations that the future is in good hands.

Kahli, a ninth-grade student at Mayville High School, stands as a shining example of why America has time and again come together in times of crisis and risen to even the most difficult challenges. In her speech, Kahli has reached back in our history to capture the same sense of freedom and responsibility that our forefathers and many patriots since our founding have relied upon to build a better future for their descendants and others who followed.

Let me share an excerpt of her essay: “I hope America will be a place where not only we will be physically safe and morally safe, but our freedoms will be preserved as well. I see a place where people won’t be afraid to walk down the streets or open their mail. I believe in our country and our dedication to our

rights and values. And I believe that we, as a people, will never give those up."

Kahli's parents, Dave and Tammy, must swell with pride to have such a talented daughter exhibit her deep and sincere love of her country in a public forum. While it is certainly heartwarming to see that displays of patriotism have become more common since September 11, we should all join Kahli in hoping that "this feeling of patriotism that has been reborn in this country will last and stay in our hearts forever."

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am proud that young people such as Kahli Ries and her family reside in the Fifth Congressional District of Michigan. The recognition that Kahli has received from the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10884 and its Ladies Auxiliary of Mayville and from the Department of Michigan Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is indeed a fine honor for this outstanding young woman. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Kahli Ries and in wishing her continued success in spreading her patriotic message to our fellow citizens.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REGARDING BENEFITS OF MENTORING

HON. NITA M. LOWEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 23, 2002

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this resolution calling for the establishment of National Mentoring Month.

I am honored to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, the oldest and largest mentoring organization in the United States. Big Brothers Big Sisters will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2004. During the past century, Big Brothers Big Sisters has provided the foundation for the mentoring movement. Today, Big Brothers Big Sisters reaches over 210,000 children in over 500 locations in the United States, with the goal of reaching one million children by 2010.

Mentoring is dependent on highly committed volunteers. Volunteers in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program and in other high-quality mentoring programs across the United States devote many hours each week and become role models for children. As the resolution points out, research has proven the tremendous contribution that these volunteers make in the overall positive development of the children with whom they are matched.

Mentoring changes lives, but it is not an easy service to provide. I think it is so important that Congress acknowledge the tremendous contribution being made by today's volunteer mentors, and challenge everyone to make a difference in the lives of America's children.

GIRL SCOUTS GOLD MEDAL RECIPIENT: RACHEL SINK

HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 29, 2002

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to recognize one of New York's outstanding young students: Rachel Sink. In February, the young women of her troop will honor her by bestowing upon her the Girl Scouts Gold Medal.

Since the beginning of this century, the Girls Scouts of America have provided thousands of

youngsters each year the opportunity to make friends, explore new ideas, and develop leadership skills while learning self-reliance and teamwork.

These awards are presented only to those who possess the qualities that make our nation great: commitment to excellence, hard work, and genuine love of community service. The Gold Awards represent the highest awards attainable by junior and high school Girl Scouts.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the recipient of this award, as her activities are indeed worthy of praise. Their leadership benefits our community and they serve as role models for their peers.

Also, we must not forget the unsung heroes, who continue to devote a large part of their lives to make all this possible. Therefore, I salute the families, scout leaders, and countless others who have given generously of their time and energy in support of scouting.

It is with great pride that I recognize the achievements of Rachel, and bring the attention of Congress to this successful young woman on her day of recognition.

RECOGNIZING STUDENTS AT THE ANTIOCH UPPER GRADE SCHOOL IN ILLINOIS' 8TH DISTRICT

HON. PHILIP M. CRANE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 29, 2002

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize students at the Antioch Upper Grade School in Illinois' 8th District. Today, as our brave men and women in uniform are deployed throughout the world to protect and defend the freedoms we all hold so dear, we are more aware than ever before of the cost of the freedom.

The students at Antioch Upper Grade School have also been reflecting on the cost of freedom. Samantha Wise, the 8th grade social studies teacher at Antioch Upper Grade School, had each of her students write an essay entitled "Is Freedom Really Free?" Ms. Wise submitted the essays in the local VFW essay contest, and three students won. Joe Barlow won first prize representing the Village of Antioch, and third place in the 5th District for the VFW. Justin Kaminsky and Anthony Baschetti, were also runners-up for the Village of Antioch.

All of the students and their teacher should be commended for their work. It makes me proud to see schools like the Antioch Upper Grade School showing their patriotism.

THE VETERANS HEALTH CARE ITEMS PROCUREMENT REFORM AND IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2002

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 29, 2002

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, the procurement of medical and surgical items is a major expenditure for the Department of Veterans Affairs. During fiscal year 2001, for example, VA reported spending more than \$1.3 billion for medical and surgical supplies and equipment. The procurement of medical and surgical supplies and equipment by VA is also an activity in need of significant reform and improvement. To achieve these reforms, I am today introducing "Veterans Health Care Items Procurement Reform Improvement Act of 2002." I

urge my colleagues to support and promptly enact this important legislation.

A major provision of the "Veterans Health Care Items Procurement Reform and Improvement Act of 2002" directs the Department of Veterans Affairs, when procuring medical/surgical supplies and equipment, to buy these items from the Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) or from national contracts negotiated by VA. By requiring most VA health medical/surgical supplies and equipment to be purchased from the FSS or national contracts, VA can better leverage the tremendous purchasing power of its annual budget in excess of \$1 billion for medical/surgical supplies and equipment. When enacted, this legislation is expected to reduce VA procurement costs by tens of millions of dollars annually.

This legislation also provides for certain limited exceptions to the centralized procurement requirement. For example, it allows emergency purchases of medical/surgical supplies and equipment from other than FSS or national contracts and permits purchases of needed items not listed on the FSS. Other limited exceptions should facilitate greater financial savings from—and greater use of—important initiatives such as VA/DOD sharing and small business procurement.

In a May 15, 2001 assessment entitled, "Evaluation of the Department of Veterans Affairs Purchasing Practices", the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) reported, "The Department of Veterans Affairs is not leveraging its buying power to obtain the best prices for items purchased." Among the recommendations of the OIG were, "VA facilities be required to purchase items that are on national contracts, such as FSS, and that the FSS and other national contracts be mandatory sources of medical/surgical supplies and equipment" and local procurement contracts be specifically prohibited with very limited exceptions.

This measure will provide strong encouragement to vendors who wish to do business with VA to list their health-care items on part 65 and 66 of the Federal Supply Classification as appropriate or as part of a National contract. This legislation will eliminate existing inefficiencies from the current acquisition system that allows for multiple, locally-negotiated contracts with national vendors and distributors. Despite the enormous volume of health care items procured by VA, these local contracts often do not provide VA purchasers with the best price offered by vendors to other buyers.

In addition, this bill strengthens the contractual management and oversight tools of the Department of Veterans Affairs. It makes pre- and post-award contract audit clauses mandatory for almost all types of procurement contracts for health-care items. This will enable procurement officers, supervisors, the VA Office of the Inspector General, and the GAO to review the true value and cost of an item and assure compliance with contract provisions. In fiscal year 1997 when audit clauses were more common, audits accounted for the recovery of over \$35 million dollars—last year with audit clauses less common the total recovery was less than \$12 million dollars.

Other important provisions of this legislation will require most VA procurement contracts to include a price reduction clause. With the inclusion of a price reduction clause, when a vendor offers a health-care item at a lower price to another buyer in a commercial contract, VA will benefit from the purchase price reduction and receive the new lower purchase price for a health-care item it has previously agreed to purchase from the vendor.