

I would like to thank my staff, Michelle Scott and others who put together this report.

TRIBUTE TO OLYMPIAN DEREK PARRA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of the America's new Olympic heroes. Like all Americans, I have been watching all of our athletes competing in the 2002 Games with great pride. We love the Olympics. We love international spirit and the thrill of competition, the joy of victory and the stories of struggle. The athletes capture our imagination and our hearts.

I have been watching one athlete with particular pride, speed skater Derek Parra, winner of the silver medal in the 5,000-meter event.

You see, Derek Parra is from my district. He went to school with my son, Joe Baca, Jr., in Rialto, and I attend church with Derek's father, Gilbert Parra, at St. Catherine's in Rialto, California.

Derek's family and friends gathered on Saturday at Graziano's Pizza Restaurant in Colton to watch the San Bernardino native break the world record in the 5,000-meter speed skating race with a time of 6 minutes, 17.98 seconds, beating his own best time by 15 seconds.

Derek's silver medal win surprised the world. At 5 feet, 3½ inches, Derek is a small man in a tall man's sport. He is known by his Nordic competitors as "The Little Man with the Big Strokes."

Derek's record-breaking performance and silver medal were a bit of a surprise to even the people who know him best, because the 5,000-meter is not his best race. Friends and family eagerly await his best event, which is the 1,500-meter race on February 19.

Derek grew up in the west side of San Bernardino with his brother and single father. He attended Roosevelt Elementary School and Eisenhower High School. He first learned to skate at the Stardust Roller Rink in Highland, where he became an avid in-line skater.

As a Mexican American youth growing up in southern California, Derek did not set foot on ice until he was 17 years of age. Derek would be 26 years old before he would switch from in-line skating to ice skating in 1996 in order to shoot for the Olympic gold.

Derek's road to the Olympics have not been easy. He and his wife Tiffany have struggled to make ends meet while raising a little girl, Mia Elizabeth, while Derek trained for the Olympics. Unlike most skaters who train full time, Derek worked part time at a Home Depot to help support his family. Derek has doggedly pursued his dream against all odds. When peo-

ple said he could not do it, he indicated he could do it, and he did do it.

We do not have too many Winter Olympians from San Bernardino. The beauty of the Olympic Games is the opportunity they allow all of us to experience the glory and triumph through our athletes. We feel a connection with them and all the individuals that participated.

The residents of San Bernardino watched their native son with pride as he broke the world record in the 5,000-meter skate to win the silver medal. As the first Mexican American to ever appear in the Winter Olympics, let alone win a medal, Derek has expanded the dreams of millions of Hispanic boys and girls throughout the United States and the world, giving them hope that you have an opportunity to compete in an area where many other individuals do not compete.

Derek Parra is an American hero. One of eight Olympians chosen by fellow teammates to carry the American flag into the opening ceremonies, Derek accepted the honor even though his first race was the next day. While most athletes spend the night before a race resting, Derek jeopardized his medal chances to carry Old Glory.

With two events left in the Games, Derek Parra has already made history and opened the world of possibility for Hispanic Americans. I will be rooting for Derek as he competes in the 1,500- and 10,000-meter races. Bring home the gold medal, Derek. San Bernardino and Rialto are behind you. We all pray for you. Our prayers are with you. We wish you the best. We know you will do the best. You have made us proud.

SUPPORTING CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. LYNCH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, we are at an important point in our legislative calendar and at a point that will have great impact on the future of this institution, this House and this Congress. We are also at an important point in the history of our country and what direction we might take.

In the next several hours, in the next several days, we will take up the debate of the Shays-Meehan campaign finance legislation. We will have a singular opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to at last take soft money out of politics. We will have one shining moment to end transactional politics on Capitol Hill, and we will have one chance to actually make sure that working families' voices are heard in the halls outside of this Chamber instead of just the voices of special interest groups and high-powered lobbyists. And I hope that my colleagues will see that opportunity and seize it and join together and pass the Shays-Meehan legislation and bring rational, reasonable campaign finance laws into effect in this Congress.

We are also in an important point in our history in terms of what direction this country will take. And those questions will be answered by our debate around the administration's budget and around our own budgetary initiatives that will be put forward on this floor. And I just want to take a moment to just do a gut check on where we are in this country's history.

We are without question the wealthiest generation of any people that has ever walked this Earth. We have acquired in this generation, my generation, greater wealth and done it faster than any other generations on this planet. We have seen in the past 20 years the average income of the top 1 percent of earners in this country increase by a staggering \$414,000 per year. We have seen the number of millionaires in our society increase by 400 percent over the past 10 years. The rate of home ownership is through the roof, never been higher in this country.

We are faced now with several challenges, knowing that we are the wealthiest generation, knowing we have the blessings of generations that have gone before us. We have a couple of challenges, and I think the way we face these challenges is instructive as to the type of people and the type of country that we become.

We are faced with the challenge of financing the cost of this war in Afghanistan. And what is our response? If I can take the instruction from the President's State of the Union Address and the instructions of the majority party, we are saying that we do not want to pay for this war. We do not want to pay for this war. We want our tax cuts. That is what we are saying as a generation. We want our tax cuts. Even though we are the wealthiest generations of Americans, do not phase out our tax cuts. Do not delay them. Give us our tax cuts. And instead, we are saying let us build a deficit, and let us just hand the bill, hand the debt owed for this war to our children and to their children.

And that, Mr. Speaker, I see as just disingenuous and to a certain degree cowardly. We have a responsibility to the next generations. We have a responsibility, especially given the blessings that we have in this country, to face up to our responsibility and to pay for the cost of the prosecution of this war. It is a just war, and I stand with the President in the prosecution of this war, but we must face up to our responsibilities.

I also say the way we are facing our responsibilities to pay for Social Security, to provide a secure and decent requirement and health care for America's greatest generations, and instead, what we hear on the floor in our debate is that we should somehow privatize Social Security, we should somehow suggest curtailing benefits to those who are our most vulnerable and most in need. And, Mr. Speaker, I think we have missed, if that is the direction we have taken, we have missed our mission. We have missed our opportunity

to strike, I think, a true course consistent with the great traditions in this country of meeting the challenges of each generation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Guam (Mr. UNDERWOOD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. UNDERWOOD addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IN SUPPORT OF THE SHAYS-MEEHAN BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. LUCAS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. LUCAS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, this evening the Blue Dog Coalition is pleased to take this opportunity on the eve of debate regarding the Shays-Meehan campaign finance reform legislation to stand in strong support of this important reform.

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight as chairman of the Blue Dog Caucus on Campaign Finance Reform to voice my support for the Shays-Meehan bill. This bill represent real reform, and I strongly encourage my colleagues to support it.

□ 2000

The Shays-Meehan bill is the only campaign finance reform bill that effectively deals with soft money and the sham issue ads.

In 1996, \$262 million of unregulated soft money was spent on campaigns. Estimates of the 2000 election place that amount of money, soft money, at about one-half billion dollars. That is billion with a B.

This money from unrevealed sources has the effect of drowning out the voice of the average citizen, and it is often used to run the so-called issue ads funded by the wealthy interest groups which oftentimes flood a candidate's district just days before an election. These ads are put together by unknown, unaccountable sources and are often misleading or sometimes simply untrue. Of course, no one knows where the ad came from, so no one is called to task for these misleading, sham issue ads.

As the recent Enron debacle shows, Congress must avoid even the appearance of impropriety. I cannot say whether or not the executives at Enron broke the law or received special interest as a result of the \$1,671,000 of soft

money they gave in the 2000 election cycle campaign. They do, after all, deserve a fair hearing, and we are about that process now, but I know that the mere suspicion by the public that Enron did receive special treatment erodes public confidence in our government.

There is no question that the campaign finance system is not working well for the American people. An individual or corporation can literally pour thousands of dollars into the system without identifying themselves or what they represent. I believe we can reform the system to shift the balance back to the people and emphasize the voices of average citizens, not special interest groups, reforming a system that will enable us to focus more attention on the needs of all of our citizens, educating our children, passing a real Patients' Bill of Rights and protecting Social Security and Medicare.

Campaign finance reform is the right thing to do. While it is not the be-all, end-all in government reform, it is a major step in the right direction. The confidence of the American people is at stake. We must return our government to the people.

Mr. Speaker, tonight I have several fellow members of my Blue Dog coalition who are here to speak. The first speaker we have in the coalition to join us this evening, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD), a strong supporter of campaign finance reform since the 105th Congress and the Blue Dog communications chairman. I am happy to yield time to him so he can speak on this subject tonight.

Mr. BOYD. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. LUCAS), who has been a strong advocate and leader for campaign finance reform since his election to this Congress, to this U.S. House, in 1998. I also want to recognize the efforts of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TURNER), who came into this body in the 1996 election, as did I, for his strong leadership, and of course we all, Mr. Speaker, recognize the leaders in this body, the bipartisan leadership that is provided by the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN), who have been strong and long and tireless advocates for campaign finance reform.

Mr. Speaker, I came to this body after the 1996 election, and our freshman class spent some time together developing what we thought was the most important issues that we could work on together. This freshman class was made up of both parties, members of both parties that came in that 1996 election, which chose together in a bipartisan way the issue of campaign finance reform to work on, and so we have been working, trying to get the campaign finance system of this Nation reformed since that 1996 election.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues know that our democratic system of government works best when the our indi-

vidual constituents participate in the largest numbers. We have had diminished participation in our government election systems over the last 20 or 30 years, and I think that diminished participation is due in large part to cynicism. The public has become very cynical about campaigns and how they are financed and who controls them and so on.

I think they are cynical because the public believes that the current system is skewed to give the wealthiest people in this country and the largest special interest groups a greater say in shaping our public policy.

The largest culprit in that cynicism, that causes that cynicism, I believe, is a soft money loophole. Closing this soft money loophole will restore public confidence into our campaign financing system in our elections. Grassroots and personal participation, which we all know, the more personal individual participation we have in the electoral process, the better our democratic system works. If we can improve personal participation and grassroots efforts, then we will go a long way toward improving our system and the participation in that system, and our democracy will work much better.

The political parties will once again, Mr. Speaker, become a resource for manpower and strategy rather than a conduit for unregulated money, which they, over the last 30 years since our last major campaign finance reform has happened, and these parties simply in the most part now have become a conduit for large sums of unregulated soft money. The national parties were healthy and vigorous before the onslaught of soft money, and they can be healthy and vigorous again once we eliminate soft money. In fact, many of us believe that soft money has broken down the effectiveness of our national parties because it dilutes the influence to outside organizations.

Mr. Speaker, the time is now to fix this problem. We need to pass a clean bill that fixes our broken campaign finance system. We passed this bill, this U.S. House passed this bill in the 105th Congress, and it passed the bill in the 106th Congress, under the leadership of the people that I have mentioned earlier, but in both cases the other body failed to take up and pass campaign finance reform.

It is time now, Mr. Speaker, that Congress takes the big money out of the elections process and make sure that everyone has equal access to their government. Mr. Speaker, the President has promised if we will send him a reasonable bill, he will sign it, and it is time now that the Congress produce that bill that the President will look favorably upon and restore confidence to the public in our electoral system.

I want to thank the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. LUCAS) for allowing me to speak.

Mr. LUCAS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD) for his remarks.