

by a lot of people. The committee and all of the members of the committee were so dedicated to producing a product and laying aside any partisan bickering and certainly laying aside even parochial interest for the better of the whole. And it was a success. It was something that took a lot of work.

I have often said to those groups that I have had a chance to meet with that I only wish that they knew the work that was put in by the committee staff. It is something they will never have an appreciation of, the time that they spend away from family; literally the nights that were spent on the floor, on couches, in chairs, wherever they could grab a quick nap, wherever they could get a little rest and then plod on from there. They never quit. They never gave up. They did it with wonderful smiling faces. American agriculture, I think, has never seen such a capable staff assembled, nor do I suspect they will ever see one that is more capable ever assembled in the future. They did such great work.

Bill O'Conner, chief of staff, who was in and around the committee nearly 20 years ago when I started, and who knows a great deal about the institution, about agriculture, and about the process. And it was many, many long hard hours under his leadership and direction that that staff continued to work. And everyone worked together. Tom Sell, who was the deputy chief of staff, one of the great young men that I have gotten to know over the years. It does not hurt also that his son and I share the same birthday. Noah and GIL GUTKNECHT and I have the same birthday, and it is something we will obviously always remember.

I could tell a story about every member of that staff and the work that they put into the end product that became the farm bill. There were some, Alan Mackey, who literally was so wracked with pain that it was difficult at times for him to even get out of bed, but was always there, every day, long, long hours every day. Dr. Elizabeth Parker was undergoing chemo at the time and set a new style for women's hair fashions in the Committee on Agriculture. She was there every day. Debbie Smith, whose home was less than a quarter of a mile away from those hit by a tornado, spent 3 days up here and never went home to see how things were because it was at a critical time here.

So many others on both the majority and the minority. There was an effort put into this in a bipartisan fashion, as my dear, dear friend CHARLIE STENHOLM said that was not for politics but for the good of the cause of American agriculture.

There are so many people over the years that I could spend a lot longer than any of my colleagues want to spend mentioning the staff and the work they do. They make us look awfully good. All of us know that. They are the ones that produce the work that really makes a difference, that

keep the fires burning. I will be very remiss in not mentioning every one of them, and I could, and you are all in my thoughts; but I will particularly mention Lynn and Patty, who were there the day the door opened and will be there the day the lights are turned out, and have just kept things going, and so many in the district.

It has reminded me a great deal over the past several months of a particular translation from Corinthians that says, "What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God how can anyone boast as having accomplished anything on their own?" And I think we have to always recognize there are a lot of others, including much more powerful than we, who direct our lives and who direct the things that we do.

And I will just close with this, Mr. Speaker, again giving my appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman, but saving the best for last, I want to thank Sharon. This is, as all my colleagues know, a family effort. This is not something we, anyone, does alone. It takes a tremendous amount of sacrifice and dedication on the part of our spouses. Mine is extra special.

I have very fond memories of this place, but one of the things that she and I have talked about is that we hope that we have spent our last night apart, as so many nights we spend apart from our families when we are in Congress. And to those of you who we will miss greatly not being here, the fact that 24 hours of every day I will spend with her, I can take missing you all a little bit. We are looking very forward to the next phase in our lives, spending it together.

It was quite ironic, I think, when we made the announcement publicly that we were going to make this move. We just simply could not quit. Everyone was just so interested, particularly the media, about what was wrong. There has to be a problem. You cannot just walk away from this. And I think she summed it up quite well when she said, isn't it really sad that people do not think you can leave that to spend more time with your wife? And it is, I guess, if people think that with all of the wonderful opportunities that we have here, that that is more important to us than those that we care about.

And so we are looking forward to this next phase, I will assure you, as much as we were 18½ years ago when we came here preparing for this phase; but it will be done in a different setting. We intend to continue in our service. It will be in an unpaid capacity, and it will be done out of dedication and love for each other and for people. But this has been a wonderful opportunity, and I am proud of the accomplishments that this House has made over the years and that I have been able to just sit here and be a part of it.

We will continue to watch you occasionally, to see how you are doing. But come about middle of the summer, when it is really hot and humid here,

we will be somewhere under the cool trees in the mountains of Colorado, maybe spending enough time there that I could almost become a constituent of my good friend Governor Bill Owens. We will not be there quite that long, we will always have a home in our beloved Texas, but we are looking forward to that adventure in our lives.

So next week, when you are out doing your Memorial Day parades, we are going to start the fishing trip. Thank you very much.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for sharing those wonderful remarks with us, and I thank him also for sharing nearly 2 decades of his life with the American people and with all of us here in the Congress. We thank Sharon for sharing you with us because it has been a blessing for all of us. So we wish you the best.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to note that we have a large contingent of staff members of the House Committee on Agriculture and other friends and supporters of LARRY in the gallery. I mentioned earlier that the RECORD will remain open for an additional 5 days for Members to submit statements for the RECORD, and a number already have.

I would also note that the vice chairman of the committee, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), and the chairman of the Subcommittee on Livestock and Horticulture, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES), the former chairman of the Subcommittee on Specialty Crops and Foreign Agriculture Programs, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. EVERETT), have submitted statements for the RECORD, and I know others have been submitted and will be in the coming days because, LARRY, many of us want to let you know how highly we regard you and we wish you happy trails and abundant streams. May God abundantly bless you and Sharon in all of your future travels.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLE). The Chair will remind all Members not to refer to occupants of the gallery.

Mr. BONILLA. Mr. Speaker, LARRY COMBEST is a good friend. I will miss him and his wife Sharon very much.

All of his friends who remain in the House of Representatives wish him happiness in his new endeavors.

Mr. EVERETT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to join my colleagues on the House Agriculture Committee in saying farewell to an old friend and statesman, retiring Congressman LARRY COMBEST of Texas.

I've known LARRY since I first came to Congress and joined the Agriculture Committee in 1993 and I have the utmost respect for his continual dedication to the Nation and our farmers and ranchers.

LARRY COMBEST's long and distinguished career has included the chairmanships of the

House Intelligence and Agriculture committees. I had the pleasure of working side by side with Chairman COMBEST as he forged the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002.

From holding ten historic nationwide Agriculture Committee field hearings, one of which he conducted in my state of Alabama, to personally securing a \$73.5 billion funding commitment from the House leadership for the new Farm Bill, LARRY COMBEST was largely responsible for the successful passage of the landmark legislation for farmers and ranchers.

Chairman COMBEST's determination made it possible for the Committee to write a bipartisan, effective bill in a relatively short time and ensure its ultimate passage into law. This legislation restored a much-needed safety net to production agriculture that has been missing for too long. And when agriculture funding was under attack earlier this year, LARRY COMBEST once again stood up for farmers by standing fast against harmful proposed budget cuts.

As we in the House say goodbye to LARRY, I thank him for his service to America and wish he and his wife Sharon the very best as they pursue a future life outside of Washington.

Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to recognize the Honorable LARRY COMBEST as he completes his final three weeks serving as a Congressman in the United States House of Representatives. In addition to representing the 19th congressional district of Texas for the past 20 years, Representative COMBEST has served the entire U.S. agriculture community as Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture. His dedication to his country, his constituents and American agriculture should not go unrecognized.

I commend Representative COMBEST for his hard work and fine leadership while serving as Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture. Although I was elected to Congress in 2000 and only served under his leadership on the Committee for one term, I was honored to do so. Throughout the 107th Congress, Chairman COMBEST was diligent in his efforts to improve farm programs and to ensure the future of agriculture in America. Due in large part to his relentless hours of hard work and outstanding leadership, the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 was passed by Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush. I applaud Representative COMBEST for the strides he made to strengthen agriculture in the United States.

Congressman COMBEST has certainly contributed greatly to our nation and to our agriculture community, and I thank him for all of his efforts and congratulate him on his accomplishments while serving in the United States Congress.

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and commend Congressman LARRY COMBEST for more than 18 years of dedicated service to the 19th District of Texas.

As a member of the House Committee on Agriculture, I have appreciated his leadership as the former chairman and his genuine desire to pass sound legislation for America's farmers and ranchers.

LARRY took an approach to crafting the 2002 farm bill that no other legislator took before—he began holding hearings around the country as well as in Washington, listening to the pro-

ducers affected by farm policy, asking for concrete ideas and proposals which helped the Committee develop a farm bill that met the needs of our agriculture industry.

His ability to work in a fair bipartisan manner allowed the committee to establish a bill that was balanced and supported by members representing many regions of the United States.

Throughout the entire process, his tireless efforts did not go unnoticed by his colleagues or America's agriculture sector.

When I go home to North Carolina, I hear from my own farmers how much the farm bill has helped their families stay on the farm, and because of the leadership that LARRY provided, I know my producers have a safety net that they can count on.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to serve with LARRY and I wish him and his family the best in the future.

His leadership will be missed but certainly his accomplishments and all of his efforts will not be forgotten.

It is again my pleasure to honor congressman LARRY COMBEST for a job well done. He is a great statesman and trusted friend.

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, as a former member of the House Agriculture Committee, I would like to pay tribute to Representative LARRY COMBEST, who has announced his intention to retire at the end of May. During his ten terms in Congress, LARRY COMBEST has earned a reputation of being a friend of American Agriculture. As Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Representative COMBEST always worked in a fair and bipartisan manner to insure that all sides had an opportunity to make their voices heard. This was especially true when the Agriculture Committee developed what eventually became the 2002 Farm Bill. In order to hear from all interested parties, Chairman COMBEST held extensive hearings throughout the country, including one in my hometown of Peoria, Illinois. I believe that this level of inclusiveness was a major factor in Congress passing a Farm Bill that addresses the needs of America's farmers and ranchers.

Representative COMBEST's mark on this Chamber will not only be found in the work he has done for our Nation's farmers and ranchers. Representative COMBEST also served with distinction as Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. While I did not have the privilege of serving under his Chairmanship, as a member of the House Intelligence Committee, I know that his legacy of bipartisanship and integrity remains.

During his tenure in Congress, Representative COMBEST always worked for the interest of his constituents, his State, his country, and the House of Representatives. Knowing that actions speak louder than words, Representative COMBEST joined me as co-chair of the House Bipartisan Retreat Committee to help instill civility and bipartisanship to the proceedings of Congress.

Representative COMBEST will be sorely missed.

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Walter Lippmann stated, "The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind in other men the conviction and will to carry on." Congressman LARRY COMBEST leaves not only conviction and will for others to follow but also an example of representational leadership. His unique style of leadership has brought about positive change for his

constituency, for the state of Texas, and for each position he has held as a member of Congress.

Serving as only the third Representative in history from the 19th Texas Congressional District, Congressman COMBEST has honored the statesmen who preceded him in office. Always accessible and a constant voice for the people, his guiding strength and influence have become standard signatures for his work in Congress, including the drafting of the 2002 Farm Bill, the advocacy of medical and scientific advances through Texas Tech University initiatives, and promotion of the Vietnam Women's Memorial.

Congressman COMBEST leaves behind the conviction to distinguish the need of the people from the will of the people and the courage to carry on with the good of the people.

He is a trusted colleague and a proven leader. Congressman LARRY COMBEST will be missed.

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from California (Mr. HONDA) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my Special Order, recognizing Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the significance of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. The push for designating an APA Heritage Month started 26 years ago by visionary APA community leaders and also was led from this House by retired Congressman Robert Horton of New York and the current Secretary of Transportation, Norman Y. Mineta.

This year's Heritage Month theme, a Salute to Liberty, is an especially timely theme as our Nation is faced with conflict and tension. We must remember that in the fight to protect our national security, we must also preserve our civil liberties and individual rights. During this month, it is also imperative that we utilize this opportunity to reflect upon and understand our past so we can successfully build for our future. This is a moment of teaching and learning. There have been many histories of Asian Pacific Americans in this country, Mr. Speaker, their origins, their barriers, the barriers that they have overcome in the pursuit to seek the American Dream in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment and sort of share with the community the history of the bill that was passed in 1992, eventually, to recognize the month of May as an official