unavoidably detained. Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 89, on final passage of H.R. 1104, The Child Abduction Prevention Act, I would have voted as follows: rollcall vote No. 89—''aye.''

Protecting our children is a top priority of this Congress. Child abduction and exploitation cannot and should not be tolerated. The Child Abduction Prevention Act not only creates new methods for finding and recovering abducted children, but it also takes steps to prevent them from happening in the first place.

To help recover abducted children, it establishes a national AMBER Alert communications network and doubles the annual grant to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to $20 million through 2005.

To get tough on perpetrators and bring justice to sexual predators, it eliminates the statute of limitations for child abductions and sex crimes, denies pretrial release for child rapists or child abductors, requires a mandatory life sentence for twice-convicted child sex-offenders and a minimum 20-year prison sentence for the kidnapping of a person under 18 by a nonfamily member. It also punishes persons who travel to foreign countries to engage in illicit sexual relations with minors and criminalizes the actions of sex tour operators.

To provide law enforcement officers the tools they need, it authorizes COPS funding for a Sex Offender Apprehension Program, so local law enforcement may track sex offenders that violate the terms of their release.

I fully support this strong measure, ''The Child Abduction Prevention Act,'' that will help protect America's children.

CHILD ABDUCTION PREVENTION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 27, 2003

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1104) to prevent child abduction, and for other purposes:

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 1104, legislation that would improve our capacity to recover missing children with implementation of a national AMBER Alert program.

The safe recovery of 15-year-old Elizabeth Smart in Utah recently brought this important issue to national attention. I am well aware of how important AMBER Alert systems can be to helping bring abducted children home safely, which is why I am an original cosponsor of H.R. 412, the National AMBER Alert Network Act included in this bill, and supported the legislation introduced by Representatives MARTIN FROST and JENNIFER DUNN in the 107th Congress.

As Johnson County District Attorney for 12 years, I have seen child abduction cases that ended with the most horrible result—the death of a child. I helped bring AMBER Alert to Kansas City in 1999 and the system so far has contributed to the safe return of a 16-month-old child and a 4-year-old child. As a result, the state of Kansas implemented a statewide AMBER Alert program in October of 2002. 1 have since actively worked to bring the AMBER system nationwide.

Earlier this month, I hosted a news conference in Kansas City, Missouri, with my colleague Representative KAREN MCCARTHY, to raise awareness about AMBER procedures and the need for a national program. We joined with local police to publicize AMBER Alert and expressed our support for immediate passage of this bill. Cases like Elizabeth Smart demonstrate the urgency for recovering missing children, and although the Smart family was incredibly lucky, many others are not.

Mr. Chairman, I am disappointed that we have not seen the AMBER Alert legislation come to the floor as a stand alone bill, as I called for many months ago. I believe that saving children should be above partisan politics and that Congress should be able to unite in favor of increasing measures to help our kids. While I rise in support of H.R. 1104, 1 do want to express my dissatisfaction that we could not follow the model of our Senate counterparts who passed AMBER Alert without additional provisions that likely will delay enactment.

I hope that you will join with me to pass H.R. 1104, however, to improve the safety of our children.

HONORING PAUL H. BETANCOURT

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 31, 2003

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Paul H. Betancourt on the occasion of the Annual Banquet of the Fresno County Farm Bureau on April 4, 2003. A diversified row crop farmer, Paul completed his two-year term as Fresno County Farm Bureau president in 2002.

Born on the East Coast, Paul was raised in San Diego, California, and became a farmer after marrying into a farming family. Mr. Betancourt earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in religious studies from Westmont College, and a second degree in agriculture business from California State University, Fresno. He is a graduate of Class XXV of the California Agriculture Leadership Program.

The Fresno County Farm Bureau represents over 6,000 members, which includes over 4,500 farmers and ranchers, on trade, land use, water, labor, and all agricultural related issues. Mr. Betancourt has held several positions within Farm Bureau, including director-at-large, secretary-treasurer, and second and first vice presidents. Through his Farm Bureau activities, Paul served on the board of directors of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce, and represented the Farm Bureau at many industry and community forums and events.

Paul currently serves on the Kerman Unified School Board of Trustees and is involved in the Fresno Area Collaborative Regional Initiative. In addition, he farms 765 acres of cotton and almonds in the Kerman and Cantua Creek areas of Fresno County. Besides farming, Mr. Betancourt is a noted columnist for a local business publication and also enjoys teaching Sunday School class at Kerman Covenant. Paul and his wife, Sheryl, have two children, Heidi and Jonathan, and live near Kerman, California.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Paul H. Betancourt for his dedication and commitment to the Fresno County Farm Bureau and to the broader California agriculture community. I invite my colleagues to join me in commending Paul for his service and hard work and in wishing him many years of continued success.

THE PRINCE WILLIAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2003 MERIT VALOR AWARD RECIPIENTS

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 31, 2003

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, every year, the Prince William Chamber of Commerce recognizes individuals who have courageously demonstrated selfless dedication to public safety. These outstanding men and women have played an important role in building a better community. This hard work and determination has earned several citizens of Prince William County the highest honor bestowed upon county public safety officials—The Merit Valor Award.

The Merit Award recognizes public service officials for acts involving personal risk. The award may also be presented to those who demonstrate judgment, zeal, or ingenuity above what is non-nally expected in the performance of duty.

It is with great honor that I enter into the record the names of the 2003 Merit Award recipients. Prince William County Police Department: Police Officer Second Class R.A. Arce; Police Officer Second Class R.W. Minnick; Police Officer Second Class B.K. Oxendine; Sr. First Sergeant J.B. Wheeler; Prince William County Department of Fire & Rescue: Technician II Michelle Butler; Technician I Scott Calder; Technician II Stephen Horvath; Technician I Landon Timbers, Jr.; Virginia State Police: Trooper Darrel D. Estess; Senior Trooper Mark C. Wilkinson; USMC: Corporal Amber V. Kephart; Prince William County Office of the Sheriff: Deputy Sheriff Heath Stearns; OWL Volunteer Fire Department: EMT Robert W. Warner. The service they provide to the community is tremendous and is deserving of such acclaim.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the men and women who serve Prince William County. The events of September 11th, served as a reminder of the sacrifices our emergency service workers make for us every day. Their constant efforts on behalf of Prince William County citizens are paramount to preserving security, law, and order throughout our neighborhoods; and their individual and collective acts of heroism deserve our highest praise. I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating these outstanding individuals.