

and workforce incentives to retain the dedicated core of education professionals who daily shape the hearts and minds of the children of West Texas.

Today we recognize this important and influential group of people. My hat is off to our Texas teachers. And I encourage all Americans to take time on Tuesday to thank our teachers for the great job.

RECOGNIZING CARNEGIE MEDAL FOR NEIL JAY ROSENBERG

HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 2004

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the late Mr. Neil Jay Rosenberg, formerly of Westerly, Rhode Island, who will be awarded the Carnegie Medal for his heroism on the morning of July 17, 2002. This year, 19 individuals from throughout the United States and Canada will receive the Carnegie Medal for risking their lives to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others. The medal and \$3,500 grant will be presented posthumously to Mr. Rosenberg's father of Brooklyn, New York.

Alerted to a fire in the livingroom of his family's two-story house on July 17, 2002, Mr. Rosenberg quickly evacuated his step father, Robert L. Ingram, who required the use of a wheelchair. He then turned back into the house where his girlfriend, Tara Verrier, and two half sisters, Crystal L. and Carol Ingram, remained on the second floor. Tragically, neither Mr. Rosenberg nor the others survived the fire.

Mr. Speaker, I hope our colleagues will join me in honoring a true hero, Mr. Neil Jay Rosenberg, for sacrificing his life in the hopes of saving others.

HONORING MR. HOTS MICHEL

HON. HENRY J. HYDE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 2004

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call your attention to Hots Michels, one of Chicago's best liked and most enduring entertainers. During his 50-year musical career, Hots has played for three different Presidents and many famous people including Zsa Zsa Gabor, Abbott and Costello and Bob Hope.

In case you didn't know it, the "piano bar" began in Chicago, where people would gather around a piano and sing away their troubles to a wonderful guy like Hots.

Hots started in the old Sherman House Hotel at Clark and Randolph in Chicago. It was the original piano bar across the street from City Hall where politicians, union leaders and the media gathered. More recently he has been playing at the Chicago Chop House for the last 18 years, entertaining the throngs of individuals visiting the "Windy City."

On May 2, the Chicago Sun-Times featured Hots Michels in an article entitled, "Piano Player to the Stars": Hots Michels." Today, I am pleased to share this article with my colleagues in recognition of Hots, a guy who still knows how to pack them in.

"PIANO PLAYER TO THE STARS": HOTS MICHEL

Strangers in the night are the only people who tip piano player Hots Michels. He's got too many pals.

"I was never a tip guy, mainly because people knew me too well," Hots says. "I'd be in business with them, how could I take a tip? And I wouldn't want to; it would have to be from a stranger."

Hots has a fishbowl on his piano in the Chop House, just in case any strangers drop by.

Hots Michels is the original Chicago piano bar guy. The gang at the bar in the Chicago Chop House busts his chops and calls him "the pianist to the stars!" He has tickled the ivories for the likes of Zsa Zsa Gabor, Abbott and Costello, Bob Hope, Don Rickles, Sidney Poitier, Nat King Cole and Wayne Newton. One night while plunking the 88s at the Sherman House, he saw a face peek through the curtains from the dining room. The face belonged to another piano player who had just retired and was on a book tour. Hots says, "The maitre d' came over to me and said, 'President Truman would like you to join him.'"

He's had pops with three different presidents (Truman, Reagan, Bush I) and said prayers with the Pope. He's been playing piano in saloons for more than 50 years. How old is he? "That's an unpublished number."

He's no teenager but he sure looks good for his age.

Hots started out in Little Flower Parish near 79th and Ashland. How did he get the name "Hots"?

"I have no idea," he says, "It has nothing to do with music."

Did your parents name you Hots? "Hots Michels, yeah." Gotcha.

His dad, Walt, was a musician and songwriter, and Hots must have it in his genes. "I play by ear, I can't read music. I don't know what it was, but anything that had to do with a formal education, I just went south. I have no idea how I really got to play the piano, but hey, thank God."

Chicago Chop House owner John Pontarelli says, "He can probably play 2,000 songs."

The piano bar was born in the old Sherman House Hotel at Clark and Randolph. Hots says, "They had the College Inn, the Porterhouse Room and the Well of the Sea. We had strolling violins at the Porterhouse Room, and in between was a little lounge where people would sit and wait to be called to a table. Someone got the idea, just put a piano in there and entertain 'em while they're in there. Then someone said, well let's build a bar around it. All by accident, it wasn't planned. They did, and it's hard to believe but people would wait in line to sit at the piano bar because it was so new." It's karaoke with class.

The Sherman House was across the street from City Hall. Pals would wander over for a couple of carnables along with union leaders and media folk, and most of them became friends with Hots over the years. Along the way he was involved in a multitude of schemes.

"Piano was never enough for me. I was involved in other things all my life. I had a small loan business, used cars, Christmas trees, launched a new lipstick, bubble bath, radio stations in Alaska, Mill Run Playhouse, video games. I had a detective agency. We were in the slot machine business, drilled oil three times in my life, had a burial vault company in Melrose Park, and on and on and on."

Hots and his friend Hal White raised championship hogs in their backyard in Beverly and entered them in an international livestock show. "We took grand champion of the show."

On the wall next to his piano is a picture of the two city slickers crossing the Rock Island Line tracks with their two prize pigs, Lightgreen and Coolbreeze.

Hots used to wear a turban at the piano when he was doing his act, "The Musical Wizard of Mental Telepathy." Folks would conceal the name of a song on a piece of paper and Hots would tear it up and play it for them on the piano. The gang at the Chop House says, "Carnac stole his act!"

He's been playing from 5 to 8 p.m. every weekday at the Chop House for the last 18 years. The joint is drenched in Chicago history with thousands of photos of the toddling town's sinners and saints, including Sally Rand sitting nude on a horse, a gallery of gangsters and every mayor in the history of the city. Grab a stool at the piano bar and request a tune from Hots. If you feel like singing, he'll be your accompanist. I ask him what's the most requested song and he says, "As Time Goes By," requested by the young and the old. "It's still the same old story."

If you're lucky, Joe Sullivan might stop by to do some crooning at the bar. Hots says, "He owns Clark & Barlow Hardware, but Joe could have easily made it in show business. He brings down the house." I've watched Pete Nolan warble here with hand moves and phrasing that rival Sinatra's.

It's not just the music that draws you to Hots' piano. There's a camaraderie among those half-dozen stools as we listen to him play his favorites. One night Charlie Carey and I were chillin' with Hots, and Charlie mentioned that he was on his way to Washington, D.C. Hots picked up the phone next to his piano, called his best friend, U.S. Rep. Henry Hyde, and handed Charlie the phone. Lobbyists charge heavily for that kind of clout, but Hots was just putting two pals together.

After a half century of playing piano in saloons and more than a few cockeyed business schemes, Hots tells me, "I have no beefs."

He's been around long enough to know that only suckers beef.

CONGRATULATIONS TO GIRL SCOUTS ON THEIR 92ND BIRTHDAY

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 2004

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today to honor an American icon and an organization that we all know well, Girl Scouts of the USA. This year, Girl Scouts is celebrating 92 years of service to our communities and our nation. For 92 years, Girl Scouting has made a remarkable difference in the lives of girls in so many ways.

The Girl Scouts is an organization that has always been ahead of its time, and the experiences that girls have in Girl Scouting today are profound. For example, they travel the world, learn about science, math and engineering by working with some of the most innovative thinkers in these fields, and perform community service projects that are literally changing many of our communities for the better.

In March, I had the opportunity to meet with Girl Scout representatives from my district who came to Washington, D.C. with nearly 600 other Girl Scout executives, professional staff and volunteers from across the nation. The

Girl Scouts/San Diego-Imperial Council is the council that serves girls in my district, and I am proud of their work and leading expertise on the challenging issues affecting girls in today's world. This council serves over 30,000 girls in San Diego and Imperial Counties.

During their time in Washington, the representatives of Girl Scouts were discussing a very important issue: safety for girls. I am impressed by their dedication to helping all girls feel emotionally and physically safe, secure and strong. In our contemporary society where child abductions, rampant abuse and other violence against children occurs too frequently, their task is extremely important. I commend the Girl Scouts for their national and local leadership on this issue.

Through a nationwide call to action, Girl Scouts of the USA is leading an effort to create communities in which all girls feel safe and empowered. I ask that schools, churches, youth-serving organizations, Congress, and other government entities join with Girl Scouts to bring attention to this very important issue. All of our nation's children deserve to feel safe, secure and strong.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I congratulate Girl Scouts for a job well done and look forward to working with them on ensuring the safety of our nation's youth.

H. RES. 598 RECOGNIZES THE VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MILITARY IMPACTED SCHOOLS

HON. SILVESTRE REYES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 2004

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res 598, sponsored by my colleague Mr. HAYES of North Carolina. The resolution recognizes the valuable contributions of military impacted schools, teachers, administration, and staff for their ongoing contributions to the education of military children.

The federal Impact Aid program has been assisting school districts since its inception in 1950. The Impact Aid program provides financial assistance to school districts that are limited in their ability to raise local revenue by the presence of tax-exempt federal property, and must educate larger numbers of children because of the presence of federal employees. The program provides formula grants to cover a portion of per pupil education costs, as well as grants to support construction and maintenance needs.

This program has been a life-line for many school districts like the El Paso Independent School District (EPISD), which I represent, whose annual budget includes a significant amount of federal Impact Aid funds.

Fort Bliss, Texas, also located within my district, is home to the U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery Center as well as the Army's Sergeant Major's Academy. Fort Bliss is also a major employer in my district. The children of troops and civil servants at Fort Bliss attend EPISD schools.

I ask my colleagues to support our troops, their families and this resolution. I would also urge my colleagues to support H.R. 932, a bill sponsored by my colleagues Mr. KIRK and Mr. LARSON. This bill would make Impact Aid an entitlement for our local education agencies. This is a fair, just and more efficient way to fund our federally impacted schools.

COMMEMORATING 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF CENTRO ROMERO

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 2004

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Centro Romero, a community-based organization that has been serving Salvadoran immigrants in the Chicago communities of Rogers Park, Edgewater, Ravenswood, and Uptown. Since its founding in 1984, Centro Romero has served Latino immigrant and refugee populations by providing services to adults and children to help them overcome barriers of integrating into U.S. society. Last year, Centro Romero served over 5,600 clients through its adult education, women's empowerment, youth learning and leadership and legal assistance programs.

Centro Romero was founded by a group of Salvadoran refugees living in Chicago who wanted to assist other incoming Central American refugees arriving in the United States to seek safe haven from the political and civil repression and human rights abuses that were plaguing the region during the 1970s and 1980s. Centro Romero is named in honor of Archbishop Oscar Romero, a Salvadoran Roman Catholic cleric, on behalf of his service of the poor and oppressed people. Archbishop Romero was assassinated in 1980 for his outspoken denunciations of the ruling elite and his defense of human and civil rights during El Salvador's civil war.

Centro Romero began its work in Chicago communities by providing basic services such as food, job placement, housing orientation and immigration procedures. Today, Centro Romero provides these services and has added a women's program and youth program to address additional needs in the growing Latino community.

Today, in the House of Representatives, I would like to extend my congratulations and

appreciation from the grateful communities of Chicago to the dedicated staff and volunteers of Centro Romero for their many contributions providing vital information and essential services for the Latino communities. All of us who live in the Chicago area are fortunate to have Centro Romero in our midst and we all benefit from its unparalleled commitment to improving our community.

JOIN ME IN IMPROVING INSURANCE FOR DISABLED VETERANS

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 2004

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today to urge support for improvements for veterans who have become disabled in their service to our country. I have introduced H.R. 4229, the "Fair Insurance for Disabled Veterans Act" to address this need.

First, when the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance, SDVI, began in 1951, it was intended to provide service-disabled veterans with the ability to purchase life insurance coverage at "standard" rates.

Unfortunately, these life insurance premiums are based upon mortality rates for 1940, while current standard life insurance policies have premiums based upon the 2001 mortality table. This means that service-disabled veterans are being charged premiums based on a table that is 60 years out of date. The Independent Budget, prepared and endorsed by many veterans service organizations, has recommended that the mortality table be updated so that service-disabled veterans pay lower premiums for insurance. My bill would provide insurance comparable to standard policies, based on 2001 tables.

Second, the VA provides mortgage life insurance, VMLI, up to \$90,000 to severely service-disabled veterans who qualify for specially adapted housing grants. Currently, this amount covers only about 72 percent of the outstanding mortgage balances because the maximum amount has not been increased since 1992. We know how the cost of houses has skyrocketed since then in many areas of our country! In May, 2001, an evaluation by the Department of Veterans Affairs recommended that the coverage be increased to between \$150,000 and \$200,000. The Independent Budget has also recommended that the coverage be increased. H.R. 4229 implements those recommendations by increasing the maximum to \$200,000 to cover 98 percent of mortgage benefits outstanding.

I invite my colleagues to support H.R. 4229 to improve insurance policies for our Nation's service-connected disabled veterans.