

Bob has always been a modest man, avoiding the limelight and the accolades he so richly deserves. That is why I chose to honor him now for a lifetime of service, particularly those who might otherwise get lost in the federal bureaucracy.

Bob's simple philosophy includes "taking it one day at a time," and that is what he plans to do. Bob's mother passed away in 2001 and since then he has been telling his father that if he waited until he retired they would spend many days fishing the streams of his youth in his beloved San Luis Valley. Bob, good luck to you and Martin, may the fish always bite and may the sun always be at your back, as you "take it one day at a time."

Enjoy your retirement.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS
OF STEF PARAMOURE, CANYON
MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER OF
THE YEAR

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 26, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Stef Paramoure, Canyon Middle School Teacher of the Year.

Stef Paramoure received her Bachelor's degree in Multidisciplinary Studies from Texas Lutheran University in Seguin Texas. She is a bright young star in the Comal Independent School District, having taught for only three years before receiving the prestigious Teacher of the Year award.

Working as a seventh grade science teacher has its challenges, but Stef Paramoure is ready to embrace each new day with optimism and enthusiasm. Putting the students first, she works hard to give them the quality of education that they deserve.

She believes strongly in taking a practical approach to learning science. Ms. Paramoure strives to connect the personal lives and experiences of her students to the subject that she is teaching. Though concentrating on a personalized approach, she is able to make science applicable, useful, and understandable to her students.

I am proud to have this opportunity to recognize the skill and accomplishments of one of Comal Independent School District's newest stars. Her recognition as Teacher of the Year is an excellent start to an already distinguished career.

IN MEMORY OF V.G. STRONG

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 26, 2005

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding citizen of the Fourth District of Texas, Vilo Glen (V.G.) Strong of Mt. Pleasant, who passed away recently after living 92 wonderful, happy years. V.G. was an active and beloved member of his community and will be missed by all those who knew him.

Born in Nebraska to Walter and Mary Schneider Strong, V.G. received his Bachelor of Science degree at Colorado College and

taught high school in Eckley, CO. After marrying Doris Wells in 1938, he returned to college to receive his Masters degree in 1941. During World War II he was a civilian chemist with the War Department in Pine Bluff, AR, and moved to Mt. Pleasant, TX, in the late 1940s to work for the Cotton Belt Railroad. When offered a promotion with the Cotton Belt in another state, V.G. turned down the opportunity and found a new career as a chemical engineer at Lone Star Steel, where he worked twenty years before retiring.

V.G. and his wife of 66 years, Doris, have been active members of the Mt. Pleasant First Presbyterian Church for over 57 years. V.G. served as a deacon and an elder. He was also active in the Lions Club for over 50 years.

V.G. and Doris developed a passion for traveling after his retirement, visiting more than sixty countries and every continent except Antarctica. Their latest adventure was to Scotland and the Shetland Islands with their grandson and his wife just last August. Also in retirement, V.G. turned a hobby into a part-time job. His love for restoring antique lamps resulted in restoring or converting lamps for numerous East Texas antique dealers and customers.

Most importantly, V.G. had a great love for his family—his wife Doris, sons Jerry and Paul, and five grandchildren. One of his grandchildren, Katie Strong, who is director of the Congressional and Public Affairs Division of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce here in Washington, shared with me her admiration for her grandfather. Katie noted that V.G. was a man of his word who helped so many in need—social outcasts, young people who needed encouragement, young adults who needed guidance and direction.

"While his life was not extravagant, it was good, it was full, and most importantly, it was honest. We could all try to be a little more like the man his grandchildren called Pop-Pop," Katie wrote.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize this respected and beloved citizen of the Fourth District of Texas and ask my colleagues to join me in paying our last respects to Vilo Glen Strong. May the memory of his wonderful life and his legacy of kindness continue to bring comfort to his family and friends.

TAIWAN OPPOSITION LEADER
ARRIVES IN CHINA

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 26, 2005

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, a historic event occurred today in the history of Taiwan-Chinese relations, the Leader of Taiwan's Nationalist Party arrived in China for the first meeting between the party of Chiang Kai-shek and the Communists since the Chinese Civil War "ended" nearly six decades ago.

I know that relations across the Taiwan Straits have been much on the minds of many members of Congress in recent months, especially after the Chinese passed the Taiwanese Anti-Secession Law. Although not an official Taiwanese Government visit, the eight-day trip by Lien Chan does represent an opportunity to test the waters, and put the issue of peaceful co-existence between these two historic antagonists back into the realm of public debate.

Analysts and China-watchers disagreed on whether Lien's trip can help ease Taiwan-China tensions. Some have argued that Chen is simply being used by Communist officials to foster a schism in Taiwanese society. Others, such as Robert L. Downen, a former U.S. State Department Policy Advisor for East Asia during the Reagan administration believe that the Lien Chan can win Beijing's trust and cooperation. Mr. Downen has written an interesting Op-Ed piece supporting his position that is worth considering, and I would like to have the text of Mr. Downen's Op-Ed placed into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD following my statement.

I do not know which side of this debate is right, and I suspect that it will ultimately be left to the judgment of history to decide whether this trip accomplished anything. Nevertheless, a security crisis over Taiwan is something we all must work to avert and perhaps Lien Chen's visit can in some small way persuade the Chinese Government to reconsider their recent actions and return to the "Good Neighbor" policy that has worked so effectively for so long. The quest for peace is worth that small gamble.

BACK ON TRACK

(By Robert L. Downen)

Nearly overlooked in a recent series of pessimistic news stories about rising tensions across the Taiwan Strait is a small but important initiative. Direct, though unofficial talks between senior statesmen of China and Taiwan are about to occur after an interruption of several years. Cross-Strait talks offer a glimmer of hope in an otherwise stormy policy arena. There simply has been too long a delay in direct contact between antagonists in such a sensitive forum as this one. Face to face communication is overdue.

The set of policy actors on both sides has changed substantially since talks last occurred in the 1990s, and post-9/11 global security and political factors form a different environment. The political stalemate between the Chinese mainland and the island of Taiwan is an anachronistic relic of the Cold War demanding attention, and only direct talks will bring about an accommodation. The present leadership in Taipei seems unable to break the icy standoff, and so the opposition Nationalist Party Chairman Lien Chan a former vice president and premier of Taiwan but now a private citizen has accepted an invitation to visit China in April and will meet there with its President Hu Jintao. Lien calls his mission "a trip for peace."

After more than a half-century of deep mistrust between Beijing and Taipei, further estrangement only aggravates the situation politically, militarily, and economically. Direct talks between semi-official representatives of the two sides in the early 1990s did lead to a few practical agreements on handling postal exchanges, fishing disputes, and airline hijackings, as well as a promising agreement to disagree over the meaning of "one China." But that dialogue eventually broke down over statements by public officials and missile tests conducted by China in the Taiwan vicinity. The lapse of time since then has produced additional misunderstandings and stagnation. New governments in both Beijing and Taipei have missed opportunities for contact and occasionally provoked the situation by careless public remarks and behaviors in recent years.

In diplomacy, as in private business, if you are not moving forward you are effectively moving backwards. Inaction is equivalent to regression. Mistrust and lack of confidence on both sides has produced accusations and counter-accusations, fueling arms build-ups

and cross-Strait tensions that increasingly worry the U.S. and its allies. China's recent enactment of an "anti-secession law" and its continuing ballistic missile build-up adjacent to the Strait has produced palpable concern in Washington and European capitals. It has jeopardized the Asian-Pacific region's promising economic development and political stability of recent years.

The time has truly come for bold, creative initiative otherwise known as leadership based on self-confidence, to break the deadlock. The late President Ronald Reagan believed in proactive engagement with adversaries, saying old enemies should "trust but verify" as they reach out and seek to reconcile. Like President Reagan's outreach to the Soviet Union in its final years, the Lien mission proposes to go half-way in extending a gesture of peace, to open a channel of communication to the other side.

Lien's mission is reminiscent of previous milestones when other statesmen chose to reach out to old adversaries at opportune moments in history, often placing their personal reputation and political legacy at risk in the process. His gesture is not unlike that of President Richard Nixon who opened doors for dialogue by visiting China in 1972; or Egyptian President Anwar Sadat who traveled to Jerusalem in 1977 to open discussions with Israel; or even Pope John Paul II who seized the initiative to visit Communist Eastern Europe and later Cuba to open historic new contacts that he believed could change old Cold War relationships.

The international community should welcome this step towards direct unofficial talks between Taiwan and China. Dialogue cultivates mutual understanding, nurtures confidence, builds trust, and creates opportunities for healing wounds and moving forward to break the deadlock. Never underestimate the power of personal engagement the personal touch reduces tensions and prospects for conflict while introducing very human avenues for potential cooperation. There can be no harm in a fresh initiative that energizes the peaceful process across the Strait and promotes the welfare of the people of Taiwan in so many ways.

Americans can cheer the Lien initiative because it serves U.S. interests of peace, international stability, and regional cooperation. It reduces the likelihood that U.S. naval battle groups will once again have to move into the Taiwan vicinity to avert possible conflict between the two sides, as they did in 1996. It greatly improves the prospect that Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait can forge new channels of communication and cooperation, leading eventually to a resolution of one of the world's most dangerous tension spots. Engagement, not estrangement, is the means to reconciliation and stability.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF BARBARA TAYLOR, NORMA KRUEGER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 26, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Barbara Taylor for being named Norma Krueger Elementary School Karrer Campus Teacher of the Year.

Ms. Taylor holds a B.S. in Elementary Education from the University of Houston, and a Masters in Special Education from Our Lady

of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas. She now teaches fifth grade science at the Marion Independent School District.

Barbara Taylor believes that teaching is an ordinary-seeming profession that presents extraordinary opportunities to those willing to look. She asks herself every day what she can do to make a difference in the world, and in the lives of her students. She is known for seeking out teachable moments in which she can show her students a new way of seeing the world.

Ms. Taylor believes that good teaching can be the foundation for extraordinary lives. This philosophy has led her to be one of her district's most energetic and dynamic educators.

Ms. Barbara Taylor is an exemplary teacher, and a tremendous resource for the families and children of Marion, Texas. Her commitment to our children deserves our respect and thanks, and I am happy to have had the chance to recognize her here today.

AMTRAK BOARD'S REORGANIZATION PLAN

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 26, 2005

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, last week, Amtrak's Board of Directors released a set of "strategic reform initiatives" the railroad would like to take "to revitalize U.S. passenger rail service." The Chairman of the Board suggested these reforms would "strengthen passenger rail service at a time when our nation needs it most."

In my view, which I share with many of my colleagues on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, these reforms are misguided and would doom the future prospects for the railroad, result in significant hardships for rail passengers in the long-term and be a tremendous disservice to the hard-working employees of Amtrak.

It comes as no surprise to me that the Board's proposal is similar to that of the Administration's—Amtrak's entire governing body has been appointed by President Bush. To be clear, if these proposals, both from Amtrak and the Administration, go into effect, Amtrak will not survive. In many cases, the millions of people who depend on Amtrak's services will be left with no reliable means of rail transportation.

Of significant concern is the Board's proposal as it relates to its workers. The Board proposes to alter the Railway Labor Act to enable Amtrak to unilaterally change work rules and contract out jobs. The Board's reforms would also eliminate many health, safety and benefit protections for which Amtrak's workers have fought hard. In addition, under the Board's plan, newly hired Amtrak and other passenger rail workers would be placed in the Social Security program instead of the Railroad Retirement System, which has covered rail workers for more than 70 years.

The Board is attempting to put Amtrak's funding burden on the backs of its hard-working employees and for that I will not stand. To that end, I would like to highlight the introduction of the Amtrak Reauthorization Act of 2005, introduced by Chairman YOUNG and Ranking Member OBERSTAR.

This legislation would provide Amtrak with \$2 billion each year through 2008, and would put the railroad on the track to financial and operational stability. This bill also includes strict funding accountability procedures to ensure contractual obligations are met and money is spent wisely. It is this type of proposal—not the Administration's or Amtrak's Board's plan—that will benefit Amtrak and its passengers in the coming years.

In closing, I urge my colleagues to reject both the Bush Administration's and Amtrak Board's proposals to dismantle Amtrak. They aim only to weaken the railroad, place greater financial burden on the states, and harm the hard-working employees of Amtrak and passenger rail throughout the country.

MEDIA CONSOLIDATION

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 26, 2005

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to a presentation by Charles Benton, chairman of the Benton Foundation, entitled, "Where's the Public? Media Reform in the Digital Age," which he gave at the Engaging in Democracy Series at Ithaca College on January 25, 2005. It is my hope that Congress will address the problems of media consolidation that Mr. Benton discusses. It is our duty to ensure that the public airwaves are meeting the public need.

"I believe the future of media and communications in America is cause for serious concern. In April 2004, I delivered this message to the Council on Foundations, and I repeat it tonight. As we move from an analog world to a digital one, we are truly at a crossroads. At stake is who controls what we see, hear, and read. At stake is our ability to get our message out and make a difference. At stake is nothing less than the health of our democracy. We all have a stake in this debate.

I come here three months after Representative MAURICE HINCHEY and Federal Communications Commissioner Michael Copps spoke to you about media concentration. Given Congressman HINCHEY's representation of this district, I feel I'm visiting the people who brought the message of media ownership reform to Washington—perhaps you can think of this address as Washington reporting back.

The debate over media ownership restrictions is just the tip of an iceberg that has jolted our time-honored communications policy priorities of competition, diversity and localism. Some would say we are now rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic . . . that media concentration and consolidation are inevitable, and we will drown in a sea of commercialism. But I see it differently. I believe we are embarking on a new journey—kept afloat—and indeed propelled—by the interest, enthusiasm, and energy of a new generation of people concerned about our media future.

Collected in this hall tonight, I hope, are new enlistees in the battle to preserve, protect, and strengthen the public space in America's media environment. Beyond this hall, I hope this message is received by other committed people and organizations who will offer their time, talent, and resources to prevail in this ongoing fight.