

HONORING THE CONSULAR CORPS
ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 27, 2005

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the Consular Corps Association of Philadelphia.

In celebration of 43 years of promoting international understanding, I extend congratulations to the first Consular Corps in the United States, the Consular Corps Association of Philadelphia.

With the founding of the Corps, now one of the largest diplomatic associations in the nation, a model was created that allows us to reach beyond geographic boundaries to strengthen international relations.

Thirty seven countries are represented in the Philadelphia Association and as a result there are increased opportunities for business, educational and diplomatic partnerships.

The Consular Corps Association of Philadelphia has also provided humanitarian aid. Its members aided relief efforts for Asian and African victims of the tsunami disaster and survivors of civil war.

On the educational front, the organization has developed innovative cultural exchange programs, including partnerships with the World Affairs Council, the International Visitors' Council and the Bodine High School for International Affairs. As a result of these outreach programs many area young people now see themselves as world citizens with a greater appreciation for cultural and racial diversity.

The Consular Corps of Philadelphia helps us understand that by reaching beyond our geographic boundaries there is hope that we can learn to share more fairly in the world's bounty.

WALL STREET JOURNAL EUROPE
ARTICLE

HON. PHIL ENGLISH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 27, 2005

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, at a time when reform is being encouraged from both inside and outside the Arab and Muslim worlds, Morocco has been quietly getting the job done. The April 12th edition of The Wall Street Journal Europe contains an insightful and balanced article on the progress that has been made—as well as the continuing challenges—in Morocco. Reform is a long and oftentimes difficult process, but both the government and the people of Morocco have made a decision about where their future lies. I commend this article to the attention of my colleagues.

[From the Wall Street Journal Europe, Apr. 12, 2005]

MAGHREBIAN NIGHTS

(By Brian M. Carney)

CASABLANCA, MOROCCO.—There really is a Rick's Cafe in Casablanca. It was opened a year ago by an American expatriate named Kathy Kriger, who decided to stay on after a stint here as a trade attache for the U.S. Commerce Department.

Ali Kettani, the man sitting across from me at Rick's, is also a returnee. Although born and raised in Morocco, he'd spent the best part of the last 15 years in Paris and New York as a banker. "Before the previous king died," Mr. Kettani says, "I would have sworn that I would never have come back to Morocco." But here he is, moving back and forth between the U.S. and Morocco to raise American money for a planned \$35 million Moroccan private-equity fund, which he says is the first of its kind.

Mr. Kettani's renewed enthusiasm for his country is not unusual in this, the country that claims to be America's oldest ally. (Morocco signed a friendship treaty with the U.S. in 1787 that has been in force ever since.) In February, a bilateral free-trade agreement went into effect between the U.S. and Morocco, lowering 95 percent of tariffs between the two countries to zero and phasing out the rest over the next several years. A so-called "association agreement" with the EU is likewise gradually lowering trade barriers between Europe and Morocco. Businessmen in the country hope to capitalize on this privileged access to the two largest economies in the world by trading with both.

"The future of Morocco," said Ali Belhaj, a businessman and opposition politician, "is in services, logistics, tourism and agriculture." Agriculture is already a substantial chunk of the Moroccan economy, but in the future Mr. Belhaj sees Morocco selling more and more farm products to the U.S. and Europe, thanks to its privileged trade status and low costs. As for services, he offers an example. "The biggest dental-implant company in Paris is Moroccan. You go to the dentist in Paris, he takes a mold of your teeth and ships it to Casablanca, where the implants are made and shipped back to Paris. We can turn around dental implants in 48 hours." For Mr. Belhaj, proximity and good relations with the West are the foundations of Morocco's economic future.

Morocco is a potential bridge between the West and the Arab world in more than just economic ways. At a time when U.S. President George W. Bush's Greater Middle East project is viewed by many in both Europe and the Arab world as a "neoconservative" pipe dream, Morocco stands out as a country furiously trying to show that Arab ways and a Western, modernizing orientation are not incompatible.

Morocco is a nigh-absolute monarchy, but one whose king has been steadily if gradually ceding power to an elected Parliament. The elections in 2002 are generally viewed, both within Morocco and among Western NGOs such as Freedom House, as the first free and fair ones in the country's 1,300-year history. And this year, the Parliament is expected to pass and the king is expected to ratify a law strengthening the role of parties in the country's politics. For Ali Belhaj, a businessman who is trying to found a center-right party dubbed Alliance of Liberties, it is a vital step toward democracy. "We have 26 parties that get nearly all of their funding from the state," Mr. Belhaj says. "The annual budget for the parties? \$1 million. How can you build a democracy like that?" Even so, he allows that he sees "the beginnings of democracy in Morocco," and would like to see the Parliament strengthened.

But in terms of civil rights and freedom of the press, the country has made some real strides, enshrining habeas corpus and the presumption of innocence in law in the last few years. The Parliament is working on a bill to decriminalize libel, meaning disgruntled politicians would no longer be able to lock up journalists for writing things the ruling class would rather not see in print.

In Rabat, the country's capital, I spoke to Ahmed Abbadi, the director of Islamic af-

fairs in the Ministry of Religion, about the role of religion in a modernizing Morocco. Last year, Morocco passed a reform of its so-called Family Law. The new law grants women equal status in the family, with equal rights to divorce their husbands, an equal say in family governance and the right to marry without the consent of a male relative.

There were Islamist elements who had opposed some of these reforms on religious grounds; I asked Mr. Abbadi what the government's response had been on a religious level. "We are concerned with finalities," he said. "When you are concerned with finalities, you do not get bogged down with the literal words." He continued: "There is a saying in Islam: 'Wherever is the interest of the whole, there is sharia.'" So bearing in mind the interest of the whole, he said, "We must determine how to implement the general principles of sharia law in a way that is appropriate to our time." In short, the Ministry of Religion determined that the Family Law, giving women broadly equal rights in the family context, was consonant with Morocco's official interpretation of Islam. It's a dose of historical relativism that's badly needed in much of the Arab world.

What about Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's claims ahead of the Iraqi elections that democracy was unIslamic? "He does not have the skills, the knowledge or the class to talk about democracy," was Mr. Abbadi's response, delivered with just a touch of condescension. And, speaking of Saudi Arabia's fundamentalist brand of Islam, he observed: "When you have a simple society," you wind up with a "simple, superficial" interpretation of Islam—"like the 'Bedouin Islam' in Saudi Arabia."

All of which sounded pretty encouraging. So, did Mr. Abbadi see Morocco's flavor of Islam as a model for the rest of the Arab world—a modern, forward-looking alternative to Wahhabist fundamentalism? He didn't want to go that far, but in the end he allowed, "We believe—humbly—that Morocco could be a model" for others, although they had no inclination to actively export their interpretation.

Morocco is democratizing, liberalizing and modernizing on several fronts. Is it a model for the Arab world? I repeated the question to Bob Holley, a former American diplomat who is now consulting for the Moroccan government in Washington, and who facilitated a number of my meetings in Morocco. "It's a great sales pitch—Morocco as model for the greater Middle East," Mr. Holley noted. But in the end, given its historical, cultural and ethnic particularities, "I think Morocco's utility as a model is limited," he admitted.

Mr. Holley may be right, and in any case Morocco's progress is far from perfect or uniform. After the May 16, 2003, suicide bombings in Casablanca, the police rounded up some 2,000 people, a reaction that for some in Morocco harkened back to the bad old days when the government was empowered to imprison anyone it deemed a threat to the public order. (That law, known in the country as Art. 35, has been repealed.)

But model Arab democracy or not, Morocco is nevertheless showing what is possible within an Arab monarchy that looks west and north, rather than only east or inward. Back at Rick's Cafe, our table-mate, Dr. Bouthayna Iraqi-Houssaini, who owns a medical-supply company here in Casablanca, offers her own appraisal. "Not everything is good, but it is all changing. People believe life is getting better," she said. And that's not a bad beginning.

RECOGNIZING RECIPIENTS OF THE BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU OF CENTRAL NEW ENGLAND, INC. TORCH AWARDS FOR MARKETPLACE ETHICS

HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 27, 2005

MR. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to this year's Better Business Bureau of Central New England Torch Award For Marketplace Ethics recipients from my hometown area of Worcester County.

Mr. Speaker, the mission of the Better Business Bureau of Central New England, Inc. (BBB) created in 1942, is to promote and foster the highest ethical relationship between businesses and the public through voluntary self-regulation, consumer and business education, and service excellence.

Ten years ago, the BBB established its annual Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics to recognize companies for their outstanding commitment to exceptional standards in relationships to their customers, employees, suppliers, competitors, shareholders, and surrounding communities. These awards are helping to illuminate the importance of corporate conscience and responsibility to upholding a fair and honest marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, two companies are being honored today by the Better Business Bureau for their commitment to marketplace ethics: Apple Home Care Associates, Inc. of Holden, MA. (provider of hospital equipment and supplies; established in 1990; 12 employees; President, Ms. Joni Milluzzo) and Sarkisian Builders, Inc. of Rutland, MA. (building contractor; established in 1962; 6 employees; President, Mr. Pat Sarkisian).

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in honoring Apple Home Care Associates, Inc. and Sarkisian Builders, Inc. for this outstanding recognition of their business ethics and solid reputations within the communities they serve. It is through the efforts and leadership of companies like these that businesses throughout Massachusetts, both large and small, are reminded that ethical behavior in the marketplace counts.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 1898: THE TELEPHONE EXCISE TAX REPEAL ACT OF 2005

HON. GARY G. MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 27, 2005

MR. GARY G. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, in 1898, the United States engaged in a brief military conflict with Spain. To pay for the three month skirmish, lawmakers enacted a luxury tax that would only tap money from the super wealthy. Today, that same luxury tax lives on, but instead of taxing only the rich, it hits the pocket books of almost all Americans, both rich and poor. The tax is the federal phone tax. A pesky three percent surcharge on all phone calls made in the United States. Today I am introducing a bill to ensure its days, like those of the Spanish empire before the 1898 war, are numbered.

H.R. 1898, the "Telephone Excise Tax Repeal Act of 2005," will repeal the antiquated tax on telecommunication services.

While a "luxury" tax on telecommunication services might have made sense in 1898, there is no question that telecommunications services today are necessities, not luxuries.

Today, Americans depend daily on land line telephones, cell phones and dial-up internet services to communicate. However, we continue to take money from Americans by classifying these services as a "luxury." Today, more than 100 million American households are paying for a tax on their telecommunications services.

The tax is not only applied to local services, but on specialty features including call waiting, caller ID, local toll charges, long-distance calls, wireless services and directory assistance. This tax burdens our communication abilities and is destructive to technological innovation. It must be repealed immediately.

Telephone tax revenues once used to pay for the Spanish-American War are deposited in the General Fund. Unlike the gas tax, which directs revenues to the Highway Trust Fund, no specific account exists to redirect money collected from the telephone "luxury" tax. Other items subject to a "luxury" tax include airplane tickets, beer and liquor, firearms and cigarettes. Obviously, a telephone is a necessity, and thus does not fit with this list of "luxury" items.

It is time to hang up on the telephone tax. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation to permanently repeal the federal telephone excise tax.

TRIBUTE TO DR. ANNE J. MATULA

HON. SOLOMON P. ORTIZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 27, 2005

MR. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay special tribute to a unique and distinguished woman from Portland, Texas: Dr. Anne J. Matula, who is greatly admired for her leadership in education and who is retiring from her work in education and service.

Dr. Matula is the former Dean of Business Career and Technology Programs at Del Mar College. Presently, she serves as an assistant to the Vice President of the university, and as an adjunct instructor at the University of the Incarnate Word.

Her deep conviction and strong character were apparent even when she graduated as the valedictorian from Odem High School. She obtained a Bachelor of Science degree, Summa Cum Laude (the highest honors) and a master's degree in Business Administration from Texas A&I. Following that, she completed a Joint Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at the Texas A&M Universities at Corpus Christi and Kingsville, Texas.

Her educational background clearly supports her firm belief in education. Thriving to pursue this endeavor, she devoted a major part of her life to teaching. She began her teaching experiences at H.M. King High School in Kingsville, TX and Gregory-Portland High School in Gregory, TX. Just right after, she began teaching at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi as an instructor, assistant professor, and associate professor. Later on, she became an adjunct

instructor at the college as needed. Dr. Matula served a tenure of 23 years at Del Mar College, which she led with incomparable competence. She was also an adjunct instructor at Texas A&M University in Corpus Christi.

Her participation in a number of civic organizations, such as the Coastal Bend Council of Governments and the San Patricio Economic Development Corporation, reflect her commitment to help the community. She has given many years of service on boards and forums, including the Junior League of Corpus Christi Advisory Board, the Regional Community Leaders Forum, the National Conference for Community and Justice, and the Board of Trustees of the Gregory-Portland Independent School District, on which she served for five elected terms. Dress for Success South Texas is another important board on which she served and of which she was the founding member.

She has also been distinguished for her membership in various professional organizations, such as the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International (Gamma Psi Chapter), Phi Alpha Kappa, the Texas Association of School Boards, the Texas Community College Teachers Association, and the Texas Association of College Technical Educators (TACTE).

As a woman of great talent and dedication, Dr. Matula has been recognized and presented with various awards and prominent recognitions. It is a pleasure and privilege to honor Dr. Matula, whose passion and dedication to help others is immeasurable. Her years of commitment to higher education make her a distinctive and unique voice in our community. Dr. Matula is loved by all the students whose lives she has touched and will remain in their hearts as a prominent figure in their education and future success.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Dr. Anne J. Matula on the occasion of her retirement.

WOMEN'S HEART HEALTH

HON. MICHAEL BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 27, 2005

MR. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to a critically-important public health issue, cardiovascular disease among women.

I recently attended a women's heart health symposium in my district and was surprised to learn that heart disease is the number one cause of death for American women. Heart disease kills more than 366,000 women each year, more than all types of cancer combined. One of every 5 women has some form of cardiovascular disease. One woman dies from it every minute.

There are also troubling trends for women who survive heart attacks. I was astonished to learn that 38 percent of women who have heart attacks will die within one year of having that heart attack. Forty-six percent of women who have heart attacks will be disabled with heart failure within 6 years of having a heart attack. These statistics are simply unacceptable.

There is good news, however. There are some simple steps both women and men can take to greatly reduce their risk for heart disease. We can lower our risk for heart disease