While at AMS, Mr. Yates has proven to be a tireless advocate for the long-term survival and economic well-being of America's farms. His leadership has proven crucial in several issue areas important to America's farmers, including the management of Federal marketing orders and the Fruit and Vegetable Advisory Committee and launching the implementation of the organic program.

AMS employees wish Mr. Yates the best as he returns to California to spend time with his wife Joyce and their three sons. I, too, wish him well and join my colleagues in commending him on a job well done.

TRIBUTE TO 1LT ANDREW C. SHIELDS

HON. BOB INGLIS

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 17, 2005

Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am moved to commend to this House a thoughtful eulogy commemorating the life of one of America's finest: 1LT Andrew C. Shields.

The eulogy was written and delivered by Brandon Steelman at First Lieutenant Shield's funeral at New Prospect Baptist Church, Campobello, South Carolina, on December 18, 2004.

EULOGY FOR A FALLEN SOLDIER: FIRST LT. ANDREW C. SHIELDS

This past week has been filled with things that quite simply can't be understood. While there are many larger and more profound mysteries, one of the smaller mysteries I've faced this week is why Andrew would have me give these remarks today. Certainly, he had many friends who knew him just as well, if not better, than I did. And certainly he loved his family above all others. Each of those family members would be better suited to make these remarks today; after all, I didn't spend my childhood dressing like him as Philip did! But I think I'm here because Andrew would be too uncomfortable watching a beloved family member stand and undoubtedly cry in remembrance of him. But he was always OK when I stood up to embarrass myself. In fact, he encouraged it. So I can't think of a better way to embarrass myself on Andrew's behalf than to start with me, crying like a baby, when I first heard the horrible news we've all been trying to accept this past week.

One of my first thoughts was to turn to the Episcopalian Book of Common Prayer. In it I quickly found a prayer I'd like to share. Entitled For those in the Armed Forces of our Country, it reads: . . .

Almighty God, we commend to your gracious care and keeping all the men and women of our Armed Forces, at home and abroad.

Defend them, day by day, with your heavenly grace;

Strengthen them, in their trials and temptations;

Give them courage, to face the perils which beset them;

And grant them a sense of your abiding presence, wherever they may be; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

I read that prayer three times: the first time, I was too overcome with emotion to finish; the second, I was overcome with guilt for not having said that prayer every day Andrew had been away. But when I read it a third time, I realized Andrew didn't need my prayerful requests on his behalf. This prayer asks for a few important things, but Andrew had each of those, and it didn't take a friend reciting an old prayer to make them real for him.

The prayer asked for strength in his trials, but, Andrew was already strong. He had a physical strength, sure: he ultimately got bored wrestling me so he turned it into a game of seeing how many time he could spin me in the air before pinning me to the ground. But it wasn't just physical strength that impressed so many people about Andrew. He had a strength of character. Without that, how does one put on hold a rewarding career, a promising salary, and the potential of finding his dream girl, all to leave the comfort of his newly constructed house for a far away land and a mission? Yes, Andrew had strength.

The prayer asks for the benefits of heavenly grace. But Andrew's faith was already based on grace. In a generation where it's not cool to embrace religion, and not cool to hold yourself to unwavering moral principles, Andrew was a rare example of someone who not only incorporated religion into their weekly schedule, but who let it guide every aspect of his life. Andrew's soul was defended by grace long before I read that prayer.

The prayer concludes by asking God to grant a sense of His abiding presence. But those of us here are already comforted by Andrew's faith, courage, and strength. We find comfort knowing that as we say the words, ''wherever he may be,'' Andrew maintains a sense of God's abiding presence, for he is graciously embraced by the spirit of our Heavenly Father.

This prayer helps me, even though initially too difficult to read, because it reassures me to know Andrew's faith guided his life and protects him beyond his death.

With a loss as great as Andrew, no single prayer will bring us the comfort we seek. In search of that reassurance, I visited a war memorial near my house. Inscribed there, in black marble, is a quote by George Washington. In words too long to recite today, he calls us to honor our nation's veterans, for it's our appreciation now that will determine the willingness of future generations to serve in wars to come. That quote reminded me of how inspired Andrew had been by his father's military service, and how proud he was to serve as an aviator for the country that brought aviation to the world. He considered the military an extended family and would have been honored to know that, as George Washington alluded, in honoring Andrew today, we prepare future generations to join his extended family and defend our nation as he so bravely did.

Shortly, uniformed pallbearers will place Andrew's body on a horse-drawn carriage and, with full honors, give him a farewell worthy of his immeasurable sacrifice. But it's important to remember that Andrew never embraced recognition.

Before he left for Iraq, he visited a class of second graders, who embraced him and adopted him as their pen-pal. He was flattered when some of them asked for his autograph, but told us later that he hadn't done anything heroic. As we all know, Andrew is a hero. Those second graders recognized that, as many of us did. But he didn't embrace our recognition. In the wake of Sept 11, when he was learning to fly his Apache, I spoke to him of his heroism, but he humbly dismissed me, quickly joking that I must have been drinking. Similarly, he would have blushed to see this much support today, and while graciously accepting the honor bestowed upon him by a grateful nation, he would want us to remember him for those great moments he shared with us in life.

My sister, for example, said she will remember him as a giant snowball tumbling down the ski slopes as were tried to snowboard for the first time. I think memories like that would make him happy. In his humility and simple faith, we would bring him the most joy if today we honor him for the hero he is, and tomorrow we remember him for the great person he was.

HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF CONGESSIONAL PAGE EDWIN ROBINSON

HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 17, 2005

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Edwin Robinson, an exemplary young man who recently completed a semester of service to the House of Representatives through the Congressional Page Program.

Mr. Robinson is a junior at Wyandanch Memorial High School, where he has one of the highest grade point averages in his class. Outside the classroom, Edwin takes part in his school's Junior Military Program, where he demonstrates leadership and civic responsibility to younger students and his community. He is also an active member of the First Church Ministries where he serves as Vice President, an Usher, a member of the Sunbeam Choir and Sunday school teacher.

Edwin is a member of the 2004 Town of Babylon Minority Internship Program, Ujima, a Swahili word that means collective work and responsibility. Ujima seeks to introduce a select group of high school students to the inner workings of local government, provide an environment where they can develop a one-on-one relationship with elected officials, and enable them to develop their professional skills in the workplace.

Through this experience and his semester as a page on Capitol Hill, I have no doubt that Edwin has a bright future ahead of him in public service. His strong presence, positive disposition and sharp intellect have made Edwin a role model for Wyandanch students and a respected leader among his fellow pages. Edwin represents the future of American leaders and I look forward to hearing of his continued achievements.

COMMENDING THE TSUNAMI RESPONSE

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 17, 2005

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing a resolution commending the outstanding efforts by members of the Armed Forces and civilian employees of the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development in response to the earthquake and tsunami of December 26, 2004.

When I toured the tsunami-affected countries in early January, I was struck by how impressive the relief effort by American military and civilian personnel was. Their actions went above and beyond the call of duty and they deserve our deepest gratitude.