

of developing, implementing and maintaining them would total billions of dollars. All this is even more strikingly troublesome given a recent Wall Street Journal poll that found that 70% of Americans don't want the IRS preparing their taxes anyway.

I share the sentiments of the American people. As far as I'm concerned, having the IRS prepare your taxes is a little like sending your dog to the butcher to pick up your order—it doesn't serve your best interest.

Despite the assurances of Secretary Snow and Commissioner Everson, there is currently nothing in statute that stops the IRS from developing and implementing a return-free tax filing system. Yet we already have a program in place that serves the purpose of these costly systems.

It is called the Free File Alliance—of which my home state of New York is a member and it assists people who otherwise cannot afford tax preparation or e-filing. The Free File Alliance is a private sector program, and provides free preparation services to poor and low-income families, and since its inception in 2002 it has provided 15.3 million free Federal tax returns.

Now, the Free File Alliance is not a perfect system yet, and it is still in need of additional oversight and reform. However, its existence means that the infrastructure for such systems is already in place, making the costly development of virtually identical IRS programs unnecessary.

CONGRATULATING ARCHER DANIELS MIDLAND

HON. GIL GUTKNECHT

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 20, 2006

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Archer Daniels Midland of Mankato, Minnesota, on receiving the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve's Above and Beyond award.

The National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve component members and their civilian employers. Their mission is to continuously gain and maintain active support from all public and private employers for the men and women of the National Guard and Reserve. Local and national representatives stand ready to help employers understand Federal laws that affect the call-up of their employees. The Above and Beyond award recognizes those who have gone beyond what Federal law requires for supporting activated Guard employees.

Minnesota businesses that employ Guard members are an essential link in family support for deployed service members. The state of Minnesota is recognized as a leader among those employing Guard and Reserve members and received the 2004 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award.

Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) was nominated by Sgt. Dave Bonnifield who has been mobilized twice with the Army Guard. ADM has been extremely supportive by providing pay differential and continuous support to Sgt. Bonnifield's family. Archer Daniels Midland was one of 475 companies nominated for the Above and Beyond award.

I extend my sincere congratulations to Archer Daniels Midland for receiving the Above and Beyond Award from the National Committee for Employer Support of Guard and Reserve and commend them for the extraordinary services provided to those who serve our country.

THE DEMOCRATIC PACIFIC UNION

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 20, 2006

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, on May 14, 2005, the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, the Democratic Pacific Union was formally inaugurated in Taipei, Taiwan. Notable guests at the ceremony included presidents of Taiwan, Costa Rica and Guatemala, as well as vice presidents of Taiwan, Nicaragua and Palau. The goals of the union are to integrate resources in the pan-Pacific region for joint development and regional cooperation and to promote democracy, peace and prosperity among DPU member democracies.

Since May of 2005, the union has established a Secretariat, published its first quarterly, planned West Pacific regional meetings, formed a Pacific economic advisory group, and initiated the Pacific Congressional Caucus project. The project seeks to bring congressional and parliamentary members of DPU together to promote exchange and cooperation among lawmakers throughout DPU member countries. The Taiwan Chapter of the Pacific Congressional Caucus was inaugurated on May 20, 2006 and convened by the Speaker of Taiwan's Legislature Yuan.

The Taiwan Chapter of the Pacific Congressional Caucus will sponsor a symposium on congressional reforms this August 12–14 in Taipei, Taiwan. Legislative members of the DPU members states and U.S. Members of Congress are cordially invited to attend this symposium either as participants or observers. I hope that my colleagues will find time to attend this very important event in Taipei and lend our encouragement and support to the Pacific Congressional Caucus.

I salute the Democratic Pacific Union, its goals, achievements, and initiatives which included a training program on hazard mitigation on typhoon-related disasters held May 8–12, 2006 in Taiwan; a 2006 fellowship and scholarship program providing funds for students from DPU member states to attend universities in Taiwan; invitation of distinguished women from member states to attend meetings in Taiwan to identify, and address problems women face in the Pacific region; invitation of political experts to observe elections in Taiwan; and establishment of the Pacific Center for Disaster Reduction in Taipei.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO WEN HUI TAN

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 20, 2006

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Wen Hui Tan for being named the Ne-

vada State winner in the 19th annual National Peace Essay Contest sponsored by the United States Institute for Peace.

Approximately 4,000 students from across the United States wrote essays for this year's topic, "Controlling the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons." This contest challenges students to consider some of the most pressing issues confronting international peace and our country's security. This year's topic of nuclear proliferation could not be more timely, and it is also a challenge that the international community will confront for decades to come. Wen's essay, titled "Nuclear Proliferation: Two Superpowers and Iraq," won at the Nevada State level, earning Wen a \$1,000 college scholarship and a chance to compete at the national level.

Wen is currently a student at Coronado High School in Henderson, NV. Her passions include volunteering in the children's department of a local library, graphic design, eating foreign cuisine, chemistry, and traveling. With a myriad of interests, she has aspirations of pursuing higher education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in hopes to train for her future careers as a linguist, pediatric surgeon, and paleontologist.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to honor Wen Hui Tan for being the Nevada State winner of the 19th annual National Peace Essay Contest sponsored by the United States Institute for Peace. I commend her success and wish her the best of luck at the national competition and in all of her future endeavors.

TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, THE JUDICIARY, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN E. SWEENEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2006

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5576) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, District of Columbia, and independent agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes:

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your leadership on this bill. I am proud to serve as the Vice-Chairman of this Subcommittee. I want to echo the words of my friend, Mr. REHBERG, because Amtrak is an essential service in my Congressional District and home state of New York.

We have had this debate every year, and we go through this process in each of those years. Last year in particular, we fought possibly the toughest battle in years for passenger rail. We were threatened with vetoes, unless some Amtrak reforms were enacted. So what did we do? We enacted reform. One year later, we have seen evidence these reforms are working.

Yet, here we are today with a proposal to fund Amtrak at \$900 million. This allocation is-

a shutdown number for Amtrak, and it would come at the worst possible time to shut down Amtrak.

This is because we have seen evidence these reforms are working. We required Amtrak put in place a new business plan. We required Amtrak to institute new service contracts and plans. For instance, they had to

adopt more efficient accounting procedures. We also demanded they restructure their dining services, which was a big money loser.

The Department of Transportation Inspector General just issued a report on Amtrak business practices. According to this April 6th report, Amtrak has saved \$19 million from Octo-

ber 2005 through February 2006, thanks to these reforms. This is better than expected.

Amtrak is saving money because of the institution of these new reform plans that we demanded of them. To now shut them down would go back on our word. They lived up to their end of the deal, now we must live up to ours.