

years ago," wrote Mr. Ritchie in a 1979 column in the Democrat. "No other industry could stay in business under these circumstances, and farmers cannot be expected to, either."

In later years, Mr. Ritchie became a driving force behind Fauquier County's purchase of development rights program.

However, it was a different crisis, far from Fauquier, that put Mr. Ritchie on a new path that would make a lasting difference for hundreds of people.

In the wake of the disaster in South Carolina caused by Hurricane Hugo in 1989, Mr. Ritchie and several of his friends founded People Helping People of Fauquier County, Inc., a nonprofit corporation for the sole purpose of helping people struggling against natural disasters, illness or sudden financial hardship.

EDUCATION ADVOCATE

In the early 1990s—after a school bond referendum held to provide funding for a second high school failed—Mr. Ritchie became active in yet another arena.

Determined to see a second high school in southern Fauquier, Mr. Ritchie persistently lobbied the School Board and pushed for the needed school bond referendum. When Liberty High School at Bealeton opened in 1994—without the funding for a football stadium—he was at the forefront of the campaign, soliciting donations and selling raffle tickets to raise the money to get the stadium built.

After Mr. Ritchie and his friends on the Principal's Advisory Committee at Liberty raised \$100,000 for the stadium lights, the Board of Supervisors, then under the late Dave Mangum (Lee District), came up with the remaining \$250,000 to build it.

Due to Mr. Ritchie's efforts and his growing, positive influence in Fauquier County, he was recognized as the Fauquier Times-Democrat's Citizen of the Year for 1994.

His influence continued throughout his final years, and he often spoke out on issues that were important to him. A frequent contributor to the Democrat's opinion pages, Mr. Ritchie's last letter was published here on Jan. 25, 2006.

In it, he urged the Board of Supervisors to consider giving tax money to parents who wished to opt-out of the public schools and send their children to private or Christian schools.

"The movement would be so great that I doubt that we would have to build any more new public schools," he said. "The good news is that everyone wins."

Mr. Ritchie was a longtime, active member of Mount Carmel Baptist Church near Morrisville, where he served on the Building and Grounds Committee, as well as videographer for worship services.

According to his family, one of the highlights of Boots' life was being chosen to carry the Olympic Torch.

Mr. Ritchie is survived by his wife, Gail R. Ritchie; his sons, and Glenn C. Ritchie, all of Bealeton; and his daughters, Jennifer R. Krick of Bealeton and Helen R. Ritchie of Strasburg.

Also surviving are his step-sons, Edward C. Lynskey of Annandale and William E. Lynskey of Midland; and his stepdaughters, Linda L. Ashby and Karen L. Hughes, both of Bealeton; and his sisters, Hazel R. Bell of Drayton, Md., Jennalee R. McNally, Marie R. Lee and Peggy R. Dahany, all of Fredericksburg; 11 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Wilbur Early Ritchie and Ethel Barker Ritchie; a son, Jeff A. Ritchie; and his brothers, C. Hunter Ritchie, Claude Ritchie, and Charles Dwight Ritchie.

Funeral services and interment will be private. A public memorial service will be held on Saturday, March 4 at 2 p.m. at the Liberty High School auditorium.

Memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society, Relay for Life, P.O. Box 1095, Warrenton VA 20188; People Helping People, PO Box 3108, Warrenton VA 20188; or to Mount Carmel Baptist Church, 12714 Elk Run Road, Midland VA 22728.

THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FOREST INSECT RESPONSE ENHANCEMENT AND SUPPORT ACT (ROCKY MOUNTAIN FIRES ACT)

HON. JOHN T. SALAZAR

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 2, 2006

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure after working with my friend and colleague, Representative MARK UDALL, that today we will introduce legislation to assist and help protect Rocky Mountain communities. Over the past couple of years, our state has experienced horrific wildfires caused by the ongoing insect epidemic in our forests. It is time to action in order to reduce the risks and protect both life and property.

The Rocky Mountain Forest Insects Response Enhancement and Support Act, or Rocky Mountain FIRES Act, will provide the Forest Service, Interior Department and local communities with a better ability to respond to this serious and growing problem of beetle infestation.

While the various species of bark beetle are native to our forests, these insects create poor forest health conditions and are destroying our forests. A healthy tree can normally defend itself through the production of sap that creates a retardant against the insect, but current drought conditions and density of forests have impacted the production of these natural defenses and the overall health of the forests.

In my district, I am concerned that deteriorating forest health places many mountain communities at greater risk of fire. Our legislation will allow these communities to treat increased fuel risks caused by unhealthy trees and dense forest stands. In fact, we took great care to address the concerns of local communities and have crafted a bill that incorporated the input of diverse constituencies across Colorado.

Finally, I would like to stress that our goal is to provide helpful tools in the treatment of forests areas while still having the proper sideboards in place to protect the environment. We understand the insects play a role in the forest ecosystem and the goal is not eliminate them, but to allow communities and the forest service to respond quicker to catastrophically impacted areas.

This is good legislation that is needed to help protect and preserve Colorado's mountain communities. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important piece of legislation.

CONGRATULATIONS TO CHRISTOPHER HOUSE OF CHICAGO

HON. LUIS V. GUTIERREZ

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 2, 2006

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution congratulating Christopher House of Chicago on the occasion of its centennial celebration.

I believe Christopher House is a successful and absolutely essential organization for the livelihood and well being of the great city of Chicago. Let me explain why.

In 1906, the First Presbyterian Church of Evanston founded Christopher House as a settlement house on Chicago's North Side. Over the course of a century, it has grown in response to the needs of new immigrants and others in our community.

Today, Christopher House is a seven-site resource center that helps families overcome the consequences of poverty, enabling them to thrive. Through early childhood and youth development, parent enrichment, literacy, counseling, pregnant and parenting teen support, and the meeting of basic human needs, Christopher House is a catalyst in a family's journey towards stability, resiliency and self-sufficiency.

Christopher House is a premier human service organization that provides assistance to all in need without regard to race, creed, religion or national origin.

Shortly before his death, Cesar Chavez said, "You are never strong enough that you don't need help." I think he was speaking to all of us.

Obviously, we are all touched by the 100 years of work of Christopher House. We see the lives Christopher House changes—the children who receive Head Start, the people who benefit from English as a Second Language classes, the families who are enlightened by literacy classes—and we are pleased that we can help in some small way.

So we volunteer. Or we write a check. Or we attend a fundraiser or a rally or make a donation. Or support legislation and federal funding. All of which are critically important, and we extend our gratitude to all of those who have given time, money and resources to help Christopher House.

But here is an important part of what I believe Cesar Chavez meant when he said, "You are never strong enough that you don't need help."

Christopher House does more than serve 3,500 children and their families in need. It does more than help teen moms who have nowhere else to turn. It does more than help children who would have few options for summer camps and tutoring programs. It does more than help kids by providing comprehensive early childhood education to families across our neediest neighborhoods.

Christopher House helps us. Christopher House helps all of us—whether we are a CEO or a partner in a law firm or a member of Congress. Because of the work that the organization's staff does every day, the lives of all of us are enriched and improved—not just the families who receive direct service.

Because Cesar Chavez was right—none of us are ever strong enough that we don't need help.

Perhaps we don't need a literacy class. But we all benefit from an educated and capable work force.

Perhaps we don't need to put our own children in Head Start. But we need to know that every child with a desire to learn and grow and reach toward their dreams has a place to go and people to help them.

Perhaps—if we're lucky—many of us will go through our lives and never have a desperate need for emergency services—for food and shelter and for clothing.

But we need to be part of a community where every person in need has somewhere to go, someone to turn to, someone who cares.

And perhaps, if we are fortunate, few of us will have a need for the day-to-day, make-or-break help that Christopher House routinely provides. But that doesn't mean we don't rely on Christopher House.

Because it comes down to this—all of us rely on Christopher House to answer this important question: Who can we count on? Who is there for us? Who cares enough to do the hardest work for the people who need help the most?

Every day, the people who devote their lives as staff and volunteers and donors to Christopher House answer those questions through their actions.

We can count on Christopher House. Christopher House is there for us. And Christopher House has been doing this vital work for 100 years, and with our support should continue for many more.

Christopher House's history means a lot to me—because it has always served precisely the population that I work with every day as a member of Congress. When it started a century ago as part of the settlement house movement, Christopher House focused closely on the population that has always been the sustaining life of our city—the immigrant community.

Today, Christopher House still serves our immigrant population—now largely Latino. It is a population whose steady influx breathes oxygen into Chicago's lungs and reimagines our city every generation.

From the time it opened, Christopher House has been there for all of us, because its leaders have understood that treating the newest Americans well means that all of us are treated better.

So, Mr. Speaker, with this resolution, we recognize Christopher House for its century of contributions to Chicago.

To the "House with a Heart," I say from the bottom of my heart—thank you very much. Thank you for enriching and improving the lives of Chicagoans for the last 100 years and we look forward to many more years of your services.

FREEDOM FOR JOSÉ DANIEL
FERRER GARCÍA AND LUIS
ENRIQUE FERRER GARCÍA

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 2, 2006

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remind my colleagues about José Daniel Ferrer García and his brother

er Luis Enrique Ferrer García, both political prisoners in totalitarian Cuba.

Mr. José Daniel Ferrer García is the regional coordinator for the Christian Liberation Movement and his brother Mr. Luis Enrique Ferrer García is also active in the same movement. They are peaceful pro-democracy activists who believe in the cause of freedom for the people of Cuba. Because of their steadfast belief in human liberty, and their constant work to bring freedom to an island enslaved by the nightmare that is the Castro regime, these courageous brothers have been a constant target of the dictatorship.

According to Amnesty International, Mr. José Daniel Ferrer García has been harassed and detained numerous times for his pro-democracy activism. In January 2002, he was forced from a bus and beaten by the tyrant's thugs because of his activities and ideals. Amnesty International reports that Mr. Luis Enrique Ferrer García, in December 1999, was sentenced to 6 months of "restricted freedom." In March 2003, as part of Castro's heinous crackdown on peaceful pro-democracy activists, both brothers were arrested. Subsequently, in two sham trials, Mr. José Daniel Ferrer García was sentenced to 25 years in the totalitarian gulag and Mr. Luis Enrique Ferrer García was sentenced to 28 years in the gulag.

While confined in the inhuman horror of Castro's gulag, both brothers have been the constant target of abuse. According to the Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004:

"On January 1, José Daniel Ferrer García reported serving 45 days in a punishment cell for protesting the suspension of correspondence and the delivery of food and medical supplies from his family. He did not receive food or water during the first 3 days of his confinement and slept on a cement floor. Authorities confiscated his Bible and prohibited any contact with other prisoners."

According to Amnesty International, Mr. Luis Enrique Ferrer García was transferred to a punishment cell for having bravely refused to militarily salute a warden of the gulag. The Department of State Country Report describes the true horrors of a punishment cell: "Prisoners sometimes were held in 'punishment cells,' which usually were located in the basement of a prison, with continuous semi-dark conditions, no available water, and a hole for a toilet." This is in addition to the grotesque depravity of the gulag that also includes beatings, isolation, denial of medical treatment to detainees, and multiple forms of abuse.

These two brothers are brilliant examples of the heroism of the Cuban people. No matter how intense the repression, no matter how horrifically brutal the consequences of a dignified struggle for liberty, the totalitarian gulags are full of men and women of all backgrounds and ages who represent the best of the Cuban nation.

Mr. Speaker, it is as inconceivable as it is unacceptable that, while the world stands by in silence and acquiescence, these two brothers are systematically tortured because of their belief in freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. My Colleagues, we must demand the immediate and unconditional release of Luis Enrique Ferrer García, José Daniel Ferrer García and every political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba.

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 2, 2006

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today marks Texas Independence Day. 170 years ago today, the Texas Declaration of Independence was ratified by the Convention of 1836 at Washington-on-the-Brazos.

Just as American patriots declared their independence from the tyrannical British Empire's military domination and established the first true democracy in the modern age, Texas declared its independence from Mexico to restore their political rights.

After July 4th, 1776, democracy became a common goal for all people of the New World, but one that we would have to fight for.

Texas declared its independence after many peaceful years as a part of a Mexican federal republic because Texans lost their political rights when Mexico became dominated by military dictatorships.

In 1824, a military dictatorship took over in Mexico that abolished the Mexican constitution. Facing an even more oppressive regime than the British Empire, the Texas Declaration of Independence states that Texas's government had been "forcibly changed, without their consent, from a restricted federative republic, composed of sovereign states, to a consolidated central military despotism."

The Texas Declaration of Independence was also fully justified because this military dictatorship had ceased to protect the lives, liberty, and property of the people of Texas—Anglos and Tejanos.

The new military dictatorship refused to provide for trial by jury, freedom of religion, or public education for their citizens.

When Texans and Tejanos peacefully protested the undemocratic changes to Mexico's government, they were imprisoned unjustly.

Failure to provide these basic rights violates the sacred contract between a government and the people, and Texans did what we still do today—stand up for our rights by declaring our independence to the world.

In response, the Mexican army marched to Texas to wage a war on the land and the people, enforcing the decrees of a military dictatorship through brute force and without any democratic legitimacy.

The struggle for Texan independence was a political struggle, not an ethnic conflict. In fact, many Texas Hispanics considered themselves Tejanos—not Mexicans—and Tejanos from all walks of life served bravely in the Texas War for Independence and sacrificed greatly.

Tejanos were in Texas before Mexico became a nation, and Tejanos cherished the freedom to run their own affairs democratically just as dearly as Anglos. When the Mexican government failed, it failed all Texans and Tejanos equally.

For example, two Tejanos who distinguished themselves in the Texas War for Independence were Captain Juan Seguin and Lorenzo de Zavala, a future Republic of Texas Vice President. The historical records are full of many other patriotic Tejanos as well.

As future President Sam Houston and other delegates signed the Texas Declaration of Independence, Mexican General Santa Ana's army besieged independence forces at the Alamo in San Antonio.