

TRIBUTE TO CHIEF FRANCISCO
ORTIZ AS HE RECEIVES THE 2006
DISTINGUISHED COMMUNITY
SERVICE AWARD

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, today, in my hometown of New Haven, Connecticut, friends, family and colleagues will gather to pay tribute to one of our community's most outstanding citizens and a dear friend of mine. I am proud to stand today and join the Connecticut Anti-Defamation League as they honor New Haven Police Chief Francisco Ortiz, Jr. with the 2006 Distinguished Community Service Award.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to those who dedicate themselves to public service, especially those who serve as law enforcement officials. These brave men and women face dangers and challenges that few of us can imagine. Over twenty-five years ago, Francisco (Cisco) Ortiz joined the New Haven Police Department and, over his career, worked his way through the ranks. In his time with the department he has been assigned to every major unit in the Department serving with both integrity and distinction. There were very few that were surprised when he was selected as Chief of the Department—a role in which he has served for the last several years.

Even more inspiring than his leadership in the Department has been the diversity of roles he has taken on in the community. Volunteer, board member, department liaison—Chief Ortiz has been a strong and vocal advocate for the families and residents of New Haven. Working with such organizations as the Community Consultation Center, Easter Seals/Goodwill Industries, and the New Haven Labor Day Road Race, Chief Ortiz has demonstrated a unique compassion and concern for our community and his efforts have touched the lives of many. Chief Ortiz is also a member of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, the Connecticut Puerto Rican Parade Committee, and the Connecticut Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run. He is also a Senior Fellow and one of the founders of the Yale Child Study Center's Development/Community Policing Program—a program which I have been proud to be a part of. His active participation in our community as a professional, volunteer, and advocate has made all the difference.

Each year, the Connecticut Anti-Defamation League presents the Distinguished Community Service Award to an outstanding leader in the community, recognizing their unique commitment and dedication. Chief Ortiz is a remarkable reflection of the true spirit of community service. I am proud to stand today to join his family, friends, and the many colleagues and community members who have gathered this evening to extend my heart-felt congratulations to my dear friend, Chief Francisco (Cisco) Ortiz, Jr. as he is honored with this very special award. It is a fitting tribute to his many years of service to our community and his continued dedication to improving the quality of life for others.

CONGRATULATING THE WASH-
INGTON HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE
OLYMPIAD TEAM

HON. G.K. BUTTERFIELD

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to rise to congratulate the students of the Washington High School Science Olympiad Team for winning the North Carolina State Science Olympiad. Competing against 250 teams from around the state, the young men and women from Washington defeated some of the premier science and math high schools in the State.

Washington High School is becoming known in North Carolina for its excellence in science education. This year's victory represents the second straight year Washington High School has been named North Carolina's top team and the third time in the last four years.

This week they will travel to Bloomington, Indiana, to compete in the National Science Olympiad against equally capable schools from around the Nation. I am confident that the students of Washington High School will demonstrate their expertise again in competing to the best of their abilities with some of the best funded specialty schools in the country.

The students and faculty of Washington High School continue to show they can achieve great things with what little they are given, and it is my hope that my colleagues will agree that with the proper means, these students can achieve anything. Again, I congratulate the students of Washington High School for their great achievements and wish them the best of luck on May 17. We are very proud of them.

“THE ENDANGERED LAND OF RENTER-WORLD”

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, one of the most effective advocates for housing for people of moderate and low income to have served recently in our federal government is Nicolas P. Retsinas. Mr. Retsinas now directs the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University, and he recently published an extremely important and cogent article in the Boston Globe, on May 5. One of the great mistakes that is made by people who talk about housing policy is to talk as if we are concerned only with promoting homeownership. Homeownership is a very important thing, and increasing the number of people who enjoy it is a desirable goal. But it is also the case that tens of millions of Americans for a variety of reasons, primarily economic, are unlikely ever to be homeowners, and if we do not pay attention to the need for a good stock of affordable rental housing, we will be condemning large numbers of our fellow citizens to substandard lives in many ways. Under the current Administration, as Mr. Retsinas points out, Federal policy badly neglects the needs of those who must rent.

It is true that a bias in public policy against renters unfortunately predates the Bush Administration, but it is this Administration that has greatly exacerbated it by its assault on the various programs by which we provide rental housing at affordable levels for moderate and low-income people. Using his literary device of talking of “Owner-World,” and “Renter-World,” Mr. Retsinas notes that, “Today parts of Renter-World constitute a desperation sector of America. Poor people, crammed into too-small apartments, struggle to pay for food, rent, transportation, and medical care.”

Mr. Speaker, given Mr. Retsinas' experience in administering housing problems, his great scholarly expertise in this subject, and most of all his compassion and understanding of the needs for rental housing as part of a comprehensive national housing policy, I ask that his important article from the May 5 Boston Globe be printed here.

[From the BOSTON GLOBE, May 5, 2006]

THE ENDANGERED LAND OF RENTER-WORLD

(By Nicholas P. Retsinas)

Welcome to Renter-World, home to more than 34 million households. Renter-World denizens, aka tenants, comprise all ages. Eighty percent of all twentysomething households rent; so do 4 million senior households. Tenants come in all socioeconomic strata: Twenty percent of renters earn more than \$60,000 a year; another 20 percent earn less than \$10,000.

Yet a myopic Uncle Sam barely sees Renter-World.

Instead, Uncle Sam focuses on Owner-World. Owner-World captures the federal tax breaks: The homeownership tax deductions for mortgage interest and property taxes top \$100 billion a year and are rising rapidly.

Owner-World also captures the federal attention: For almost 100 years, starting with a 1918 Department of Labor campaign and continuing through Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, Bill Clinton's National Homeownership Partnership, and George Bush's Ownership Society, the federal government has been promoting homeownership. Today 69 percent of households own a home—an all-time high.

From Uncle Sam's vantage, that statistic marks success. Homeownership is the American “dream,” the crucial first step on a family's pathway to the middle class. A homeowner amasses equity, so that one day he can own a piece of America. That vested interest spurs involvement in schools, in neighborhoods, in political life. Just as important, the home gives the owner a financial cushion. Even if owners do not reap the windfall of a superheated market, the home can still be a hedge against inflation.

Indeed, we are a nation of immigrants who have marked the exodus with a series of papers: green cards, citizenship, and mortgages. The “American dream” may be a three-bedroom Cape on a tiny lot, but immigrants have come here for that dream.

So Uncle Sam's myopia is understandable. He expects renters to move on—to become owners. That is what they too expect.

Renter-World, however, is in trouble.

Even though we are building new rental units, we are not adding to the net “affordable” (a euphemism for cheap) units. That supply is shrinking. Between 1993 and 2003, we lost 2 million low-rent units from the rental inventory. At the same time, rents are rising, especially for newly constructed units.

Consider the plight of the lowest income renters: 70 percent pay more than half of their income for housing. The National Low Income Coalition could not find one county

in the United States where a minimum wage worker, paying 30 percent of his or her income for housing, could afford a one-bedroom apartment.

As for the government rent subsidies aimed at alleviating the hardship of low-income tenants, those too have shrunk.

The war on terror and the war in Iraq have pushed them off the agenda.

Today parts of Renter-World constitute a desperation sector of America. Poor people, crammed into too-small apartments, struggle to pay for food, rent, transportation, and medical care.

To paraphrase Linda Loman, lamenting the plight of her husband, Willy, in "Death of a Salesman": "Attention must be paid" to these renters.

The reason is pragmatic.

In the past, Renter-World has been a gateway to Owner-World. Low-income workers, renting for a few years, have saved up enough for the downpayment on a house, and, with scrimping, have kept up with mortgage payments. But today's renters cannot so easily make that leap. The Big Box shelver, married to the fast food waitress, may want the American dream. They may have left family thousands of miles away to seize the dream. But without some housing relief, they will never leave Renter-World.

And the promise of America, the dream for millions of Americans, is to leave Renter-World. That first mortgage—often the first mortgage for a family—constitutes step one in the economic mobility we value. High rents trap families, anchoring them on the bottom rung of the ladder that we want them to climb.

For the sake of the renters, and of the nation as a whole, Uncle Sam must pay attention to Renter-World.

TRIBUTE TO THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BURLINGTON BRISTOL BRIDGE

HON. JIM SAXTON

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Burlington Bristol Bridge as it turns 75 years old. The Burlington Bristol Bridge (1931–2006) is a vital transportation asset to the residents of South Jersey, connecting New Jersey to Pennsylvania.

The bridge replaced a ferry service which carried passengers across the Delaware River to Burlington, Bristol and the amusement park on Burlington Island. Bridge construction commenced on April 28, 1930, and was completed one year later, for a total cost of approximately \$1.5 million.

This landmark bridge stretches 2,301 feet from abutment to abutment, and is 20 feet in width, with one lane in each direction.

For many years after its construction, the bridge's lift span at 540 feet was the longest movable span ever built. It is a vertical "Lift" type of movable bridge, which raises regularly to allow large vessels to pass beneath.

Approximately 27,000 vehicles per day, or 9.9 million vehicles annually traverse it.

This man-made wonder has faithfully served the residents of South Jersey and Pennsylvania for three-quarters of a century, and will continue to do so for many more years. Its contributions to travelers and the citizens of South Jersey are hereby recognized.

INTRODUCTION OF THE "PROTECTING AMERICAN'S MINERS ACT"

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Since the beginning of this year, we have witnessed numerous accidents in our Nation's underground mines. So far this year, 26 underground coal miners have died, more than the total for all of last year. Preliminary investigative reports and public hearings have made it clear that prompt action is necessary if we are to avoid a continued loss of life and disruptions to a vital American energy source.

For many months, I have been urging the Committee on Education and the Workforce to take action on this matter by marking up the legislation introduced by the West Virginia delegation. Sadly, that has not occurred. While the Senate is making progress on this matter in a bipartisan manner, the responsible leaders in this body have declined to treat this matter with the seriousness it deserves. The Administration, which helped create the problem by withdrawing regulatory initiatives that could have saved lives and moving enforcement resources into compliance assistance, is likewise lacking in purpose and direction in addressing this crisis.

Accordingly, today I rise to introduce new mine safety legislation, together with Congressman RAHALL of West Virginia, Congressman OWENS of New York, Congressman CHANDLER of Kentucky, Congressman HOLT of New Jersey, Congressman ARTUR DAVIS of Alabama, and Congressman MOLLOHAN of West Virginia. This legislation does not detract in any way from our continued pleas to this body to move forward with the West Virginia bill. It does, however, include refinements and new provisions based upon what we have learned since that bill was introduced. An identical bill is being introduced in the Senate by Senators KENNEDY, ROCKEFELLER, MURRAY and DURBIN, and we understand the refinements and new provisions reflected in this legislation are under active discussion in the responsible Senate committee. We hope that these new ideas will advance the discussion and lead to prompt action by this body. We will not let up on this, nor will we let complacency take root.

Following is a detailed section-by-section discussion of the new bill, entitled the "Protecting America's Miners Act." I encourage all of my colleagues to join me in support of this legislation, and in demanding action by this body before new tragedies strike.

SUMMARY OF PROTECTING AMERICA'S MINERAL ACT

(1) Short Title. "Protecting America's Miners Act".

(2) Sense of Congress. This legislation is necessary because of the failure by the current Administration to protect miners and properly prepare for the future.

(3) Definitions. Relevant definitions from the Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977 are incorporated into this free-standing legislation.

(4) Improved escape and refuge requirements to help protect miners in the event of an emergency.

This section would establish improved safety standards to help underground coal

miners survive an underground emergency. Highlights include—

Requiring atmospheric detection and warning systems to alert miners to dangerous levels of harmful and explosive gases;

Requiring two-way messaging systems to communicate between miners and the surface once they are available; in the interim, one-way messaging systems and backup telephone lines would be required;

Requiring caches of self-rescuers for escape, and, until such time as the mine has established underground refuges, also requiring special caches to support prolonged stays underground;

Requiring underground refuges, meeting criteria based on past experience in the U.S. and abroad, to protect miners unable to escape from a mine; and

Requiring miners to be equipped with tracking devices to facilitate rescue.

The bill authorizes MSHA to revise these standards by regulation in order to improve them over time. This is the approach taken in 1977 when the current Mine Act was established. Similarly, MSHA is authorized to issue modifications of these standards for individual mines as with any safety standard under the requirements of existing law. Additional research on related topics is required by section 11 of the bill.

Because of the nature of these requirements, the bill would make any violation of them an "imminent danger" so that MSHA can act promptly to ensure mines are in compliance.

SECTION 5—FACILITATING THE PROMPT INITIATION OF RESCUE AND MINE RECOVERY EFFORTS

The bill would set up an Emergency Call Center to be sure MSHA is ready to receive information on emergencies—so callers don't find themselves going from answering machine to answering machine. The Call Center would have to be supplied by the Secretary with home and emergency numbers for key agency personnel, local emergency services, mine rescue teams, and others.

The bill would require that operators notify MSHA within 15 minutes of any emergency or serious incident. The bill ensures MSHA gets prompt notice of close calls, not just situations in which there are deaths or serious injuries.

The bill would separate mines into two categories for purposes of what mine rescue team requirements are applicable:

Those mines with less than 36 employees can contract out for mine rescue services to the nearest mines which maintain such teams, provided that: (1) the mine must include some of its own employees in the rescue team; (2) all rescue team members must be able to reach the mine within 1 hour; and (3) the operator must hold at least two rescue drills a year to ensure the team becomes familiar with the mine.

Those mines with 36 or more employees must have their own mine rescue teams (although they could contract for additional teams). These mines must also hold at least two rescue drills a year.

The bill would also require the Secretary to promptly initiate an expedited rule-making to revise existing mine rescue team requirements, and to consult broadly with existing mine rescue teams, other rescue organizations, local and State emergency authorities and others in this regard. The rules would cover training and qualifications for rescue team members, the equipment and technology used in rescue, the structure and organization of mine rescue teams, and other factors which have been identified by mine rescue team members at recent public hearings as posing problems during recent rescue efforts. Section 11 of the bill contains related research requirements.