

TRIBUTE TO DR. ROBERT (BOB)
UBBELOHDE AND MRS. SUSAN
UBBELOHDE

HON. BART STUPAK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 16, 2007

Mr. STUPAK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor two of my constituents who together have dedicated nearly 40 years of service to one of the great educational institutions in Michigan's Upper Peninsula (U.P.): Finlandia University. This week, Finlandia University President Dr. Robert (Bob) Ubbelohde and Mrs. Susan Ubbelohde, the manager of "North Wind Bookstore" at Finlandia University, will both retire.

Dr. and Mrs. Ubbelohde first came to the U.P. in 1988 when Dr. Ubbelohde was named Dean of Faculty at Suomi College (later to become Finlandia University) in Hancock, Michigan. In 1991, Dr. Ubbelohde was named the 15th president of Suomi College.

When they came to the U.P., the Ubbelohdes did not expect to remain at Finlandia University for 20 years. In fact, as a self-described "city person," Dr. Ubbelohde has been known to say that he expected to stay in the U.P. only three to five years. However, the Ubbelohdes fell in love with Hancock, Michigan, with the local area, which is commonly referred to as the Copper Country, and with Finlandia University itself.

Dr. Ubbelohde's contributions to Finlandia University cannot be overstated. In fact, as much if not more than any other single person, he can be credited with saving and revitalizing the school. When Dr. Ubbelohde came to what was then Suomi College, he inherited an institution that, while enjoying a rich history, faced an uncertain future. Enrollment was de-

clining by 8 percent a year. By Dr. Ubbelohde's own admission, the administration of the school at the time even contemplated whether to close the school altogether. Thankfully, under Dr. Ubbelohde's guidance, the decision was made to keep the school open and to move the institution forward.

Under Dr. Ubbelohde's leadership, new programs were adopted at Suomi College and the school was largely re-vamped. In 1996, after being in existence for 100 years, the school was transformed from a two-year college offering, to a baccalaureate degree-granting university and was re-named Finlandia University. In 1998, athletics were re-introduced to the school, further strengthening the school's reputation. Over the past 10 years, thanks to Dr. Ubbelohde's vision, the school has enjoyed a 65 percent increase in student enrollment, major upgrades to campus technology and capital improvements.

Although Finlandia University has thrived under Dr. Ubbelohde's leadership, this humble man is perhaps best known for his passion for seeing students grow, learn and succeed. When asked what his greatest accomplishment is, he tellingly replies, "I don't even think that way. What I think about are students crossing the stage at Commencement to receive their diplomas. I can't claim to know the life story of each student, but I've learned enough about our students to know when a graduate has overcome or accomplished something extraordinary to earn that degree."

Just as Dr. Ubbelohde has done great things as the President of Finlandia University, Mrs. Ubbelohde has also contributed significantly to the university and to the surrounding community. While Dr. Ubbelohde served as the University President, Mrs. Ubbelohde has earned a well deserved reputation as the "ideal first lady" for the university. Well re-

garded for her warmth, kindness, grace and hospitality, Mrs. Ubbelohde has made friends throughout the community and acted as an ambassador for the school.

Mrs. Ubbelohde managed North Wind Books, the university bookstore that was founded under Dr. Ubbelohde's administration. North Wind Books not only supplies Finlandia University students their books, but is in many ways a cultural center for Finlandia University, offering Finnish rugs, tablecloths, Finnish books and other items that celebrate the Finnish traditions that the university honors. Under Mrs. Ubbelohde's management, North Wind Books has grown. Today, the thriving store continues to serve as a resource for students, teachers, Finlandia University alumni and visitors. Just as Dr. Ubbelohde has left his mark on Finlandia University in many ways, Mrs. Ubbelohde leaves a legacy in North Wind Books, which will be enjoyed by many future generations of Finlandia University Lions.

Madam Speaker, Finlandia University is in many ways a special place. It is a place that cultivates character among young people, provides them a first-rate education, while embracing traditional Finnish values and teaching in the tradition of the Lutheran faith. Because of Dr. Robert Ubbelohde's and Mrs. Susan Ubbelohde's leadership, Finlandia University will continue to grow and prosper for years to come. While they will be missed at Finlandia University by the students and staff, this retirement is well deserved. Madam Speaker, I would ask that you and the entire U.S. House of Representatives join me in congratulating Dr. Robert and Mrs. Susan Ubbelohde on their well deserved retirement and in thanking them for their decades of service to higher education.