

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 5, 2007

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, due to the passing of my father, on Wednesday, October 3, 2007, and Thursday, October 4, 2007, I missed rollcall vote Nos. 932 through 948. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on the motion on ordering the previous question on the rule H. Res. 701; "aye" on the motion on ordering the previous question on the rule H. Res. 702; "aye" on H. Res. 702; "aye" on the Conyers amendment to H.R. 928; "nay" on the motion to recommit H.R. 928; "aye" on H.R. 928; "aye" on the motion to postpone the vote to override the president's veto of the children's health care bill; "nay" on the motion to recommit H.R. 2740; "aye" on H.R. 2740; "aye" on the motion on ordering the previous question on the rule H. Res. 704; "aye" on the rule H. Res. 704; "aye" on the motion on ordering the previous question on the rule H. Res. 703; "aye" on the rule H. Res. 703; "nay" on the motion to recommit H.R. 3246; "aye" on H.R. 3246; "nay" on motion to recommit H.R. 3648; and "aye" on H.R. 3648.

RECOGNIZING MELISSA HENSLEY
FOR ACHIEVING THE MISSOURI
AMERICAN STAR OF TEACHING

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 5, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Melissa Hensley, of Milan, MO. Melissa Hensley is the recipient of the Missouri American Star of Teaching Award.

Melissa serves as a Literary Coach for Milan C-2 Elementary in Milan, MO. She works closely with other educational professionals and parents to increase students' reading abilities. Melissa also acts as a mentor to beginner teachers and represented Missouri schools by presenting at the National Reading First Conference in Reno, NV. Currently, she is working on completing her master's degree in Reading.

Each year, American Stars of Teaching receives over 4,000 nominations for this award. From this, the organization picks one educator from each state. This year, Melissa represented Missouri by earning the American Star of Teaching Award.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in honoring Melissa Hensley whose dedication and service to the people of Milan has been truly exceptional.

HONORING BURCHELL NURSERY

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 5, 2007

Mr. RADANOVICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Burchell Nursery upon celebrating their 65th anniversary in the nursery business.

Irvin Burchell began his small business with an acre and a half in central California, just outside of Modesto, in 1942. Mr. Burchell's idea was "Plant good trees on good land, take care of them, and they will take care of you." Three generations later the company has grown to more than 1,000 acres, from 10,000 trees to 2.5 million. Burchell Nursery began with just peach trees. Today they grow peach, nectarine, cherry, apricot, plum, prune, apple, pomegranate, pistachio, citrus, almond, and walnut trees in more than 200 varieties.

Irvin Burchell's focus on quality led to the development of the state of California's own tree certification program. The Nursery began in the 1960s and has worked toward eliminating viruses from commercial tree varieties and establishing clean sources of bud wood. They have created an ongoing sampling process to ensure virus-free trees. This has become the model that is used by the state today.

Burchell Nursery changed hands in 1970 to Bill Burchell, who oversaw dramatic growth in the company. Through out the decade 700 acres were added in Oakdale, CA, and during the 1980s another branch was opened in Fresno, CA.

Now in the third generation, Burchell Nursery is headed by Tom Burchell. Tom has renewed the company's focus on research. Tom has pioneered the development of the nursery's container tree lines. With special growing techniques, and a uniquely designed container, the program has expanded from about 8,000 container trees per year to more than 170,000 in 2006. The breeding program has also flourished under Tom, with more than 40 patented varieties to the nursery's credit.

Burchell Nursery has been a constant leader in the community and in the state of California. To the state, Burchell Nursery has provided innovative ways of growing, nurturing and protecting trees from a number of viruses. In the local community, they have not only provided employment, but they have also given back in the form of donations and support to various groups. Burchell Nursery has always been a strong supporter of 4-H and Future Farmers of America. They have provided scholarships to outstanding agriculture students at Modesto Junior College and contributed trees to the orchards of elementary and secondary schools. They have also been active supporters of the agriculture research programs at Modesto Junior College, California State University at Fresno, University of California at Davis and have provided financial support to the Stanislaus County Agriculture Center.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend and congratulate Burchell Nursery on 65 years of business. I invite my colleagues to join me in wishing Burchell Nursery many years of continued success.

THE ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF
THE ASSASSINATION OF ANNA
POLITKOVSKAYA

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 5, 2007

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, as chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission,

I have followed closely the difficulties faced by journalists throughout the nations of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Many of these dedicated men and women risk financial ruin, physical intimidation and even death at the hands of those who fear honesty and truth in print or in the electronic media.

In this connection, I would call the attention of my distinguished colleagues to a tragic anniversary: Sunday, October 7th, 2007, marks the one-year anniversary of the death of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who was shot and killed by an unknown assailant or assailants at the entrance to her apartment building in Moscow.

Ms. Politkovskaya was a brave and prolific journalist whose name has become synonymous with journalistic courage under fire. Her vivid, on-the-spot reporting brought to the world's attention the bloody war in Russia's breakaway region of Chechnya and the suffering of its victims, both Chechen and Russian. In her book "The Dirty War," a compilation of articles she had written previously on the conflict, she demonstrated a unique gift for telling the stories of people caught in the crossfire between the Russian military forces, brutal Chechen paramilitaries operating on Moscow's behalf, the indigenous Chechen resistance, and Islamic extremists who rushed in from all over the world to exploit the conflict. One reviewer wrote that "her writing focuses on the ethics of everyday life and individual misery in the midst of Chechnya's catastrophe. It is Chechen civilians and Russian conscript soldiers who are the centers of concern here. Politkovskaya's most withering scorn is reserved for the political and military classes that initiated this war, together with its profiteers, opportunists, and contract soldiers straight from Russia's prisons."

For her hard-hitting and courageous reporting Ms. Politkovskaya earned numerous journalism awards, including the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's annual Prize for Journalism and Democracy in 2003. In 2004, she shared the Olof Palme Prize for human rights work with fellow Russian human rights activists Ludmila Alexeyeva and Sergei Kovalev.

On the day Anna Politkovskaya was killed, she was due to file a story on the looted reconstruction money intended for Chechnya, and use of torture and kidnapping by pro-Moscow Chechen paramilitaries. Clearly, her reporting had made a lot of enemies and threatened a lot of comfortable positions.

Anna Politkovskaya was an American citizen, born during the Cold War in New York City, where she was exposed to democracy, a free press, and a world of ideas denied to most Soviet citizens. Graduating in 1980 from Moscow State University, she worked for the Soviet newspaper Izvestiya during the halcyon days of perestroika. In 1999, she joined the staff of Novaya Gazeta, one of the few national Russian newspapers at that time that took a critical line toward the Russian government. Her dedication to exposing the tragic events in Chechnya resulted in around 50 trips to that cauldron of conflict.

In 2004, she made an attempt to travel to Beslan during the murderous school siege, in that village but fell ill with food poisoning on the way, an event which some took as a deliberate poison attempt by her enemies to kill her. She was very aware that her actions angered many in the governments of both

Chechnya and Russia, but never let threats to her life dissuade her from her passion. She was once quoted as saying, "journalists have a duty to report on the subject that matters, just as singers have to sing and doctors have to heal."

Despite her critical attitude toward her country's political leadership, Anna Politkovskaya possessed a deep warmth and love for its people. She cared for Russia, and wanted nothing else for the country and its people than to see it become a true democracy free from corruption and fear. Her death, said former Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev, "... is a savage crime against a professional and serious journalist and a courageous woman. It is a blow to the entire democratic, independent press. It is a grave crime against the country, against all of us."

Madam Speaker, the Russian government has announced the arrest of several persons implicated in Anna Politkovskaya's murder, and the actual shooter has reportedly been determined. However, the investigation itself appears to have raised more questions than answers, which is, unfortunately, a characteristic of many high-profile investigations in Russia nowadays. Let us hope that the investigation will be brought to a successful conclusion, and that Anna Politkovskaya's killers, who or wherever they are, will be brought to justice.

HONORING COACH BOB ROMBACH RETIREMENT

HON. KENNY MARCHANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 5, 2007

Mr. MARCHANT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Duncanville High School Panther Baseball Coach Bob Rombach for 39 years of dedicated coaching and teaching.

After graduating from Denton High School in 1961, Coach Rombach signed a professional baseball contract with the Houston Colt 45's organization. He spent the off-seasons studying for his Bachelor's Degree and graduated in 1968 from North Texas State University.

His first coaching position was in Amarillo. Since then he has led five different baseball programs and is recognized as one of the most successful and respected coaches in Texas High School Baseball. Coach Rombach's accolades are not only numerous but prestigious as well. He has been named Texas Coach of the Year twice, received a number of district honors and was coach of the North-South All-Star Game. In November of 1990, Coach Rombach was elected into the Texas Baseball Hall of Fame after guiding the Panthers to the Class 5A State Championship. In 2000, he was selected by the Texas High School Baseball Coaches Association for the Hall of Fame.

As coach of the Duncanville Panthers, Coach Rombach's teams have reached the playoffs 22 times in 23 seasons. They have earned a trip to the Texas State Tournament in Austin six times and won the state title in 1990. His career record is 859 wins and 362 losses and his record at Duncanville High School is 565 wins with 180 losses. During his distinguished tenure at Duncanville, Coach Rombach has seen thirty of his players drafted with nine playing in the big leagues.

Coach Rombach and his wife, Deanna, have three children: daughters, Amy and Tracy and son, Deron, who is a national cross checker for the Baltimore Orioles. They have seven grandchildren.

Madam Speaker, in closing I would like to commend and congratulate Coach Bob Rombach on all of his accomplishments. His dedication and commitment to coaching and teaching is worthy of recognition. I wish Coach Rombach a happy and healthy retirement and it is an honor to represent him in the 24th District of Texas.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3648, MORTGAGE FOR- GIVENESS DEBT RELIEF ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 4, 2007

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be a co-sponsor to this bill that will provide relief to those people in my district, the entire State of Florida, and the country as a whole who are losing their homes.

Foreclosures in south Florida are escalating way too quickly. They have tripled in Miami-Dade County and more than doubled in Broward County from this time last year. In fact, Florida as a whole is second only to Nevada in new foreclosures from January through March of this year.

Why this fast increase in foreclosures? Mostly because lenders gave high-priced loans to borrowers during the housing boom, particularly borrowers in low-income, largely minority neighborhoods. Starting in 2000, because property values were rising quickly, financial institutions made risky loans that put them and the borrowers in jeopardy. About \$1.3 trillion in subprime loans was lent to these borrowers. Specifically to south Florida, in Miami-Dade, about 23 percent of these loans are subprime—in Broward about 18 percent are subprime—in Miami Gardens about 66 percent are subprime.

Florida homeowners are now bearing about one tenth of that 1.3 trillion dollar debt. This is more than any other state except California. Now the value of these homes is declining but these homeowners have this huge outstanding mortgage debt. It's bad enough that these homeowners are losing their homes, but under current law they would also have to include their discharged mortgage debt in their income and pay tax on it.

This bill will give some relief to those homeowners by eliminating that tax. Equally important, the bill will help those homeowners who are doing their best to avoid foreclosures—those that are having a portion of their mortgage discharged as part of a restructuring of their debt.

It is time for those homeowners in Florida and elsewhere to get this badly needed tax relief.

MEJA EXPANSION AND ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 4, 2007

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2740) to require accountability for contractors and contract personnel under Federal contracts, and for other purposes:

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Chairman, I have followed with interest news reports from Iraq documenting some of the terrible atrocities that have been committed at the hands of military contractors hired by the United States. I have been keenly interested in the recent congressional hearings that have been held on this matter. Based on what I have learned, I am pleased today that the House of Representatives is considering this bill, which would ensure that those who do business with the United States Government in Iraq can be held accountable when they commit criminal acts. Unfortunately, I cannot be present for the vote today, but I wanted to ensure I submitted this statement of support so the record will reflect that I am strongly in favor of the goals of this important bill.

This bill is a fair and sensible way to ensure that military contractors can be prosecuted for their criminal actions in a U.S. court. This is important both because it gives the government a way to police the behavior of these contractors, and also because it shows the Iraqi people that the United States is serious about the rule of law. While I am glad Congress is taking this action now, I remain concerned about the Bush Administration's failure to take steps to investigate or prosecute those who committed wrongdoing in the past. I believe Congress should continue to investigate these incidents and ensure that those responsible are held accountable.

TRIBUTE TO COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR FRANK D. GROSS

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 5, 2007

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, let me take this moment to recognize the extensive career of Command Sergeant Major Frank D. Gross. CSM Gross has spent over 41 years serving in the Missouri Army National Guard and Engineer Regiment.

Frank Gross earned a master's degree in education from Central Missouri State University. In 2001, he successfully completed the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy. During his career, CSM Gross has been awarded over 18 medals and ribbons for his selfless leadership and dedication. He is highly respected by his peers, as well as by the soldiers who he has led.

CSM Gross's service to our country in wartime has been invaluable. Beginning in 2002, Gross served as CSM for the 35th Engineer Brigade for over 2 years, where he supervised the deployment of three battalions and two