

TRIBUTE TO PATRICIA TATE OF  
HOWEY IN THE HILLS, FLORIDA

**HON. GINNY BROWN-WAITE**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 25, 2007*

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Madam Speaker, each year the President of the United States presents the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics to outstanding teachers in the disciplines of math and science from the 50 States and 4 territories. This year, Patricia Tate from Lake County, FL, is one of the three math finalists for the award from the State of Florida.

Established in 1983, the Presidential Award for Excellence is sponsored by the National Science Foundation. The award recognizes outstanding kindergarten to 12th grade math and science teachers in each State who are models for their colleagues and leaders in the improvement of science and mathematics education.

For the past 42 years Patricia Tate has taught math at the high school level. A current teacher at South Lake High School, she teaches AP Calculus, trigonometry, integrated Math III and Algebra II. In addition to her classroom experiences, Patricia goes out of her way to volunteer as a mentor for other Lake County math teachers. She has also been an online guide for Connected University and has taught at Lake-Sumter Community College.

An avid fan of math from an early age, Patricia really took it on as a passion while her older brother was in college. When he returned home during vacations, he would work with Patricia on math, challenging her to solve more and more complex problems. It was through these exercises that she saw the educational and teaching possibilities that math could create.

Patricia has seen a marked change in the way students are taught throughout her forty-plus years in the classroom. Instead of using the blackboard as the primary tool of instruction, as she did for many years, today Patricia uses multimedia presentations and PowerPoint presentations to reach the current tech-savvy student body. While the classroom experience has gotten more challenging over time, she still enjoys getting letters of appreciation from former students who valued her math teaching and want to thank her for making a difference in their lives.

While Patricia will not find out if she is a winner until next March, I can tell you that her record of accomplishment teaching math to high school students is unmatched in my congressional district. Patricia Tate serves as a role model for other teachers throughout Florida. I wish her the best of luck in the competition and hope that she continues her exemplary work on behalf of Lake County students.

TRIBUTE TO THE AUDUBON OHIO  
URBAN CONSERVATION CREW  
SUMMER CAMP AT THE ROCKE-  
FELLER PARK GREENHOUSE IN  
CLEVELAND

**HON. STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 25, 2007*

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Audubon Ohio Urban Conservation Crew Summer Camp at the Rockefeller Park Greenhouse in Cleveland. The Ohio program of the National Audubon Society is working hard to ensure that children in the central city have the opportunity to connect with nature and, in doing so, improve both their educational achievement and their sense of community and self-esteem.

During the recent August recess I had the good fortune to visit the Ohio program of the National Audubon Society which is also a program in my own district. The program, a free summer camp for neighborhood children ages 8 to 11, is known as the Urban Conservation Crew. Through this program, Audubon Ohio, in less than five weeks, has succeeded in developing a group of budding scientists who have mastered the fine points of bird identification and behavior, focusing on the birds and plants of their own neighborhood.

Audubon Ohio chose as its location for the camp the Rockefeller Park Greenhouse. The Greenhouse is located in the heart of Cleveland's historic Glenville neighborhood. Owned and operated by the City of Cleveland, the Greenhouse's official function is to develop plants for indoor and outdoor use at other city properties. But the facility includes classroom space, extensive gardens (including a community garden), and a large meadow ringed with mature trees that makes an excellent habitat for birds.

I grew up near the Greenhouse, yet during my visit I learned a lot of new things about it. Chief among these was the fact that the Greenhouse property immediately adjoins an "Important Bird Area," or "IBA." IBAs are part of an international network of areas that are important to the survival of migratory birds. This network was created by a European-based organization, Birdlife International. Audubon is the Birdlife partner responsible for designating and protecting IBAs in the United States.

The Greenhouse sits next to one of 63 IBAs that Audubon has designated in Ohio. Specifically, it is next to the "Doan Brook/Dike 14 IBA," a key migratory corridor that connects the coast of Lake Erie with the upland Shaker Lakes on the western edge of the Appalachian Plateau. In practical terms this means that a lot of interesting birds pass through the area, with many species nesting in it. This in turn creates an opportunity for children in Glenville to explore an important natural area right near where they live.

From what I saw of the camp, Audubon Ohio is taking full advantage of the location of the Greenhouse and the convergence of a central city neighborhood with an interesting natural area. During the first four weeks of the camp, children walked the Greenhouse grounds and the surrounding neighborhood with Audubon instructors who taught them how to identify birds both by sight and by

sound. Audubon also took advantage of the plant life inside and outside of the Greenhouse to teach the children about what plants they could grow in their neighborhood and how the birds of the neighborhood would both help the plants survive by eating pests and, in turn, benefit themselves from the seeds and berries produced by the plants.

During my visit the children showed off the knowledge that they had picked up in only a few weeks. They explained to me the concept of "field marks" of birds and how I could use field marks to distinguish different species. They identified the various body parts of birds and explained how I could distinguish the sexes of different species, such as the Northern Cardinal. They told me what kind of food birds could find around the neighborhood and how people could help birds by supplying this food. And they explained how to protect birds from man-made threats, such as plastic "six pack" holders that, they said, I needed to cut up so that birds would not get their necks stuck in them and choke.

Beyond the knowledge and conservation values that the children were displaying, I was impressed by the passion with which the children were discussing the birds and plants of their neighborhood. I kept having to remind myself that these children were all less than 12 years old, some as young as eight, had no previous interest in birds, let alone experience in identifying them. These children were learning complex fundamental scientific techniques, including observation, distinction, grouping by similarities, understanding food chains and identifying threats and barriers. Introducing children to birds and plants was a great way of teaching them science by drawing on children's inherent desire to explore and understand the natural world around them.

Cleveland is blessed with a number of outstanding institutions that have offered nature-based education to children over the years. These include our fabulous Metro Parks network as well as stand-alone institutions such as The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, the Lake Erie Nature and Science Center and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park Education Center. These institutions have gone to great lengths to reach out to the central city by bringing children out to their suburban and exurban facilities. I appreciate all of the efforts they have made over the years, and I hope they continue.

What distinguishes Audubon Ohio's Urban Conservation Crew is that it is being conducted right in the neighborhood where the children live. Given the enthusiasm I saw in the children during their visit, I am confident that they will continue to explore Rockefeller Park, looking for birds, plants and other animals, long after the camp is over.

After my visit I learned that Cleveland is not the only location where Audubon has been offering programs like the Urban Conservation Crew to central city children. In Columbus, Audubon is developing the Grange Insurance Audubon Center, a nature-based education center slated to open in 2009 in a central city neighborhood just a mile south of downtown. Audubon already has similar facilities at Prospect Park in Brooklyn and in Debs Park in East Los Angeles. Another urban center, known as "the Rio Salado Center," is under development in the heart of Phoenix.

It is notable that Audubon Ohio produced the Urban Conservation Crew program almost

entirely with private funds. Support came from the Cleveland Foundation, the Kent H. Smith Charitable Trust, and the Shaker Lakes Garden Club. Audubon Ohio did, however, receive a small amount of federal money, specifically a \$5,000 grant from the U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service. It goes to show how a relatively small amount of federal dollars can be leveraged to produce great results.

I commend Audubon, Ohio for helping to reconnect children with nature, particularly in the central city. Audubon and its Ohio program deserve high marks for their creativity and skill in doing so at the Rockefeller Park Greenhouse in Cleveland and elsewhere. They provide great hope for the future.

**MARIANAS WAGE HIKE SHOWING  
POSITIVE EFFECTS**

**HON. GEORGE MILLER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 25, 2007*

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to share encouraging news from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. As many of my colleagues know, I have been fighting for years to ensure that employers in the CNMI—an American territory in the Pacific—pay their workers an honest wage.

But for years, we were blocked from reforming the broken labor and immigration system in the Marianas. The corrupt lobbyist Jack Abramoff's collusion with then-Majority Leader Tom DeLay and others here in Congress meant that the CNMI's sweatshop-based economy persisted for almost two decades after we were first made aware of abuses there.

Eventually, Abramoff's dishonest schemes, which caused so much human misery, caught the attention of law enforcement, and the web of corruption is now unraveled. Jack Abramoff is in prison, Representative DeLay no longer serves in this House, and the Congress has a Democratic majority.

That is good news for the workers of America and especially those in the CNMI. Earlier this year, the new Congress raised the minimum wage across the country for the first time in almost a decade. And for the first time, that increase applies to the Northern Marianas. Today, workers there make \$3.55 an hour, up from the barely \$3 that workers there were paid for years.

This long-overdue reform is already having a positive effect, and I commend to my colleagues the article below from the Marianas Variety ("Labor: Wage hike drives locals to seek jobs"). As the article explains, we still lack good data on the CNMI job situation, but the trend is very encouraging: the number of people looking for jobs in September of this year was up by an incredible 80 percent compared to the same period last year, according to their Department of Labor.

For too long, thanks to policies that reinforced the low-wage garment industry's dominance, there were very few good-paying jobs in the Marianas: if you weren't willing to work for \$3 an hour, you could either work in the public sector, or you could live on public assistance. But as the Commonwealth's deputy

secretary of labor says in the article, "There are so many people looking for jobs not only because they need them but because the (minimum) wage is now \$3.55 an hour. It's waking them up to go out (and join the workforce)." The bottom line is that the increase in wages is attracting jobseekers to private sector jobs, exactly as we predicted.

It's an abiding shame that it took the U.S. Congress so many years to bring reforms to the Mariana Islands and to raise the minimum wage. And it was a major setback for workers there when the government of the Commonwealth went back on earlier attempts to raise the wage locally. But even though it comes years after I would have liked, I am pleased, although not surprised, by this early report. Under the leadership of this New Direction Congress, we are starting to turn things around, and we are beginning to see the positive results of raising the minimum wage.

Paying honest wages for honest work is good for our economy and the right policy for our country. Members of this Congress should be proud that we are moving America, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, in a new direction.

[From the Marianas Variety, Oct. 26, 2007]

**LABOR: WAGE HIKE DRIVES LOCALS TO SEEK  
JOBS**

(By Gemma Q. Casas)

The 50-cent increase on the local minimum wage in July resulted in an increase in the number of locals seeking employment assistance at the Department of Labor, according to its deputy secretary, Alfred Pangelinan.

He said there were 1,800 local jobseekers in September up by 80 percent compared to the same period last year when Labor assisted 1,000 jobseekers.

He attributed the sudden surge to the increase on the minimum wage from \$3.05 an hour to \$3.55 and the worsening economic crisis. "There are so many people looking for jobs not only because they need them but because the (minimum) wage is now \$3.55 an hour. It's waking them up to go out (and join the workforce)," he said.

He believes that as the local minimum wage increases, more residents will be enticed to work in the private sector.

The Federal Minimum Wage Act became law in May of this year and it also applies to the CNMI, mandating an increase of the local minimum wage by 50 cents every year until it reaches the U.S. minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour.

The next 50-cent increase in the CNMI minimum wage will take effect in July 2008, which will raise the rate to \$4.05 an hour.

The Department of Labor says it is also making sure that local residents who are employed get the monetary equivalent of their foreign counterparts' non-monetary benefits to further encourage them to work.

Pangelinan said the real unemployment rate among the local population is difficult to determine because the statistics only include those that come forward and seek assistance. There hasn't been any CNMI-wide survey conducted in recent years to determine how many local residents are jobless.

**TRIBUTE TO CHRISTINA HALE  
VANBRAKLE**

**HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 25, 2007*

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ms. Christina Hale

VanBrakle, who everyone knows as "Tina," a long-time employee of the Federal Election Commission, who will retire from the United States Government at the end of this year after more than 38 years of distinguished federal service. Tina has spent 28 of those years working at the Federal Election Commission and the last 19 assisting me and many of my colleagues as the FEC's Director of Congressional, Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs.

A native of Washington, DC, Tina grew up in Maryland and has been a resident of Silver Spring in Montgomery County, Maryland for the last 24 years. After graduating from Suitland Senior High School in Maryland, she accepted a job at the Maritime Administration, Department of Commerce, where she spent 2 years working as a press assistant for the late John K. Tennant, who was the Press Officer. Mr. Tennant introduced Tina to then-Chairman Helen Delich Bentley of the Federal Maritime Commission, and former Congresswoman from Maryland. She accepted a secretarial position with Chairman Bentley where she was employed for several years. Tina has fond memories of traveling with Chairman Bentley on various speaking engagements. Most memorable was a visit to San Clemente—the Western White House—for a meeting with Japanese shipping interests during the Nixon Administration. Tina also met her husband, Bryant, while employed at the FMC. They were married in 1983 and have three children, Wendye, Ashley and Derek. They have one grandchild, Dominic, with another expected in January 2008.

Tina also worked with Vice Chairman Barbara Hackman Franklin at the Consumer Product Safety Commission, CPSC, enrolling at the University of Maryland at night, where she earned a Paralegal Certificate in the Legislative Liaison Program and a B.S. in management and technology and political science. Tina then joined the newly created Washington office of a Detroit law firm.

Tina joined the Federal Election Commission in 1979, where she worked for the Deputy Staff Director, then served as Special Assistant to the Staff Director. In 1988 she was named Director of Congressional, Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs. Tina is widely respected on the Hill for her dedication and quick and accurate responses to questions and perhaps will be best remembered by the campaign finance community for providing fair and impartial advice to anyone who contacted her.

Whether she was answering a simple question regarding the campaign finance laws, preparing a fact sheet for a Member of Congress on a budget or campaign finance matter, or preparing Commissioners for a hearing, Tina served with commitment, integrity and competence. On the occasion of her retirement from the United States Government, I offer my congratulations, and wish Tina and her husband, Bryant, all the best in their future endeavors.