

CONGRATULATIONS TO KIMBERLY WOODARD AND JOI SHEFFIELD ON WORK DONE FOR THE ELIAS MOTSOALEDI PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL IN SOWETO, SOUTH AFRICA.

**HON. GREGORY W. MEEKS**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 30, 2007*

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and congratulate Miss Joi E. Sheffield and Miss Kimberly A. Woodard as they embark on a journey to improve the lives of young boys and girls in South Africa through education.

Miss Sheffield and Miss Woodard are launching their first event, in partnership with The Silver Spring (Maryland) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, Shari Sheffield, The Perfect Glass LLC and TV One, by hosting a charity event this evening at the Verizon Center's concert featuring legendary recording artist Stevie Wonder. Proceeds from their event will benefit The Elias Motoaledi Pre-Primary School in Soweto, South Africa in the Gauteng Province.

The Elias Motoaledi Pre-Primary School is a temporary school located in the informal settlement of Motoaledi. The school was built in 2002 with donations from The Links, Incorporated. The Elias Motoaledi Pre-Primary School is a private school that does not qualify for funding from the South African government and is reliant on private funding and donations for school tuition and fees, teacher's salary, books and supplies, and meals.

In May 2007, Miss Sheffield and Miss Woodard traveled to South Africa as part of a Links, Incorporated-sponsored trip, where they visited The Elias Motoaledi Pre-Primary School, among many others. Following that experience they walked away committed to working to improve the lives of the children they met in Soweto, South Africa.

Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate Miss Sheffield and Miss Woodard on the work they are doing in support of those seeking educational excellence in South Africa, and I wish them well in their endeavors.

**HONORING THE MONTEREY VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**HON. BART GORDON**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 30, 2007*

Mr. GORDON of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor the members of the Monterey Volunteer Fire Department for their selfless dedication and bravery in protecting our families, day and night.

In 2000, the Monterey Volunteer Fire Department bought a new pumper fire engine for their 1985 Ford fire engine. The Monterey Fire Department is privileged and honored to serve their community and their country.

Without volunteer fire halls, like Monterey, many places in the Sixth District would lack effective fire protection. In the state of Tennessee, over 70 percent of fire service is provided by volunteers. Among these volunteers, almost 75 percent work other daily jobs.

Ensuring our families' safety is not without risk. Sadly, an average of two firefighters die each year in Tennessee in the line of duty. In 2005, the Tennessee Fire Services and Code Academy dedicated a memorial on their main campus in Bell Buckle to honor those Tennessee firefighters who have died in the line of duty.

For their willingness to serve, the following members of the Monterey Volunteer Fire Department deserve recognition: Chief Richard Milligan, Assistant Chief Kevin Peters, Johnny Bowman, Mike Looper, Jeff Hicks, Matt Parrott, Jody Key, John Webb, Jonathan Sisco and Terry Coggins.

**IN MEMORY OF EARL CLEMONS,**

JR.

**HON. MIKE ROSS**

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 30, 2007*

Mr. ROSS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Earl Clemons, Jr., formerly of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, who passed away October 20, 2007, at the age of 83.

Earl Clemons, Jr., dedicated his life to his family, his community and his country. He was born in the small Delta town of Tamo, in Jefferson County, and his deep affection for the Delta region can be measured by the enormous contributions he made to the agriculture community of Arkansas, something he dedicated his passions and energies to throughout his long life. It can always be said he lived life to the fullest and impressed upon each person he met the value of giving back, something that was evident in his numerous leadership roles he held in life.

Upon graduation from Grady High School, Earl Clemons, Jr., served his country in the 103rd Infantry Division of the U.S. Army. After his service, he returned home and earned a degree in agricultural engineering from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. He took his enthusiasm for agriculture back to his hometown of Tamo where he refined his craft on the family farm. Over the years, he gave everything he had to agriculture and to the Delta region. His famous "Farm Tour" was a detailed history of agriculture in the Delta that included visits to a local cotton gin, cotton oil mill and river port where grain was loaded.

In addition to his work in the field of agriculture, Earl Clemons, Jr., was also a man of devout faith. He was a member of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Pine Bluff. His belief in the importance of community led him to serve in many civic organizations such as the Grider Field Airport Commission and the local Board of Directors of Simmons First National Bank in Pine Bluff.

I extend my deepest condolences to his wife, Bennye Jane Haskins Clemons; his two sons, Earl "Skip" Clemons III of Little Rock and Neil Clemons of Chicago, Illinois; his two daughters Jane Clemons of San Francisco, California and Rose Clemons Gladner of Little Rock; and to his six grandchildren and numerous friends. Earl Clemons, Jr., will be greatly missed in Pine Bluff, Jefferson County, the agriculture community and throughout the state of Arkansas, and I am truly saddened by this loss.

HONORING THE LANCASTER VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

**HON. BART GORDON**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 30, 2007*

Mr. GORDON of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor the members of the Lancaster Volunteer Fire Department for their selfless dedication and bravery in protecting our families, day and night.

The Lancaster Volunteer Fire Department is a small, rural fire department in a close-knit community. The department hosts the Fire Hall Jam every August.

Without volunteer fire halls, like Lancaster, many places in the Sixth District would lack effective fire protection. In the state of Tennessee, over 70 percent of fire service is provided by volunteers. Among these volunteers, almost 75 percent work other daily jobs.

Ensuring our families' safety is not without risk. Sadly, an average of two firefighters die each year in Tennessee in the line of duty. In 2005, the Tennessee Fire Services and Code Academy dedicated a memorial on their main campus in Bell Buckle to honor those Tennessee firefighters who have died in the line of duty.

For their willingness to serve, the following members of the Lancaster Volunteer Fire Department deserve recognition: Chief Tim Manning, Asst. Chief Larry Moss, Keith Williams, Honorary Lifetime Member Bradley Helm, Tim Bates, Larry Watts, Danny Bass, Ellic Gullett, James Grenty, Kevin Moss, and Keith Boyd.

**CELEBRATING AMERICA'S HERITAGE ACT**

SPEECH OF

**HON. DAVID LOEBSACK**

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 24, 2007*

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1483, Celebrating America's Heritage Act. I thank Congressman REGULA, Chairman RAHALL, and their staff for their hard work on bringing this deserving and important legislation to the floor for full consideration. This bi-partisan legislation will authorize additional funding to existing National Heritage Areas, ensure adequate management of these areas, and establish six new Heritage Areas which enjoy broad community support.

The National Heritage Area program is unique in that it involves whole communities in public/private partnerships to recognize, and appreciate our Nation's shared history for generations to come. I'm so pleased that both sides of the aisle support the goals of the National Heritage Area program. President Herbert Hoover said, "Honor is not the exclusive property of any political party." This bill proves that honoring our past is also not the exclusive property of any political party.

President Hoover, a native Iowan, was born in West Branch, Iowa on August 10, 1874. Thanks in part to the Silos and Smokestacks, or America's Agricultural Heritage Partnership program, President Hoover's birthplace, and other similar historic sites are preserved and included in the 37 county, 20,000 square mile

region of Iowa which showcases over 100 farms, agribusiness and heritage sites to a world wide audience.

The Silos and Smokestacks program boasts over \$1.2 million in Federal grants awarded with a match from our local Iowa communities of \$8.3 million. Of these grants, 27 were awarded to schools allowing 1,619 students to learn about Iowa's heritage.

With the increased funding authorized in this legislation for the existing National Heritage Areas, over 300,000 students in the Silos and Smokestacks area will have a chance to learn about Iowa's agricultural history and heritage. I urge my colleagues to support this culturally important legislation.

**HONORING THE WEST SIDE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**HON. BART GORDON**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 30, 2007*

Mr. GORDON of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor the members of the West Side Volunteer Fire Department for their selfless dedication and bravery in protecting our families, day and night.

The West Side Volunteer Fire Department was established on April 1, 1994. A State grant provided 12 sets of bunker gear and pagers. West Side Volunteer Fire Department responds to incidents including structure fires, trash or brush fires, vehicle fires, accidents with injuries, and EMS First Responder calls.

Without volunteer fire halls, like West Side, many places in the Sixth District would lack effective fire protection. In the State of Tennessee, over 70 percent of fire service is provided by volunteers. Among these volunteers, almost 75 percent work other daily jobs.

Ensuring our families' safety is not without risk. Sadly, an average of two firefighters die each year in Tennessee in the line of duty. In 2005, the Tennessee Fire Services and Code Academy dedicated a memorial on their main campus in Bell Buckle to honor those Tennessee firefighters who have died in the line of duty.

For their willingness to serve, the following members of the West Side Volunteer Fire Department deserve recognition: Chief John Naylor, Assistant Chief Paul Simon, Captain Jack Barton, Matt Studd, Scott Tresler, Jeremy Genter, Jeremy Vassar, Jeff Smith, Dale Fulghum, Donnie Simon, Ashley Powell, and Nicholas Barton.

**HONORING THE WESTMORELAND VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**HON. BART GORDON**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 30, 2007*

Mr. GORDON of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor the members of the Westmoreland Volunteer Fire Department for their selfless dedication and bravery in protecting our families, day and night.

The Westmoreland Volunteer Fire Department was organized in 1958. The department members logged over 1,600 training hours in

2006, and the department responded to 148 calls for fire and rescue services and assistance on emergency medical situations. The department has 23 members.

Without volunteer fire halls, like Westmoreland, many places in the Sixth District would lack effective fire protection. In the State of Tennessee, over 70 percent of fire service is provided by volunteers. Among these volunteers, almost 75 percent work other daily jobs.

Ensuring our families' safety is not without risk. Sadly, an average of two firefighters die each year in Tennessee in the line of duty. In 2005, the Tennessee Fire Services and Code Academy dedicated a memorial on their main campus in Bell Buckle to honor those Tennessee firefighters who have died in the line of duty.

For their willingness to serve, the following members of the Westmoreland Volunteer Fire Department deserve recognition: Chief Mark Jenkins, Asst. Chief Tim Shelton, Scott Vantrease, Rick Myers, Phil Crook, Kevin Bandy, Todd Camp, Jon Pullen, Christina Pullen, Tim Reagan, Brad Penick, Eric Harrison, Jason Graves, Larry Gross, Tommy Kirby, Brandon Gross, Sean Milam, Brandon Carter, Jeremy Atkins, Brent Simons, Greg Carr, Megan Harrison, Devin Branham, and Troy Moss.

**THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY BRIDGE RECONSTRUCTION AND INSPECTION ACT OF 2007**

**HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 30, 2007*

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, and I introduce the "National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act of 2007", which will improve the safety of Federal-aid highway bridges, strengthen bridge inspection standards and processes, and increase investment in the reconstruction of structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System.

The tragic collapse of the I-35W Bridge, which occurred in my home state of Minnesota on August 1, 2007, demonstrates the need to make a commitment to invest in the maintenance and reconstruction of our nation's infrastructure. Many facilities are being stretched to the limit of their design life and beyond.

Of the 594,101 bridges in the National Bridge Inventory, 26.2 percent of America's bridges—more than one in four—are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. There are 73,784 structurally deficient bridges and 80,317 functionally obsolete bridges. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), more than \$65 billion could be invested immediately in a cost-beneficial way to address existing bridge deficiencies.

We must take action to put in place a framework to address this situation, and ensure that the safety and structural integrity of the nation's highway bridges do not continue to deteriorate.

Since the collapse of the I-35W Bridge, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit have conducted in-depth hearings into

the Highway Bridge Program and the National Bridge Inspection Program. During those hearings, we have found a number of significant problems that must be addressed to ensure the overall safety of the nation's highway bridges. The National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act of 2007 establishes a framework for risk-based prioritization of bridge infrastructure investments and ensures that the limited resources available today will reach those facilities most in need of repair.

The National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act require the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to immediately update the National Bridge Inspection Standards to establish uniformity among States in conducting inspections and evaluations. The bill also strengthens training, certification, and qualification requirements for all highway bridge inspectors.

The bill requires States to inspect structurally deficient bridges each year using the best practicable technologies and methods. All other bridges would be required to be inspected every 2 years. The legislation allows FHWA to extend the biennial inspection requirements if FHWA determines that granting the extension will increase the overall safety of the State's bridge inventory.

In response to concerns raised in a U.S. Department of Transportation Inspector General report, the bill requires States to calculate the load rating for highway bridges that have a structural deficiency in a load-carrying member and ensures that the safe load-carrying capacity for such bridges is properly posted.

Our legislation also requires the Department of Transportation to conduct a risk-based prioritization for the reconstruction of deficient Federal-aid highway bridges. The National Academy of Sciences would then independently review the process of prioritization to ensure that investment and resource decisions are based on need, not politics.

The bill also calls on States to develop a 5-year performance plan for the inspection of highway bridges and the reconstruction of structurally deficient and functionally obsolete Federal-aid highway bridges. The performance plans will provide a roadmap for addressing bridge needs, and will ensure greater accountability.

The bill authorizes an additional \$2 billion for reconstruction of structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System. These funds are in addition to funds authorized for the Highway Bridge Program under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users. These funds are distributed to the States by formula, and Congressional or Administration earmarks are specifically prohibited.

Finally, the bill limits the transferability of Highway Bridge funds. The funds authorized by this bill are not transferable to other Federal-aid highway programs. In addition, the bill provides that a State may transfer Highway Bridge Program funds to other Federal-aid Highway programs only if the State demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Secretary that the State has no structurally deficient Federal-aid highway bridges. This "fix-it-first" approach will ensure that bridge program funds are utilized as intended by Congress in SAFETEA-LU—to improve the safety of highway bridges.