

The Medal of Freedom is the highest civil honor that a President can bestow. By an executive order of John F. Kennedy, the medal is designed to recognize great contributions to national security, the cause of peace and freedom, science, the arts, literature, and many other fields. The eight men and women came to this distinction by very different paths. Each of them, by effort and by character, has earned the respect of the American people, and holds a unique place in the story of our time.

The story of an old order, and the glimmers of humanity that would one day overtake it, was unforgettably told in a book by Miss Harper Lee. Soon after its publication a reviewer said this: "A hundred pounds of sermons on tolerance, or an equal measure of invective deploring the lack of it, will weigh far less in the scale of enlightenment than a mere 18 ounces of a new fiction bearing the title *To Kill a Mockingbird*."

Given her legendary stature as a novelist, you may be surprised to learn that Harper Lee, early in her career, was an airline reservation clerk. (Laughter.) Fortunately for all of us, she didn't stick to writing itineraries. (Laughter.) Her beautiful book, with its grateful prose and memorable characters, became one of the biggest-selling novels of the 20th century.

Forty-six years after winning the Pulitzer Prize, *To Kill a Mockingbird* still touches and inspires every reader. We're moved by the story of a man falsely accused—with old prejudice massed against him, and an old sense of honor that rises to his defense. We learn that courage can be a solitary business. As the lawyer Atticus Finch tells his daughter, "before I can live with other folks I've got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience."

Years after *To Kill a Mockingbird* was put to film, the character of Atticus Finch was voted the greatest movie hero of all time. It won Gregory Peck the Oscar. He was said to believe the role "brought him closest to being the kind of man he aspired to be." The great actor counted Harper Lee among his good friends, and we're so pleased that Gregory Peck's wife, Veronique, is with us today. Thank you for coming.

One reason *To Kill a Mockingbird* succeeded is the wise and kind heart of the author, which comes through on every page. This daughter of Monroeville, Alabama had something to say about honor, and tolerance, and, most of all, love—and it still resonates. Last year Harper Lee received an honorary doctorate at Notre Dame. As the degree was presented, the graduating class rose as one, held up copies of her book, and cheered for the author they love.

To Kill a Mockingbird has influenced the character of our country for the better. It's been a gift to the entire world. As a model of good writing and humane sensibility, this book will be read and studied forever. And so all of us are filled with admiration for a great American and a lovely lady named Harper Lee.

Now I call on the military aide to read the citations for the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

MILITARY AIDE. Harper Lee. Harper Lee's beautiful book is a meditation on family, human complexity, and some of the great themes of American life. At a critical moment in our history, *To Kill a Mockingbird* helped focus the nation on the turbulent struggle for equality. The novel became an instant American classic and earned her a Pulitzer Prize. Nearly half a century after its publication, her work continues to captivate new readers who encounter its compelling power for the first time. The United States honors Harper Lee for her out-

standing contribution to the great literary tradition of America.

THE PRESIDENT. Thank you all for coming. Laura and I now invite you to a reception here in the State Dining Room. I hope you've enjoyed this ceremony as much as I have. May God bless you all. Thank you.

A PROCLAMATION HONORING RAYMOND "SKEET" BOTDORF FOR HIS SERVICE TO THE MILITARY AND UNITED STATES VETERANS

HON. ZACHARY T. SPACE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2007

Mr. SPACE. Madam Speaker:

Whereas, Raymond "Skeet" Botdorf was a member of the Army Band Corps; and

Whereas, he earned a Bronze Star for capturing a Nazi Prison Officer who tried to escape from a prison camp in Czechoslovakia; and

Whereas, Raymond "Skeet" Botdorf is a member of the VFW Post 63 in Dover, Ohio; and

Whereas, he plays TAPS for an average of 100 funerals a year; and

Whereas, Raymond "Skeet" Botdorf has honored 3,000 veterans by playing TAPS at their funerals; and

Whereas, Raymond "Skeet" Botdorf is saluted for his service and dedication; now, therefore, be it

Resolved that along with his friends, family, and the residents of the 18th Congressional District, I commend and thank Raymond "Skeet" Botdorf for his contributions to his community and country.

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM RHODES

HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2007

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor William Rhodes of Gandeeville, WV, for attaining the rank of Eagle Scout.

William has been involved as a member of the Boy Scouts for the past 6 years as a member of Troop 434 sponsored by Walton Union Church in Walton, WV. For his Eagle Scout project, William improved the facilities at Bessie Jones Memorial Park. He constructed a handicap accessible bridge, trash can receptacles, three benches, and most notably built a trail at the park complete with signage, so walkers could easily navigate their way.

His accomplishments and hard work demonstrate the high standards held by those who achieve the rank of Eagle Scout. He has been involved with his local 4-H Club and played freshman and junior varsity football for the Roane County Raiders. William is currently a junior at Roane County High School and attends Roane-Jackson Vocational School, where he is studying auto mechanics.

I extend my congratulations to William and look forward to his future accomplishments. Roane County is fortunate to have such a dedicated, patriotic, young man among its citizens.

RECOGNIZING 200 YEARS OF RESEARCH, SERVICE, AND STEWARDSHIP BY NOAA AND ITS PREDECESSOR AGENCIES

SPEECH OF

HON. HEATH SHULER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 4, 2007

Mr. SHULER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the contributions of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA has been the leader in national research on oceans and the atmosphere, and their effect on the human environment.

NOAA evolved from the Survey of the Coast, established in 1807, to an organization that provides daily forecasts, storm warnings, and climate monitoring to a variety of organizations that support marine commerce. NOAA has a presence in each of the 50 States and countries worldwide. NOAA takes part in the most advanced, cutting-edge research, using new and innovative technologies to ensure this country's economic future.

I am very proud that Western North Carolina is home to the National Climate Data Center, the largest archive of weather and global climate related data, including that data collected by NOAA. The center holds data as old as 150 years old, and as recent as a few hours ago.

NOAA, and NCDC, are integral to our Nation's success as a global economy. I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the contributions of NOAA.

IN CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF VERICE M. MASON

HON. STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2007

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I rise in celebration of the life of my dear friend Verice M. Mason who passed away December 2, 2007 at the age of 55. A native of Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, Verice resided in Washington, DC prior to moving to Metuchen, New Jersey 30 years ago. A 1970 graduate of Theodore Roosevelt High School in Washington, DC, Verice would go on to obtain her undergraduate degree from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio and later her law degree from Rutgers School of Law in Newark.

Verice had a long and distinguished professional career. She served as Senior Vice President and General Counsel for MDA Advantage Insurance Company, responsible for all legal and regulatory matters for the company. Prior to joining MDA Advantage, Verice was appointed chief of the Authorities unit in the Governor's Counsel Office in 2004 by Governor Richard J. Cody, where she represented the Governor's interests and served as his liaison to over 40 authorities, boards and commissions.

Other positions held by Verice include Senior Vice President and General Counsel for the MIIX Group, Inc., partner in New Jersey's office of Peterson, and assistant commissioner

for the office of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs for the New Jersey Department of Insurance.

Verice was extremely involved in her community. She was previously active in the Metuchen-Edison Branch of the NAACP and received the NAACP Honorable Barbara Jordan Community Activist Award. She served as both treasurer and co-president of the Metuchen Parent-Teacher Council and treasurer of the Citizens for Quality Education. She was a trustee of the Metuchen Education Foundation. She was also a member of the Second Baptist Church of Metuchen.

I first met Verice Mason at Case Western Reserve University in the early 1970's. I was a house mother and she was a student. She had a wonderful zest for life. We were both active in the African American Society and she was very instrumental in helping other black students adjust to life on a predominantly white college campus. She and her college roommate Joan Brooks set a loving example of sisterhood that we all strived to emulate.

On behalf of the Congress of the United States and the people of the 11th Congressional District of Ohio, I would like to offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Verice Mason including her husband Mark, two sons Matthew and Mark and her father Matthew. May her legacy of love live on in our hearts.

INCLUDING ALL BANKING AGENCIES WITHIN THE EXISTING REGULATORY AUTHORITY UNDER THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION ACT

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2007

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation, and am proud to join my colleague, the gentleman from Massachusetts and Chairman of the Committee on Financial Services, Rep. FRANK, in sponsoring this bill. It represents an important first step in improving the protection of consumers of depository institutions. H.R. 3526 was referred to both of our Committees (Energy and Commerce has Rule X jurisdiction over consumer protection and consumer affairs) and reported unanimously by both. I urge its adoption by the House.

The Supreme Court's ruling earlier this year in *Watters v. Wachovia Bank N.A.* upheld a regulation by the Department of Treasury's Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) that permits operating subsidiaries of national banks to violate State laws with impunity. The Court ruled that the bank's operating subsidiary is subject to OCC superintendence, even if there effectively is none, and not the licensing, reporting, and visitorial regimes of the States in which the subsidiary operates. The practical effect of the OCC's far-reaching preemption authority as interpreted and blessed by the courts is that it prevents States from using their historical authority to protect consumers and communities in large parts of the financial services marketplace, a huge consumer protection gap that evildoers have exploited and the Federal banking regulators have not shown an inclination or an ability to fill.

As explained more fully in our respective Committee reports, banks are covered by the Federal Trade Commission Act's prohibition against "unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce," but the rule writer for them is not the Federal Trade Commission, the expert agency who implements and enforces this provision across the vast majority of the U.S. economy, but rather the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve. It has done very little. Given the tide of complaints about abusive practices with respect to loans, credit cards, checking accounts, and other products, this is clearly unacceptable. H.R. 3526 therefore includes all Federal banking regulators, and not just the Federal Reserve, within the existing mandate under Section 18(f) of the FTC Act to adopt rules identifying and prohibiting unfair or deceptive acts or practices by depository institutions.

The Committee on Energy and Commerce was pleased to adopt improvements to this legislation. We amended it to require the banking regulators to consult with the FTC when promulgating any such rules, to allow the FTC to use the notice and comment procedures of the Administrative Procedure Act in concurrent rulemakings with the bank regulators, and to require GAO to report on the status of bank rules under these authorities.

I want to assure Members that the Committee on Energy and Commerce and its Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection intend to engage in vigorous oversight, in consultation with the Committee on Financial Services, to make sure that this authority is aggressively used. The public will greatly benefit from it.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF FRANCES MURPHY II

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2007

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I rise to ask the House of Representatives to join the residents of the District of Columbia and thousands of Americans throughout the country in thanksgiving for the life of Frances Murphy II. The influential Publisher Emeritus of the Washington Afro-American newspaper was especially revered in this city and in her hometown of Baltimore, where the Baltimore Afro-American is published, for coverage that African Americans got nowhere else in the press. Frances Murphy's leadership in journalism and publishing and her decades of work as a reporter, columnist, and editor were instrumental in educating and raising the consciousness of African Americans through unfailing investigations and coverage on matters of race that furthered the determination of people of all races to struggle against racial discrimination. As fearless as she was able, Frances Murphy was the scion of the nation's most distinguished African American newspaper family, but she insisted on making it to the top the hard way. Ms. Murphy rose to the pinnacle of running the family business, but only after selling the Afro as a child and submitting pieces for its children's section, educating herself at one of the nation's finest schools of journalism, becoming an entry-level reporter and then learning the business first hand by per-

forming every function until she ran the papers. It would be unusual for a woman to become head of a newspaper empire today, but Frances Murphy's rise as a pre-feminist pioneer was all the more remarkable. Throughout her long and storied career, Ms. Murphy became a life long learner, pursuing additional degrees and always educating herself. In the process, she applied the same standard to the public by insisting on educating all of us. I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the remarkable life of Frances Murphy II.

RECOGNIZING PRINCIPAL DWIGHT WAGNER

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2007

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, today I am pleased to honor Port Arthur elementary school Principal Dwight Wagner, recent recipient of Port Arthur News' Citizen of the Year Award. The award was given to a man that has spent his entire life displaying excellence and commitment to community. For over 30 years, Mr. Wagner has been employed with the Port Arthur Independent School District, serving as a teacher and an administrator.

Principal Wagner is a Port Arthur native who has spent a lifetime giving back to his community. After graduating from Thomas Jefferson High School, he received his bachelor's and master's degrees right down the street at Lamar University.

His honors are numerous, including Wal-Mart Teacher of the Year Award, NAACP Amos Evans Service Award, and the Sertoma Organization's Service to Mankind Award.

Known throughout his community for his musical ability, Principal Wagner composed the official city song of Port Arthur, "City by the Sea." His vocal talents provide entertainment at numerous community events and various local stage performances.

On behalf of the entire Second Congressional District of Texas, I would like to congratulate Principal Wagner on his latest award and thank him for his many years of service to the Port Arthur Community.

And that's just the way it is.

COMMENDING THE CITY OF PRICHARD, ALABAMA, AND ITS MAYOR RON DAVIS

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2007

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend the city of Prichard, Alabama, its mayor, Ron Davis, and the city council for successfully eliminating the city's debt.

On November 9, 2007, Mayor Davis signed two checks at a ceremony at the A.J. Cooper Municipal Complex, officially paying off the city's creditors a full year ahead of schedule. As Mayor Davis stated while signing these checks, the city of Prichard is now open for business—business that includes the Dale Earnhardt, Jr. Alabama Motorsports Park and theme park, which will feature stock car racing, drag racing, and a road course.