

the Greater Tri-Cities. Dr. Peters is a committed leader who shares his tremendous experience and talent with the Washington state community.

I want to recognize Dr. Len Peters for his leadership and vision during the past 3½ years at PNNL. On behalf of the people of Washington, I wish him all the best in his new position and say thank you for his continued service to our State.

**WILLING-SELLER LEGISLATION
FOR CERTAIN NATIONAL TRAILS
SYSTEM UNITS**

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Speaker, I am today introducing legislation to allow people who want to do so to sell lands for inclusion in certain units of the National Trails System.

The bill is identical to ones introduced in previous Congresses by my former Republican colleagues from Colorado, Representatives Beauprez and McInnis. It is cosponsored by Representatives EHLERS, KILDEE, KIND, BALDWIN, LEVIN, and PETRI. I greatly appreciate their assistance and support.

Current law prohibits people who own land associated with several units of the Trails System from selling those lands to the federal government for inclusion in those units.

The bill would revise that to allow such sales from willing sellers.

The Trail System units covered by the bill are the Oregon National Historic Trail, the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, the Iditarod National Historic Trail, the North County National Scenic Trail, the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, and the Nez Perce National Historic Trail.

Madam Speaker, this bill would make a small but important adjustment to current law. I think it deserves the support of all Members of the House.

**INTRODUCING THE LEGAL
SERVICES BENEFIT ACT**

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join my Subcommittee Ranking Member Mr. CAMP in reintroducing the Legal Services Benefit Act.

Many employees and retirees lost access to affordable preventive legal services when the tax-preferred status of qualified group legal plans sunsets in 1991. This bill corrects that historic wrong and ensures that millions of workers and retirees have access to employer provided group legal service plans.

Group legal service plans provide employees with low cost, basic legal services, including assistance with the purchase of a home, the preparation of a will, probate services and

the resolution of domestic conflicts, such as child support collection. With evictions and mortgage foreclosures on the rise, legal plans can also help keep employees in their homes and focused on their jobs.

The Legal Services Benefit Act will restore the historic pre-tax treatment of group legal services under Section 120 of the Internal Revenue Code. This change to the tax code will again make legal service plans affordable for both employers and employees, and will provide access to legal services for millions of middle-income Americans who might otherwise let legal troubles get out of hand.

I thank many of my colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee who have already joined us as original cosponsors of this bill, and I urge all members to support this important legislation that will help workers and businesses across the Nation.

**RECOGNIZING THE CORNERSTONE
CLUBHOUSE IN PHOENIXVILLE
FOR THEIR “BEYOND THE
LABEL” CAMPAIGN**

HON. JIM GERLACH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. GERLACH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commend the Cornerstone Clubhouse in Phoenixville, PA for their ongoing “Beyond the Label” campaign to raise awareness of the many illnesses and challenges people with mental health disabilities face.

The Cornerstone Clubhouse is an important resource for the people struggling with mental health problems in Phoenixville and the surrounding communities of Chester County. The organization’s purpose is to promote early intervention and recovery from mental illnesses by offering a support system that helps them find employment and residential living opportunities and deal with daily life issues.

Individuals with mental health disabilities join the Clubhouse and then visit the facility on a voluntary basis to raise awareness of these disabilities by passing out informational materials and writing newsletters. On any given day, up to 40 people can be found at the Clubhouse and this interaction with others helps these individuals develop the valuable social, work and life skills needed to be successful.

So, Madam Speaker, I would urge my colleagues to join me in acknowledging the dedication and hard work of the Cornerstone Clubhouse in Phoenixville and its successful “Beyond the Label” campaign, which has been an important tool in the community to raise awareness and shine a light on the struggles people with mental illnesses face everyday.

**COMMISSION ON SLAVERY
ESTABLISHED IN ROMANIA**

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, 200 years ago, the movement for the abolition

of slavery achieved a major victory with the passage of a British law banning the trade in slaves—an anniversary that is getting heightened attention with the release of a new movie chronicling those events. Ending the trade in slaves was not the same as actually ending slavery, but it was a critical beginning to the end.

Other developments have also caused us to revisit the legacy of slavery in our own country. This includes the decision by the legislature of the Commonwealth of Virginia to apologize for that state’s role in the slave trade, and reports that Maryland and Missouri are considering similar steps.

With a view to our own country’s painful and complicated history of slavery, and as the first African-American Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I was particularly interested to learn about commemorations held on February 20th in Romania, marking the beginning of the end of slavery in that country. In the case of Romania, however, slaves were not kidnapped and transported from a faraway land. Instead, those enslaved were Roma, a people that had settled in Romania by the 14th century.

This ethnic group—somewhere around 1,000 years ago—migrated to Europe from what is now India. Today, Roma make up the largest ethnic minority in the European Union, conservatively estimated at 10 million people.

Romania, with an estimated 2 million Roma, has the largest Romani minority on the continent. And in that country, beginning in the 14th century and ending with the establishment of the modern Romanian state in 1864, slavery to the crown, to nobility, and to the monasteries was the exclusive status of Roma.

To be clear, Roma were not serfs; they were slaves, bought and sold like chattel. In 1837, the great Romanian historian and statesman Mihail Kogalniceanu described their situation as follows:

On the streets of the Iasi of my youth, I saw human beings wearing chains on their arms and legs, others with iron clamps around their foreheads, and still others with metal collars about their necks. Cruel beatings, and other punishments such as starvation, being hung over smoking fires, solitary imprisonment and being thrown naked into the snow or the frozen rivers, such was the fate of the wretched Tsigan [Rom]. The sacred institution of the family was likewise made a mockery: women were wrested from their men, and daughters from their parents. Children were torn from the breasts of those who brought them into this world, separated from their mothers and fathers and from each other, and sold to different buyers from the four corners of Romania, like cattle. Neither humanity nor religious sentiment, nor even civil law, offered protection for these beings. It was a terrible sight, and one which cried out to Heaven.

Unfortunately, it appears that the history of slavery in Romania—and the impact of slavery on the lives of Roma—has received little scholarly attention. As a corollary, little is taught in Romanian schools about this important chapter in the nation’s history.

I was very heartened, therefore, to learn that Romanian Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu announced on February 20 that the Romanian Government will establish a commission to study the enslavement of Roma. The National Agency for Roma will play a central role in setting up this commission, and the

commission will produce recommendations for the teaching of Romani history and promoting Romani culture.

Madam Speaker, there is an awful lot of hand wringing about the deplorable situation of Roma today. Across the OSCE region, they face profound discrimination, sometimes manifested in the worst forms of racially motivated violence. Moreover, in 2003, the United Nations Development Program issued a report on the situation in five Central European countries, concluding that, “by measures ranging from literacy to infant mortality to basic nutrition, most of the region’s Roma endure living conditions closer to those of Sub-Saharan Africa than to Europe.”

But if you want to know where you’re going, you have to know where you came from; if we want to change this status quo, we have to understand the past, which makes this new commission vital for Roma.

With respect to Roma, that means three things. First, it means understanding the history of Roma before World War II, and in the case of Romania and Moldova, that requires teaching, studying, and acknowledging the enslavement of Roma. Second, the genocide of Roma during World War II must also be remembered, and more must be done to study and understand the diverse experiences of Roma during the war in different European countries. Finally, we must put an end to the pernicious, dangerous myth that communism was “good” for Roma.

With all this in mind, Prime Minister Tariceanu’s initiative is really an extremely important step in addressing so many of the problems that Roma face today. I commend him for his leadership and I look forward to following closely the work of this body.

HONORING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S MONTH

HON. ADRIAN SMITH

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Madam Speaker, I rise today in honor of International Women’s Month, which this year we celebrated during the month of March.

Throughout the month, we have passed legislation recognizing the impact women have had on our Nation and the world itself. We have heard speeches honoring these individuals who have made life richer and better.

As March comes to a close, I want to individually honor several women from my home state of Nebraska who have made a difference.

I also want to encourage all Members of Congress to help celebrate International Women’s Month all year long, through education, support, and service.

Throughout Nebraska’s history, we have been fortunate to have had a number of exceptional women call our State home. It is in their name and the names of the exceptional women yet to come that we celebrate this month—and all year long.

Names such as Louise Pound, Willa Cather, and Mari Sandoz spring readily to mind when discussing Nebraska women who have opened minds and imaginations.

But during times of change, women such as children’s crusader Grace Abbott and jour-

nalist Rheta Childe Dorr—the first woman to cover World War I from the front lines—have served as inspirations.

The first American Indian woman doctor was Dr. Susan LaFlesche Picotte. The hospital she built in Walthill is now called the Picotte Center.

Nebraska women have also shouldered leadership for our State. Senator JoAnn Maxey was the first African American to serve as State Senator. Senators Fern Orme and Florence Reynolds also deserve mention.

I would be remiss if I didn’t mention Governor Kay Orr, who was elected the first Republican woman Governor in the United States, or Rep. Virginia Smith, who set the standard for all House Members, not just from the Third District of Nebraska.

Finally, we should also honor the women who served in our armed forces and who put their lives at risk for our freedom. In particular, let us remember Sgt. 1st Class Linda Ann Tarango-Griess and Staff Sgt. Tricia Jameson, who lost their lives in Operation Iraqi Freedom and who called Nebraska home.

Our country is blessed to have freedoms so many areas of the world unfortunately do not. We have the freedom to succeed, and many women through our history have done just that. Now is the time to encourage the next generation to follow in their footsteps.

**IN HONOR OF JAIME HERNANDEZ
IN RECOGNITION OF HIS EXEMPLARY SERVICE**

HON. XAVIER BECERRA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. BECERRA. Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today and acknowledge Jaime Hernandez, a friend and outstanding leader for working men and women in America. On March 31, 2007, community members and leaders throughout Los Angeles will gather to commend Jaime for his 38 years of dedication to the Laborers’ International Union of North America, Local 300.

Jaime was born to Antonio and Amalia Hernandez in Jalisco, Mexico in 1942. Like so many people, his parents moved the family to the United States in search of the American dream. He learned the value of union work early on from his father, who was a committed and passionate Laborer for 14 years. In this respect, Jaime and I are much alike. Just as Jaime’s father spent many years as a proud Laborer, so did my father. Like Jaime, when I worked alongside my father as a young man, I learned from him the dignity and pride that comes from hard work. Whether digging ditches, laying cement, or raising manholes, I learned that if you work hard you deserve the American dream. I know Jaime and I both draw upon these lessons to this day.

Since first joining the Laborers in 1969, Jaime has fought for greater opportunities for workers, better wages, expanded benefits, and safer work sites across California. Rising from the role of a rank-and-file member, he was appointed as a Laborers’ Field Representative in 1987. Then in 1994, his peers acted on their recognition of his talents and commitment and elected him President and Executive Board Member of Laborers’ Local 300. His subse-

quent re-elections in leadership roles resulted from Jaime having distinguished himself in the labor community as a true leader and advocate for working men and women. Jaime is now retiring as Secretary-Treasurer—a position he has held since 2000.

A. Philip Randolph, a prominent civil rights and union leader, once said, “The essence of trade unionism is social uplift. The labor movement has been the haven for the dispossessed, the despised, the neglected, the downtrodden, and the poor.” Just as his parents sought a better life for their children through hard work, Jaime has worked to keep that opportunity available to people from all walks of life. Jaime has been an integral part of the Laborers’ mission by bringing justice, honor, and a voice to hard working people across America.

Jaime has been married to his high school sweetheart, Anita, for 44 years. Together, they have four children and nine grandchildren, all of whom have been raised with Jaime’s understanding and reverence for social and economic justice. They have all seen Jaime work on behalf of non-profit organizations, charities, law enforcement agencies, and children’s groups with the assistance of the union.

Madam Speaker, it is with pride as a friend, a former member of the Laborers’ Union (Local 187 in Sacramento), and an admirer of hard work that I ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing Jaime Hernandez for his lifetime devotion to bringing dignity to the lives of every day Americans, and his loyal service to Local 300 of the Laborers’ International Union of North America. On behalf of the countless Laborers, including me, to whom Jaime Hernandez has dedicated his career, and the entire labor community which has benefited immensely from his lifelong contributions, I say thank you and may you enjoy many more years of fruitful endeavors.

TRIBUTE TO MANATEE COUNTY SHERIFF CHARLIE WELLS

HON. VERN BUCHANAN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. BUCHANAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Manatee County Sheriff Charlie Wells who will retire on April 2nd after 41 years in law enforcement. Sheriff Wells is an honorable public servant whose selfless dedication, vision, and leadership has helped to protect the more than 300,000 residents of Manatee County and earned him the respect of the community as well as his colleagues in law enforcement.

Charlie Wells was first elected sheriff in 1984 and took office in January of 1985. He was reelected five times, serving a total of 22 years, which makes him the longest serving sheriff in the history of Manatee County.

Among his greatest achievements is the enactment of the Stop Turning Our Prisoners Act, which he helped pass to require inmates to serve at least 85 percent of their prison sentence. He is also credited with pioneering and implementing several other innovative programs designed to help keep kids in school and out of trouble. They include the establishment of:

A Police Athletic League recreation complex which was expanded from a recreational program to one of Florida’s first charter schools;