

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 EXEM- PLARY 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;

The first boot camp program in Florida for juvenile offenders to promote discipline, education, physical fitness, and respect for self and others;

A school resource officer to promote positive relationships with youth;

Child Protection Services to consolidate services and ensure the safety of children with family related problems; and

Victims First, which is a charity organization that provides scholarships to children whose parents have been murdered or sent to prison as a result of murdering the other parent.

Also, under this leadership, a new jail complex was built and the agency of 1,100 employees became nationally accredited in both corrections and law enforcement.

The six-term Sheriff also served in various capacities with the Florida Sheriffs Association including president and chairman of the Legislative Committee.

He began his law enforcement career with the Florida Highway Patrol where he worked for 15 years as a state trooper. He also worked for one year as an investigator with the State Attorney's office and served for two years as the Chief of Police for the City of Bradenton.

He ends his career with the successful arrest of kidnapping suspect Vicente Beltran-Moreno who is charged with kidnapping a 13 year-old boy.

Charlie Wells has prevented, investigated, and solved countless crimes. I thank him for his tireless efforts to protect the people of Manatee County and wish him the very best in retirement.

TRIBUTE TO ELKS USA

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, let me take this means to pay tribute to the Elks USA for their continued dedication to communities across the nation and their contributions to the veterans of this country.

Founded after the Civil War with a goal of promoting friendship and charity, the Elks are the nation's oldest and largest fraternal organization, with 1.1 million members and lodges in all fifty states. Last year, they donated 9.7 million hours and contributed almost \$263 million to a variety of charitable and philanthropic causes.

One of the major tenets of the Elks is a commitment to the military and its veterans. In 1918, the Elks built a 700-bed hospital in Boston to rehabilitate World War I wounded and gave it to the nation. Elks made a solemn pledge that "so long as there are veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will never forget them." This commitment still stands through an extensive visitation program in VA hospitals and nursing homes. As the VA's only source of leather, the men and women of the Elks gather animal hides, pay for the tanning, and provide wheelchair gloves and leather used for therapy programs at VA medical centers nationwide. In 2005, they logged 1,037,932 hours visiting hospitalized veterans and taking many of the patients to baseball games, fishing trips, and other outings.

The Elks were among the first groups to endorse the World War II Memorial, donating \$1.2 million towards its construction. In addition, the Elks raised a similar amount to aid the victims of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks.

During World War II and the Korean War, the Elks operated canteens for the troops. A decade ago, they gave \$100,000 to service chaplains to support the families of the Gulf War wounded at Walter Reed and other military hospitals. A current project, dubbed the Army of Hope, provides support for the families of reservists and National Guard personnel who have been called to active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. For the citizen soldiers whose lives have been disrupted, Elks are helping with the kids, making minor home repairs, writing wills, and providing other assistance for their families.

The Elks were founders of Flag Day, a concept President Harry Truman (himself an Elk) signed into law. They promote the flying of the Flag, promote the observance of Veterans Day and Memorial Day, and sponsor parades along with other patriotic events.

Madam Speaker, I know the Members of the House will join me in commending Elks USA for their commitment to bettering our country and we thank them for their dedication to our military families.

INTRODUCTION OF MAKING BROWNFIELDS TAX INCENTIVE PERMANENT LEGISLATION

HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, Thank you for the opportunity to offer an introductory statement regarding legislation Congressman BECERRA and I are introducing today making existing brownfields tax incentives permanent.

As you may know, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Government Accountability Office estimate that there are more than 400,000 brownfield sites across the country. They exist in every state and in many of our districts, rural and urban. We have all seen them . . . they are abandoned gas stations and warehouses and manufacturing facilities that have been closed down. These sites once housed vibrant and productive businesses, but today are in desperate need of revitalization and redevelopment. Before they can be redeveloped, however, existing environmental contamination must be cleaned up.

The cost of cleanup can be significant and, when this is the case, often stand in the way of re-development projects. In some cases, the clean up costs can exceed \$1 million. The legislation we are introducing today helps make these clean ups more affordable by removing obstacles in the federal tax code that create obstacles to clean up.

Specifically, this legislation does two things: Make the Internal Revenue Code Section 198 expensing provision permanent. This provision allows for the expensing of brownfield clean up costs. Currently, this provision expires at the end of 2007;

Repeal the provision in the law that recaptures the expense deduction as taxable income when the property is sold.

A recent survey by the U.S. Conference of Mayors of 187 large and small cities found that if their existing brownfields were redeveloped, it could bring additional tax revenues to their cities of approximately \$2 billion and create up to \$500,000 jobs.

The issue of brownfield cleanups has been important to me since I joined the Ways and Means Committee in 1996. This new legislation represents more than a decade of work on this issue. These final steps involve making the tax incentive permanent and repealing the recapture requirement. I look forward to working with Mr. BECERRA to getting these final steps made into a permanent part of our tax code.

TRIBUTE TO FRANK COMFORT

HON. DAVID E. PRICE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the extraordinary accomplishments of a distinguished educator, coach Frank Comfort. It is fitting that we recognize this exceptional gentleman for his remarkable contributions to higher education, his manifold successes and abiding dedication to college athletics, and his enduring influence on generations of college students.

Frank Comfort has the distinction of being the winningest dual-meet swimming coach in NCAA history. He has amassed an unparalleled record of leadership and has devoted his time, skills, and energy to cultivating the very best in student-athletes. His career has been defined not only by athletic achievement, but by a dedication to the development of young men and women who are student-athletes in the finest sense: those who successfully combine athletic prowess with academic achievement.

Frank Comfort is a 1967 alumnus of Syracuse University, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in history and physical education. He went on to earn a Master of Arts in physical education from the University of North Carolina, UNC, and in 1968, became the head swimming coach for men and women at Johns Hopkins University. At Hopkins, his swimmers won 12 NCAA individual titles and one NCAA relay title. In 1977, Frank Comfort returned to UNC, where his consistent leadership and dedication to excellence for 30 years as Head Coach have made him one of the most respected college swimming coaches in history.

Many people have made notable contributions to collegiate athletics. Few leave the legacy of Frank Comfort. He has developed swimming teams that have thrilled the collegiate athletic world with their courage, skill and achievement. Frank Comfort's swimmers and divers have won often and won big. Of his 578 dual meet wins, 308 have come while coaching men's teams and 270 while coaching women's teams. More than a decade ago, Frank Comfort became the winningest swimming coach in the history of the Atlantic Coast Conference in terms of league championships won. Overall, he has led Tar Heel teams to 25 Atlantic Coast Conference championships during his tenure—the most in conference history by a single coach. In his 30 years at UNC, his women's teams have been a consistent national force, finishing in the top 25 an astounding 25 times, including nine seasons in the top