

HONORING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

Ms. SOLIS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Throughout the years Alpha Kappa Alpha has instilled in its members the qualities of sisterhood and service to the community. It should be commended on reaching this tremendous milestone.

Alpha Kappa Alpha is the oldest Greek-letter organization established by African American college-trained women in 1908. Since its inception, Alpha Kappa Alpha has always been an advocate for the less fortunate and an agent for change in the community. One of the top priorities of Alpha Kappa Alpha has been to remain true to its core mission of sisterhood and service to the community. Alpha Kappa Alpha's Extraordinary Service Program has worked to improve the living standards within the black community through economic education, creating exposure and opportunities for the women entrepreneur, assisting black families, and improving the mental and physical health of local communities.

This week over 25,000 members of Alpha Kappa Alpha, including Patricia Jones, a constituent from the 32nd Congressional District of California, came to Washington, DC to attend the Centennial Convention. They are joined in their work and the legacy of their work by Honorary Members of the Sorority including Maya Angelou, former astronaut Mae Jemison and the late Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, Marian Anderson and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Madam Speaker, I hope that my colleagues will join me in congratulating Alpha Kappa Alpha for 100 years of service to the community. As a Latina Member of Congress, I look forward to working to promote economic and educational advancement in all communities of color.

A TRIBUTE TO AMERICA'S RAILROADS

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, we all know that the U.S. needs a long term strategic energy policy if we are ever to break our addiction to foreign oil and become energy independent. Part of that long term solution is to focus on a policy that allows us to begin using less oil today.

The United States transportation system is the largest in the world and is almost entirely responsible for our Nation's dependence on using oil as the major source of energy. For instance, while the United States has only 4.5 percent of the world's population, it uses 25 percent of the world's oil. About 60 percent of this oil is imported. The transportation sector consumes seven of every ten barrels of oil consumed in the United States.

In addition, about 28 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, GHGs, in the U.S. are attrib-

uted to the transportation sector, making it the second largest contributor to GHG emissions, trailing only electricity generation. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, this figure is expected to rise to 36 percent by 2020.

In a carbon-constrained world, it makes sense for government to invest in transportation infrastructure that will promote the use of technologies that improve fuel efficiency, while also reducing carbon emissions and traffic congestion. Railroads are the most fuel efficient mode of surface transportation. In 2007, freight railroads moved one ton of freight an average of 436 miles per gallon of fuel—roughly the distance between Boston and Baltimore.

In its January 2008 final report to Congress, the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission stated that "intercity passenger rail is . . . more energy efficient than many other modes of passenger transportation." The report notes that the average intercity passenger rail train produces 60 percent lower carbon dioxide emissions per passenger-mile than the average automobile, and half the carbon dioxide emissions per passenger-mile of an airplane.

Using railroads more means consuming less fuel, and that's more important today more than ever. However, the railroads may not currently have the capacity to handle socially optimal amounts of freight and passenger traffic. Freight railroads are reinvesting record amounts of their own funds into their systems, but that will not be enough to take full advantage of railroads' potential to meet our transportation needs.

One step we must take is to provide relief to states, local communities, and captive rail customers who continue to suffer from unreasonably high railroad rates and poor service. This relief cannot be accomplished through capital improvements alone. Reforms to reduce impediments to competition must also be enacted.

Further, railroads have traditionally invested in their own networks and there is increased interest in public-private relationships to help address the projected underinvestment in our Nation's rail network. However, the government as a public partner has a duty to ensure that the public interest is best served under any agreements it enters into. We need to be careful when creating these partnerships as private businesses' objectives and motivations may not necessarily be aligned with the public interest. When public-private partnerships are used to finance, design and build roads, bridges, rail projects, and transit facilities, we must safeguard the public interests.

H.R. 2116, an excellent piece of legislation introduced by my friend from Florida, KENDRICK MEEK, will provide a 25 percent tax credit for railroads to invest in capital expansion. This will help augment their financial capacity for transportation investments. As we review this legislation, we should also consider including a provision that ensures prevailing wages for the workers responsible for the construction of this expansion. Amtrak ridership may reach 28 million this year—the highest it has ever been and up from 25.8 million passengers last year. In fact, Amtrak ridership and revenues are up and experiencing significant growth in all categories: short distance, long distance, and Northeast Corridor services. Last month, Amtrak had the highest rev-

enue and ridership of any month in its history. Fiscal year 2008 year-to-date ridership is up 11 percent and revenues are up 14 percent over the previous year.

We also need to consider extending the "Section 45G" tax credit for investments in short line track rehabilitation that expired in 2007. The Section 45G tax credit has helped hundreds of short line railroads increase the volume and rate of track rehabilitation and improvement programs. This allows them to offer more efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly rail service to communities throughout the country.

The key to reducing fuel consumption in transportation and our addiction to oil and dependence on foreign oil is by encouraging the use of the most fuel efficient modes of transportation—railroads. America's freight and passenger railroads offer a simple, cost effective and meaningful way to do this, thereby helping to ensure a sustainable future for our planet.

RETIREMENT OF CHIEF LANSON W. RUSSELL

HON. BILL FOSTER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

Mr. FOSTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Chief Lanson W. Russell on the occasion of his retirement from the DeKalb Fire Department. I join with the city of DeKalb in thanking him for 44 years of dedicated community service.

Chief Russell began his distinguished career in 1964 as a volunteer with the Peotone Fire Protection District. In 1975, he established Will County's first paramedic unit, and was promoted to chief in 1984.

From 1988 to 1992, he served as fire chief in Villa Park, Illinois, then moved on to Downers Grove for the next 9 years. During his tenure there, Chief Russell worked with neighboring communities to develop joint hazardous materials, technical rescue, and cause and origin teams. Under his guidance, the Downers Grove Fire Department was among the first 44 agencies in the country to receive Accredited Agency Status from the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.

Chief Russell arrived in DeKalb in 2002, and immediately set out to strengthen the department's relationships with Northern Illinois University and neighboring departments. He led the negotiations that resulted in a 4-year collective bargaining agreement, and worked to foster an effective labor-management relationship.

Chief Russell received an associate's degree in Applied Science from Joliet Junior College, and a bachelor of science in Fire Service Management from Southern Illinois University. He continued his education at the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program and the University of Virginia's Senior Executive Institute.

Chief Russell's tireless service to his community over 44 years has been exemplary. I wish him a happy retirement, and extend my deepest gratitude.