

clearly shown how much of a difference to a community the help of one person can make.

It is my great privilege to recognize JoAnne Kosey for being named Person of the Year for the Village of Riverside, Illinois.

AMERICAN HOUSING RESCUE AND FORECLOSURE PREVENTION ACT OF 2008

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2008

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3221, American Housing Rescue and Foreclosure Prevention Act of 2008. This bill is a critical step towards stabilizing our housing market and providing assistance to thousands of Americans facing foreclosure.

The problems that persist in our housing market are serious and affect millions of Americans. Thousands of families are in danger of losing their homes. In my state of North Carolina alone, PEW Charity Trusts and the Center for Responsible Lending estimate there will be 53,254 foreclosures in 2008 and 2009. Not only does foreclosure strike at the heart of these families' financial stability, but the damage spreads across all of our communities. The same study shows that over 330,000 homes in North Carolina will be devalued by the spillover impact of the foreclosures, and North Carolina stands to lose over \$860 million in property values.

However, H.R. 3221 takes strong steps to help families facing foreclosure while also bolstering our housing market and economy. This bill also creates a voluntary FHA initiative that provides mortgage refinancing assistance to allow families to stay in their homes while also strengthening the housing market. This voluntary plan would require lenders to reduce some of the existing mortgage in order to qualify for FHA backing, and would require borrowers to return portions of any future profits on the house to the government in order to prevent foreclosure. It is important to note that under H.R. 3221, only owner-occupied homes facing foreclosure can qualify for this mortgage assistance, and speculators, investors, and second-homeowners are not eligible. This provision represents a compromise by all participating parties and can keep people in their homes and improve surrounding communities.

Provisions in this bill reform and modernize the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) as well as government sponsored entities, GSEs, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. These changes will strengthen the FHA and make it a bigger force in the market to provide a better alternative to some of the riskier, more exotic loans that have spurred much of this crisis. The recent reports of major losses at Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are troubling. The GSEs are crucial engines that are necessary to drive the slumping mortgage market that provides housing for millions across the country. H.R. 3221 includes a plan to give the Treasury Department increased authority to loan and buy credit in these GSEs. This backing will boost confidence in the GSEs in the marketplace, and may make further action unnecessary. Along with this expanded credit, H.R. 3221 includes a stronger and more independent regulator to oversee Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and set their capital standards.

Finally, the American Housing Rescue and Foreclosure Prevention Act of 2008 also includes a tax benefit of up to \$7,500 for first-time homebuyers as well as an additional credit on property taxes for existing homeowners who claim the standard deduction. I am proud of the strong military presence in North Carolina's Second Congressional District, and I applaud the provisions that specifically help returning soldiers stay in their home and the housing counseling and benefit initiatives that target veterans. These measures will help revive the housing market and get our sluggish economy moving in the right direction.

I support the passage of H.R. 3221, American Housing Rescue and Foreclosure Prevention Act of 2008, and I urge my colleagues to join me.

HONORING THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF THE FBI

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2008

Mr. CUELLAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the 100th anniversary of the Federal Bureau of Investigation agency, and the brave men and women that work at the FBI Laredo Resident Agency, LRA. The FBI LRA was established in 1943, during the height of World War II, with four Special Agents assigned to the U.S.-Mexico border.

The FBI LRA was staffed throughout the end of World War II and during the Cold War with a particular focus on counter-espionage and sabotage. The focus changed during the 1960s and 1970s to a spate of new crimes involving fugitives and vehicle theft. The mission of the FBI LRA was expanded to public corruption, interstate theft, fraud, and general property crimes during the 1980s and 1990s. Currently, the FBI LRA investigates terrorism, public corruption, white collar crime, kidnappings, gangs, drug cases, and cyber crime.

Also, the FBI LRA has established a Joint Terrorism Task Force, JTTF, and a Public Corruption Task Force in the past few years to respond to potential terrorist threats and drug-trafficking violence in the U.S.-Mexico border region. Throughout the decades, the FBI LRA has evolved to meet the crime prevention needs of each decade in its five-county area of Webb, McMullen, La Salle, Zapata, and Jim Hogg, with over 30 Special Agents and support staff. The FBI LRA also works with Laredo Police Department, Office of the Inspector General—Department of Homeland Security, Department of Public Safety, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection, and the United States Border Patrol.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to have had this time to recognize the commitment of our brave men and women at the FBI Laredo Resident Agency and I applaud their efforts to safeguard the lives of my constituents along the U.S.-Mexico border, and to serve their Nation honorably. I thank you for this time.

HONORING THE URBAN LEAGUE'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY IN MADISON

HON. TAMMY BALDWIN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2008

Ms. BALDWIN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the Urban League for a commitment to social and economic justice in the Madison area that now spans four decades. When the National Urban League's affiliate arrived on the Southside in 1968, Madison and other larger cities had few support services for economically disadvantaged people. Most civil rights groups at the time had focused on legal barriers to equality. After the eventual toppling of de jure segregation and discrimination "on the books," our communities were left void of organizations and advocacy networks focused on the unequal economic conditions African Americans and other people of color still faced. Despite the shift in terrain, the Madison Urban League committed to fulfilling the need for economic programs.

Forty years later, the Urban League of Greater Madison has retained and restored the commitment the Madison Urban League made at such a crucial point in the history of our country and our city. Today, the diverse staff at the Urban League of Greater Madison serves thousands of youth, adults, and whole families all over Dane County through a wide range of programs and services. Last year, 2,000 people were reached through various initiatives throughout the county.

To bring to the forefront its renewed commitment to economic empowerment for those overlooked and underserved, the Urban League of Greater Madison is on the verge of breaking ground for a new Center for Economic Development along Park Street in front of the Villager. The center will be more than just another building on the Southside of Madison. It will be an investment in the people there. With the capacity to offer a more comprehensive set of programs and services than it can now, the Urban League of Greater Madison will be able to empower more citizens by relocating to and reclaiming an area that is ripe for revitalization.

An anniversary celebration will be held this evening to recognize the achievements and legacy of the Urban League in Madison and to commence a new chapter in the history of the organization.

For their commitment and service to the people of Dane County, I congratulate both the National Urban League and the Urban League of Greater Madison on this momentous milestone. Thanks to the work they have already done and will continue to do, we can and will achieve better.

TRIBUTE TO CITIZENS AND OFFICIALS IN HAMILTON, BOONE AND WEBSTER COUNTIES

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2008

Mr. LATHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the collective effort of citizens and officials in Hamilton, Boone and Webster

Counties in rescuing two gentlemen from the flooded Boone River in Iowa.

On Monday, June 9, at 2:45 p.m., Charlie Davis noticed two men floating down the Boone River. He quickly dialed 911 on his cellular phone and got through to the Hamilton County Dispatch Center. He relayed the message but got disconnected because he was in a limited cellular signal area. When Charlie redialed 911, this time he was connected to the Webster County Dispatch Center. As a result, Fire and Rescue Departments in Kramer, Stratford, Stanhope and Webster City, the Boone County Search and Rescue Team, Hamilton County Conservation staff, Hamilton County Chief Deputy Scott McConnell, First Iowa Methodist Medical Center, Mercy AirLife helicopters, pilot Ralph Storm, and others were all on the scene to help.

As the two men floated down the river, rescue crews set up on the Stagecoach Road Bridge waiting for the men to float to them. After waiting for a period of time, Ralph Storm flew his spray plane up and down the river until he spotted them. Once spotted, the Boone Rescue Team; Brian Pontius and Dallas Wingate, were notified to put their boat in the river and then retrieved the brothers from the water at 3:50 p.m.

The diligent team effort of all involved in this rescue effort is a testament to the bravery and compassion of Iowans; willing to do whatever is necessary for a neighbor in need. I commend all those involved for their heroism and cooperation. I am honored to represent each of them in the United States Congress, and wish each of them health and happiness in the future.

THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY SESSION IN KAZAKHSTAN

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2008

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I hereby submit, for the RECORD, the text of my report to you on the activities of the U.S. Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, held in early July in Astana, Kazakhstan. I want to thank you for allowing me to serve as the head of this delegation, and to express my gratitude to our colleague in the other chamber, Senator BEN CARDIN, for serving as the deputy head of the delegation.

I will refrain from repeating here the details of our trip, which can be found in the report, but I would like to make three brief points.

First, I want to praise the work of my 10 colleagues who participated on the delegation, namely Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. MCINTYRE, Ms. SOLIS and Mr. BUTTERFIELD who serve with me on the Helsinki Commission, as well as Mr. WAMP, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ, Ms. WATSON, Ms. BORDALLO and Ms. MOORE. All were active at the meeting, either speaking or introducing resolutions on issues of concern or making amendments to the initiatives of other delegations. Our colleague HILDA SOLIS deserves special praise for seeking and being elected to chair a committee in the OSCE PA this coming year, as does GWEN MOORE for her many initiatives that kept her busy.

Second, I want to stress to all my colleagues how useful engagement in world af-

fairs is, and the degree to which it advances U.S. interests by being out there, ready to discuss, to debate and ultimately to cooperate in making this a better world. In the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation for Europe, or the OSCE as it is often known, there is a strong parliamentary dimension that allows us to engage our allies and friends in Europe and Canada, and including the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia. We discuss everything from human rights and democracy, to energy and the environment, to regional security and terrorism. I invite my colleagues to consider joining me for next year's session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Third, I want to say a word about Kazakhstan, which served as this year's host. Kazakhstan is a large, resource-rich and strategically located country, and a country that wishes to play a stronger role in the OSCE and in world affairs generally. The U.S. delegation used its presence in Astana to welcome that fact, and to express our willingness to work with Kazakhstan to that end. At the same time, the Assembly meeting provided an opportunity to stress the need for Kazakhstan to make greater progress regarding human rights and political reforms, in line with its OSCE commitments but also with specific promises its leaders made when the OSCE designated Kazakhstan to chair the organization in 2010.

The final declaration of the OSCE PA Annual Session can be found on the Assembly's website or by contacting the Helsinki Commission, which I chair. Again, thank you Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to lead this delegation, which accomplished a great deal.

JULY 21, 2008.

HON. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: I write to thank you for designating me Head of the U.S. Delegation to the Seventeenth Annual Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA), and to report to you on the work of our bipartisan delegation. The delegation participated fully in the activity of the Assembly's Standing Committee, the plenary sessions and the Assembly's three General Committees.

Joining me in leading the delegation was the Helsinki Commission Co-Chairman, Senator Benjamin L. Cardin. Other Helsinki Commissioners who also participated include Representatives Robert B. Aderholt, Mike McIntyre, Hilda L. Solis and G.K. Butterfield. They were joined by Representatives Zach Wamp, Loretta Sanchez, Diane Watson, Madeleine Z. Bordallo and Gwen S. Moore.

This year's Annual Session, hosted by the Parliament of Kazakhstan from June 29 to July 3, brought together 227 parliamentarians from 50 of the 56 OSCE States. The designated theme for this year's gathering was "Transparency in the OSCE."

The Standing Committee, which is the leadership body of the Assembly composed of the Heads of Delegations representing the OSCE participating States and the elected officers, met prior to the Annual Session. Chaired by the OSCE PA President, Swedish parliamentarian Goran Lennmarker, the committee heard reports from the Assembly's Treasurer, German parliamentarian Hans Raidel, and from the Secretary General, R. Spencer Oliver of the United States. The Assembly continues to operate well within its overall budget guidelines and to

receive positive assessments from auditors on financial management. The Standing Committee unanimously approved the proposed budget for 2008/2009, which provides for increased expenditures of just under seven percent to cover inflation and a small increase in secretariat staff.

The Standing Committee also heard reports from the Special Representatives of the OSCE PA on a variety of issues of concern. I presented a summary of my activities as Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, which included a recent Commission hearing, a briefing on the plight of Iraqi refugees and my participation on the congressional visit you led to Israel in May, marking that country's 60th anniversary. Similarly, Rep. Solis spoke in her capacity as the Special Representative on Migration, highlighting recent Commission hearings on women migrants and on regional impacts and opportunities for migrants. Rep. Christopher H. Smith, the Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues, was unable to be present in Astana and asked that his written report be circulated to delegations. It highlights visits to Bosnia, Romania, Russia and Ukraine as well as a recent Commission hearing on combating the sexual exploitation of children. Senator Cardin attended the Standing Committee in his capacity as an OSCE PA Vice President.

In my capacity as Head of the U.S. Delegation at the Standing Committee, I welcomed the decision of the Assembly to hold an event in Washington on the upcoming U.S. elections immediately following a September meeting of the OSCE PA in Toronto, Canada.

With the Standing Committee's business concluded, Assembly President Lennmarker opened the Inaugural Plenary Session, noting the importance of holding its first Annual Session in the Central Asian region. The delegates were, in turn, welcomed by Kazakhstan's President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who noted the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in democracy-building and further humanitarian and legal norms. The two Speakers of the Kazakhstan Parliament, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of the Senate and Aslan Mussin of the Mazhilis, also addressed the delegates. OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut of France reviewed the work of the OSCE and took questions from the parliamentarians.

Members of the U.S. Delegation actively participated in the work of the Assembly's three General Committees: Political Affairs and Security; Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment; and Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions. Each committee considered a draft resolution as well as 18 supplementary items circulated by delegates prior to the opening of the Astana meeting. One additional supplementary item was considered during the opening plenary.

Five of the supplementary items were resolutions proposed by members of the U.S. Delegation: Encouraging Transparency in the Extractive Industries, by Senator Cardin; Recognizing the Economic, Civic and Social Contributions of Migrants, by Rep. Solis; Strengthening Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and Addressing the Special Needs of Child Victims by Rep. Smith (and, in his absence, Rep. Wamp); Urging Adoption of the Paris Club Commitment Regarding Vulture Funds by Rep. Moore; and my own resolution Expressing Concern Over the Security Environment in Georgia. All were adopted with few if any amendments.

Parliamentarians from Russia, I should note, very strongly opposed my resolution on Georgia, as did some European parliamentarians, but I remained firm, pointing to the