

troops played a decisive role in the success of the surge. Last month I once again visited Baghdad to meet with the leadership of the federal government. We stressed our commitment to developing an Iraqi state that abides by its constitution and that is based upon a federal model with clearly delineated powers for its regions.

In spite of all this, some commentators now suggest that the Kurds are causing problems by insisting on territorial demands and proceeding with the development of Kurdistan's oil resources. These allegations are troubling. We are proceeding entirely in accord with the Iraqi constitution, implementing provisions that were brokered by the U.S.

In the constitutional negotiations that took place in the summer of 2005, two issues were critical to us: first, that the Kurdistan Region has the right to develop the oil on its territory, and second, that there be a fair process to determine the administrative borders of Iraq's Kurdistan Region—thus resolving once and for all the issue of “disputed” territories.

Unfortunately, ever since the discovery of oil in Iraq in the 1920s, successive Iraqi governments have sought to keep oil out of Kurdish hands, blocking exploration and development of fields in Kurdistan. Saddam Hussein's government went even further, using Iraqi oil revenues to finance the military campaigns that destroyed more than 4,500 Kurdish villages and to pay for the poison gas used to kill thousands of Kurdish civilians.

The Kurdish leadership agreed to a U.S.-sponsored compromise in 2005 in which the central government would have the authority to manage existing oil fields, but new fields would fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of the regions. Since then, the KRG has taken the lead with Baghdad in negotiations on a hydrocarbon law that is faithful to Iraq's constitution and is conducive to modernizing Iraq's oil infrastructure and substantially increasing its oil production.

We have awarded contracts for foreign oil companies (including some American ones) to explore our territory. In so doing, Kurdistan is not threatening the unity of Iraq. It is simply implementing the constitution.

The “disputed territories” have a tragic history. Since the 1950s, Iraqi regimes encouraged Arabs to settle in Kirkuk and other predominantly Kurdish and Turkmen areas. Saddam Hussein accelerated this process by engaging in ethnic cleansing, expelling or killing Kurds and Turkmen, or by requiring nationality corrections (in which non-Arabs are forced to declare themselves to be Arabs) and by moving Arabs into Kurdish homes.

The dispute between Baghdad and the Kurds over Kirkuk has lasted more than 80 years and has often been violent. All sides have now agreed to a formula to resolve the problem, to bring justice to Kirkuk, and to correct the crimes against Kurds committed by Saddam Hussein's regime. Iraq's constitution requires that a referendum be held in disputed territories to determine if their populations want to join the Kurdistan Region. Conducting a plebiscite is not easy, but it is preferable to another 80 years of conflict.

If the pro-Kurdistan side should lose the referendum in Kirkuk, I promise that Kurdistan will respect that result. And if they win, I promise that we will do everything in our power to ensure outsized representation of Kirkuk's Turkmen, Arabs and Christians both on the local level and in the parliament and government of the Kurdistan Region.

Regional stability cannot come from resolving internal disputes alone. That is why

expanding and deepening our ties with Turkey is my top priority.

My meeting last month in Baghdad with the Turkish special envoy to Iraq was a historic and positive development. There should be further direct contacts between the KRG and Turkey, as well as multilateral contacts that involve the U.S. We are eager to work with Turkey to seek increased peace and prosperity in the region.

I am proud that the Kurdistan Region is both a model and gateway for the rest of Iraq. Our difficult path to a secular, federal democracy is very much inspired by the U.S. And so we look forward to working with the Obama-Biden administration to support and defend our hard-fought successes in Iraq, and to remain proud of what the Kurdistan region is today: a thriving civil society in the heart of the Middle East. When we insist on strict compliance with our country's constitution, we are only following America's great example.

HONORING MATTHEW DONALD SHUMAN

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 20, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Matthew Donald Shuman of Kansas City, Missouri. Matthew is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 1247, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Matthew has been very active with his troop, participating in many Scout activities. Over the many years Matthew has been involved with Scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Matthew Donald Shuman for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

COMPTROLLER OF THE CURRENCY DUGAN REFUTES UNFAIR ATTACKS ON THE COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT ACT

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 20, 2008

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, during the recent campaign, motivated I believe by an effort to stave off much-needed legislation establishing appropriate regulation for currently unregulated aspects of the financial industry, a number of people launched a concerted effort to blame the Community Reinvestment Act for our current financial crisis. Their argument—wholly inaccurate—was that the Community Reinvestment Act was the reason that a large number of irresponsible subprime loans were made.

I was very pleased—although not surprised—that Comptroller of the Currency John C. Dugan, an appointee of President Bush, took the time on November 19th to refute

these accusations. Comptroller Dugan is as well qualified to discuss this as anyone in the country, because he has a prime responsibility for the regulation of the safety and soundness of banks and the banking system. Given that, I believe it is essential that all Members have the benefit of his analysis.

Comptroller Dugan is characteristically forthright in addressing the question of the role that CRA has played:

“There are even some that suggest that CRA is responsible for the binge of irresponsible subprime lending that ignited the crisis we now face. Let me squarely respond to this suggestion: I categorically disagree. While not perfect, CRA has made a positive contribution to community revitalization across the country and has generally encouraged sound community development lending, investment and service initiatives by regulated banking organizations.

“CRA is not the culprit behind the subprime mortgage lending abuses, or the broader credit quality issues in the marketplace. Indeed, the lenders most prominently associated with subprime mortgage lending abuses and high rates of foreclosure are lenders not subject to CRA . . . (B)anks subject to CRA and their affiliates originated or purchased only six percent of the reported high cost loans made to lower-income borrowers within their CRA assessment areas.”

Madam Speaker, to make it clear that the forceful defense of CRA that I have just quoted is taken fully in context, I ask that those portions of Comptroller Dugan's speech that discuss the CRA be printed here in their entirety. This firm statement by President Bush's appointee with prime responsibility for the safety and soundness of the banking system should help us end the inaccurate, politically-motivated misrepresentation of the role that CRA has played.

REMARKS BY JOHN C. DUGAN—COMPTROLLER OF THE CURRENCY BEFORE THE ENTERPRISE ANNUAL NETWORK CONFERENCE—NOVEMBER 19, 2008

“ . . . Indeed, all of these efforts are fully in keeping with the OCC's mission and the way that we approach our regulatory and supervisory responsibilities, including those under the Community Reinvestment Act. CRA supports banks doing what they do best and what they should want to do well—making viable lending and investment decisions, with acceptable rates of return, consistent with their business plans, I their own communities.

Given recent public discussion, it is appropriate to ask about the role that CRA plays in the credit challenges we face on so many fronts. In my view, it plays a very positive role. Unfortunately, however, current market disruptions have clouded the accomplishments that CRA has generated, many of which we recognized last year during its 30th anniversary. There are even some who suggest that CRA is responsible for the binge of irresponsible subprime lending that ignited the credit crisis we now face.

Let me squarely respond to this suggestion: I categorically disagree. While not perfect, CRA has made a positive contribution to community revitalization across the country and has generally encouraged sound community development lending, investment, and service initiatives by regulated banking organizations.

CRA is not the culprit behind the subprime mortgage lending abuses, or the broader credit quality issues in the marketplace. Indeed, the lenders most prominently associated with subprime mortgage lending abuses

and high rates of foreclosure are lenders not subject to CRA. A recent study of 2006 Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data showed that banks subject to CRA and their affiliates originated or purchased only six percent of the reported high cost loans made to lower-income borrowers within their CRA assessment areas.

Over the last ten years, CRA has helped spur the doubling of lending by banking institutions to small businesses and farms, to more than \$2.6 trillion. During this period, those lenders more than tripled community development lending to \$371 billion. Overwhelmingly, this lending has been safe and sound. For example, single family CRA-related mortgages offered in conjunction with NeighborWorks organizations have performed on a par with standard conventional mortgages. Foreclosure rates within the NeighborWorks network were just 0.21 percent in the second quarter of this year, compared to 4.26 percent of subprime loans and 0.61 percent for conventional conforming mortgages. Similar conclusions were reached in a study by the University of North Carolina's Center for Community Capital, which indicates that high-cost subprime mortgage borrowers default at much higher rates than those who take out loans made for CRA purposes.

Of course, not all single-family CRA mortgages performed this well, because these loans have experienced the same stresses as most other types of consumer credit. Nevertheless, a number of studies have shown that when these loans are made in conjunction with a structured homebuyer counseling program, mortgage performance is substantially improved. Affordable CRA multi-family projects utilizing low-income housing tax credits have also performed well, with an average foreclosure rate through 2006 of 0.08 percent on the underlying mortgages.

During the community tours I have taken over the past three years, I personally witnessed the positive impact that CRA partnerships have had in transforming communities, expanding homeownership, and promoting job creation and economic development. These partnerships between communities and financial institutions have also helped house senior citizens and people with special needs, built community facilities, and assisted small businesses serving low-income areas.

In the Anacostia community of D.C., an area of economic resurgence that I have toured on several occasions, Enterprise's Wheeler Creek project was a critical link in stabilizing a neighborhood that had been plagued by a troubled public housing project. Wheeler Creek involved development of for-sale homes in conjunction with a bank community development corporation, as well as a bank's purchase of low-income housing tax credits for rental housing.

CRA projects also act as catalysts for other investments, job creation, and housing development. Such infusion of capital into these markets leverages public subsidies, perhaps as much as 10 to 25 times, by attracting additional private capital. Many of these CRA equity investments can be made under national banks' public welfare investment authority. These bank investments have grown significantly over the years—totaling more than \$25 billion over the past decade. Indeed, the OCC recently held its Managers Conference at the Grand Masonic Lodge on North Charles Street here in Baltimore, a public welfare investment funded by a national bank. To meet the demand to invest in similar types of projects, OCC successfully sought legislation last year to raise the cap on public welfare investments from 10 to 15 percent of a bank's capital and assets. This rise will enable the amount of such

investments to increase by as much as \$30 billion.

Interpreting national bank public welfare investment authority, OCC recently issued an approval related to energy conservation that may be of interest to Enterprise. This approval clarifies that such authority extends to bank investments in renewable energy tax credits primarily benefiting low- and moderate-income individuals and areas, government revitalization areas, rural underserved and distressed middle-income areas, and designated disaster areas. The investing bank can claim the credits and, in some instances, receive positive CRA consideration under the investment or community development testes.

Your Green Communities initiative, and others like it, may be able to take advantage of these tools to obtain additional resources under the public welfare investment authority, CRA, and other available incentives to build many more sustainable homes and communities across the country. The research and examples described on your Web site demonstrate that moving to a green economy can generate a significant number of jobs, stimulate economic growth, and create a healthy environment in communities that Enterprise serves.

As the credit market stabilizes, CRA-driven initiatives can also help us tackle challenges such as the preservation of homeownership opportunities and rental housing development. Opportunities also lie ahead for bank partnerships with Enterprise affiliates and other nonprofits to help mitigate the impact of foreclosures in communities across the country. . . .

Our nation has accomplished much since CRA's passage. Perhaps even Jim Rouse could not imagine how much the flow of CRA-related capital and credit has contributed to affordable homeownership, jobs and business development, and healthy neighborhoods. In today's challenging economy, the need for the positive results that CRA has generated are even greater, and the same is true for organizations like Enterprise.

Thank you very much."

HONORING JOHN M. MILAM

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 20, 2008

Mr. GONZALEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a constituent of mine. Mr. John M. Milam has just retired after 34 years with San Antonio's transit system, VIA, the last 16 leading the company as general manager, president, and CEO, and I wish to thank him for his dedication and for his service to our community.

Over the course of his tenure with VIA, Mr. Milam continually embraced change, and the system grew and improved in countless ways. He was among the first to install GPS tracking on VIA buses, ensuring that he knew where every bus and paratransit vehicle was at any moment, resulting in the best planned routes designed with the latest information. VIA acquired newer, more energy efficient vehicles, improving their finances as well as the environment. Mr. Milam's insistence on making VIA one of the most cost-efficient transit systems in the country saved the system in the mid-1990s and allowed him to expand and improve services, making our public transportation system truly outstanding.

It is all too easy to take a well-run transit system for granted. San Antonians simply ex-

pect VIA to be there when we need it, to run smoothly, and to provide a restful ride. John Milam ran VIA so well he made it look easy. But for hundreds of thousands of people, on millions of trips, over dozens of years, the efforts of John M. Milam made living in San Antonio that much better. The programs he began will continue to improve the area for years to come. He leaves behind a great legacy and we can all say, "John, thanks for a great ride."

HONORING BRANDEN DEMAR THOELE

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 20, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Branden Demar Thoele of Kansas City, Missouri. Branden is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 1378, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Branden has been very active with his troop, participating in many Scout activities. Over the many years Branden has been involved with Scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Branden Demar Thoele for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILIES OF CARLOS MARIN, ARTURO HERRERA, JAKE BRISBIN, JR., AND MATTHEW PETER JUNEAU

HON. SOLOMON P. ORTIZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 20, 2008

Mr. ORTIZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my sadness on the untimely deaths of U.S. International Water and Boundary Commissioner, IWBC, Carlos Marin, IWBC Mexican Commissioner Arturo Herrera, Executive Director of the Rio Grande Council of Governments Jake Brisbin, Jr., and pilot Matthew Peter Juneau, who all lost their lives in a September 16 plane crash outside of Presidio, TX.

I was shocked to hear of the plane crash and am deeply saddened by the loss. My deepest condolences are with the families of those who perished.

I had the privilege of working with Commissioners Marin and Herrera on numerous issues affecting South Texas. They were strong advocates of continued cooperation between the United States and Mexico. Their service to the IWBC was matched by their dedication to improving the quality of life between the two nations.

I will keep their families in my thoughts and prayers.