

and loss that accompany disasters is substantially minimized.

It is imperative that citizens know what to do in the event of an emergency and be ready to either shelter in place or evacuate their homes.

People must be ready to care for their basic needs should they be displaced for a period of time.

As we move toward the 3-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and the 7-year anniversary of 9/11, we must not lose sight of the lessons learned from these disasters.

While I recognize that the most effective emergency preparedness programs and messages are delivered locally and not from Washington, we must ensure that the Department of Homeland Security is working with State and local partners, providing them with the tools they need to get the message out.

Following the tragic events that occurred on September 11, 2001, Federal, State and local government officials agreed that the formula for ensuring a more secure and safer homeland consists of preparedness, training, and citizen involvement in supporting first responders.

As a result, the Citizen Corps Program and Ready campaigns were created.

To date, with limited resources available, over 2,000 communities in all 56 States and territories have established Citizen Corps Councils to help inform and train citizens in emergency preparedness, and promote volunteerism.

However, I think these programs can be improved.

The legislation I am introducing today formally authorizes the Citizen Corps Program and provides it with the necessary funding to be effective.

It also authorizes key Citizen Corps components administered by the Department of Homeland Security—Fire Corps and CERT.

Fire Corps promotes the use of volunteers to assist fire and rescue departments in non-operational roles such as fire safety outreach, youth programs, and administrative support.

The Community Emergency Response Team, CERT, program concept was developed and implemented by the Los Angeles City Fire Department in 1985 and has since spread to over 1,000 communities nationwide.

Under the CERT Program citizens are training citizens in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations.

As our Nation continues to glean lessons from the catastrophic events of Hurricane Katrina, the Federal Government must ensure that preparedness efforts help our Nation's most vulnerable populations.

To that end, this legislation requires the Secretary to work closely with organizations representing the elderly, the disabled, the hearing and visually impaired, communities with language and income barriers, and children to promote preparedness.

This legislation will also create a pilot program to enhance citizen preparedness at primary and secondary schools, as well as on university or college campuses, by providing training, exercises, and public awareness campaigns.

Finally, my bill directs the Secretary to carry out a public affairs campaign utilizing diverse media outlets to get the word out to the public

to assist them in preparing for acts of terrorism and other emergencies.

Addressing the issue of citizen preparedness continues to be a major issue for our Nation.

In fact, the National Governors' Association 2007 State Homeland Security Directors Survey, which polled the 56 State and territorial homeland security advisors, cited citizen preparedness as one of the top 5 priorities for their States.

It is now time to stop paying lip service to the issue of citizen and community preparedness and to start acting.

In closing Madam Speaker, let me say that our citizens' lack of preparedness is often cited as an impediment to an effective emergency response. I believe this legislation will make strides to change that fact and I urge my colleagues to support it.

## SBIR/STTR REAUTHORIZATION ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. MARK UDALL**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 23, 2008*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5819) to amend the Small Business Act to improve the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program and the Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) program and for other purposes:

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 5819, the SBIR/STTR Reauthorization Act. Enactment of this bill will extend important programs that improve American competitiveness in the world, and I urge its adoption.

The State of Colorado houses a strong and vibrant collection of cutting-edge small businesses, and businesses in my own district employ SBIR awards to promote advanced research in aeronautic, biotechnology, and other important industries. This bill will ensure that small businesses and research firms will continue to have access to the capital that enables them to compete with large firms both at home and abroad. Ultimately, this bill is about increasing competition and ensuring that good ideas are not lost for a lack of resources.

This bill also modernizes the SBIR and STTR programs in order to better suit the needs of small businesses, ensuring that small businesses that receive funding from venture capital firms are allowed to receive SBIR grants. Though some suggest that this policy undermines the spirit of the program, the reality for many small businesses is that their most consistent sources of funding are from venture capital firms and the SBIR program. This bill proposes sensible limits on the participation of venture capital firms so that small businesses can continue to rely on these two important sources of funds.

As co-chair of the House Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education Caucus and a representative of a district with a major research institution, I support this legislation because it will help keep America more technologically and economically competitive. I commend the committees for their hard work on this legislation, and I look forward to its enactment.

COMMEMORATING THE 93RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

**HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 24, 2008*

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 93rd anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, in which 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children were killed by Ottoman authorities during World War I.

On April 24, 1915, the Ottoman government began its genocidal plan by arresting and murdering over 250 Armenian intellectuals and political figures in Istanbul. In the interior of the Ottoman Empire, where the bulk of the Armenian population lived, the government then arrested and killed village leaders. Meanwhile, most able-bodied Armenian men, who had been conscripted into the Ottoman army, were separated into labor battalions and subsequently murdered. Next, in various provinces, gendarmes and the army massacred Armenian villagers outright, while in other provinces, the remaining Armenian population of women, children and the elderly were forcibly deported over the mountains and into the scorching deserts of Syria, without food and water. Many of the female deportees were raped and killed en route, while other deportees died of starvation and dehydration. By the end of 1915 the centuries-old Armenian civilization of eastern Anatolia no longer existed.

U.S. diplomats who were stationed in Anatolia at the time were some of the main eyewitnesses and chroniclers of that horrific period. U.S. Consul Leslie Davis, stationed in Harput in eastern Anatolia, wrote the following in a cable to U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, dated July 24, 1915: "It has been no secret that the plan was to destroy the Armenian race as a race, but the methods used have been more cold-blooded and barbarous, if not effective, than I had first supposed." He also wrote in this same cable: "I do not believe there has ever been a massacre in the history of the world so general and thorough as that which is now being perpetrated in this region or that a more fiendish, diabolical scheme has been conceived in the mind of man."

This cable, and many others of a similar nature, is housed in the U.S. National Archives only a few blocks from the U.S. Capitol and the White House. They provide unambiguous, documentary evidence of what occurred. Yet there are those who still refuse to properly characterize what happened to the Armenian people during World War I as genocide. Although the word "genocide" was not invented in 1915, what these diplomats described was indeed genocide of a people.

I am deeply disappointed that many of our current officials avoid characterizing what occurred as "genocide." This avoidance does a disservice to the memory of the victims and their descendants, and hurts our moral standing in the world. I hope that one day soon, this legislative body and the U.S. Administration will properly characterize what happened to the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire.

Many of the survivors of the Armenian genocide settled in the United States. Bearing painful physical and emotional scars, they

nonetheless re-established their lives here, worked hard, and became proud American citizens, thankful for the opportunity to live in freedom. Many of their descendants have become leaders in the fields of science, business, academia, and the arts, and have served their country bravely in military uniform. They have also created a vibrant community. Yet they also bear the pain of what their parents and grandparents went through and are actively engaged in the effort to seek proper recognition of what happened to the Armenian people in 1915. Today, as we recall the events of the Armenian genocide and pay homage to the victims, we also honor the Armenian-American community for its unwavering commitment to this human rights struggle.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE  
OF FIRST SERGEANT LUKE J.  
MERCARDANTE

**HON. DARRELL E. ISSA**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 24, 2008*

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and service of United States Marine First Sergeant Luke J. Mercardante.

Luke Mercardante was the First Sergeant for Combat Logistics Battalion 24, the logistics element of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit. Luke was 35 when killed in the line of duty on April 16th in Kandahar province of Afghanistan while serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

First Sergeant Mercardante's position required him to serve as a leader, but leadership came naturally. He is remembered for his love for country and ability to inspire those around him. Other Marines described him as the "picture-perfect Marine."

Mercardante enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1992, graduating from Parris Island as the company honor graduate. He later served on a deserter apprehension team and was responsible for apprehending more than 130 deserters. As a drill instructor at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, Mercardante trained more than 1,200 men, turning them from civilians into Marines. Later, he served at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina as the training chief and brig security for the base. He was assigned to the Virginia Military Institute as the assistant Marine officer instructor and was voted an honorary member of the class of 2007, as well as faculty mentor of the year in 2005.

First Sergeant Mercardante's personal decorations include the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with 3 gold stars in lieu of 4th award, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with 1 gold star in lieu of 2nd award, and the Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal.

Luke was engaged to Kimberly Hull and planned to marry when he returned from Afghanistan. He is survived by Kimberly, his mother Gertrude, father Patrick, brothers Patrick Jr., Frank and Mark, sister Bridget and his children Luke II and Cailin.

On behalf of the people of the United States whom he served with courage and valor, we honor and commemorate the life and service of First Sergeant Luke J. Mercardante.

HONORING DR. LON NUELLE'S PAS-  
SION FOR THE ARTS AND EDU-  
CATION

**HON. BART GORDON**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 24, 2008*

Mr. GORDON of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor my friend, Dr. Lon Nuell, who passed away March 12.

Leon Richard Nuell served on the Murfreesboro City School Board for 12 years and taught as an art professor at my alma mater, Middle Tennessee State University, for 37 years. He was up for re-election to the school board this year and received nearly 400 votes posthumously as a testament to his legacy.

Lon did many things to improve the quality of education for children in Murfreesboro, including banning the practice of corporal punishment, championing full-time art teachers in each city school and establishing the Murfreesboro City Schools Foundation, an organization that fundraises for local schools.

Lon was a founding member of Congregation Micah in Nashville and the Tennessee Holocaust Museum. He facilitated the acquisition of two exhibits to educate the public through art—exhibits the Tennessee Holocaust Museum is now releasing to tour the United States. Lon was the faculty advisor of MTSU's Hillel and helped establish Friends-in-Faith, an interfaith group with members representing almost every religion in Middle Tennessee.

Prior to his unexpected passing, several community programs—Read to Succeed, Success by 6 and Project Pass—were establishing a literacy center in a space provided by First Baptist Church on East Main Street in Murfreesboro. It is fitting tribute that they have named the center the Lon Nuell Family Literacy Center. Lon believed in education for everyone and in the strength of collaboration.

Lon will be sorely missed by the community, his friends and family; wife, Christie and three sons, but his legacy will live on.

**AGGIE MUSTER**

**HON. TED POE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 24, 2008*

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, I may not exactly be the biggest Texas A&M fan around. And, I possibly ruffle a few maroon feathers from time-to-time poking fun at the Aggies. But, one thing I can say without a doubt is that there is no school known to man that has as loyal a following and dedication to tradition as Texas A&M. Trust me I know, I hear about every little quirky thing they do from my friend and former case manager, Patti Chapman—or "Aggie Mama" as her license plate proudly reads, and from Congressman Louie Gohmert from East Texas, with his maroon boots adorned with the Aggie logo.

You can always spot an Aggie, either from their personalized license plate, their maroon pickup adorned with A&M stickers, or the ring—don't forget the ring! And I have yet to meet an Aggie that doesn't work in to any

conversation that you are having that they are an Aggie and what year they graduated, especially if you are not one. But with all their whooping and hissing, comes one tradition that I have the greatest respect for—Aggie Muster.

Last week, on April 21st, Aggies all around the world paid tribute to those that have gone before them. This time honored tradition began in June of 1883 as a reunion of sorts of former students reliving their college days from the ball field to the battlefield. By 1889 it had evolved into a celebration of Texas Independence, and in 1922 it became the official ceremony it is today that is held every year on April 21st—San Jacinto Day—the day Texas won its independence in 1836—to account for every Aggie around the world by honoring the "Roll Call of the Absent."

According to tradition, "if there is an A&M man in one hundred miles of you, you are expected to get together, eat a little, and live over the days you spent at the A&M College of Texas." The most famous example of this edict was the Muster of 1942 under the command of General George Moore during World War II. Amid fierce enemy fire, General Moore and 25 fellow Aggies mustered in the trenches on Corregidor in the Philippines. A war correspondent observed the make-shift ceremony and the world was introduced to the Aggie spirit.

During times of war, Muster is especially poignant. Texas A&M has produced more officers in the United States military than even West Point. It has the distinction, other than West Point, of having more Medal of Honor winners than any other university in the United States. When General George Patton was in Europe going to combat in the Third Army, he made a comment about the Texas Aggies and the soldiers that he had under his command. He said, "Give me an army of West Point graduates and I will win a battle. You give me a handful of Texas Aggies, and I will win the war."

The Aggies' long tradition of duty and service to our great nation dates back their beginning, to the days when A&M was an all-male military academy. Texas A&M trained nearly 4000 troops during World War I and over 20,000 Aggies served in World War II, 14,000 as officers. The entire graduating classes of 1941 and 1942 enlisted in the military. The Aggie War Hymn was written by Aggie Marine J.V. "Pinky" Wilson while standing guard on the Rhine River during World War I and it remains the most recognizable school fight song across the country—probably the world.

Today, Muster is observed in more than 400 places worldwide and this year's "Roll Call of the Absent" honored 970 people around the world, including those remarkable young men and women who gave their lives for our country today. While this is a time to honor those that have died, it also is a time when Aggies, young and old, come together to reconnect and celebrate a way of life known only to those that proudly call themselves an Aggie.

Muster means different things to different people. Every Aggie will tell you something different, something personal about what it means to them as an Aggie. One thing that is consistent in every answer is their dedication to tradition. It is the rich heritage of tradition that sets Texas A&M apart from all the rest. It is the Corps, the Aggie War Hymn, the 12th Man, Midnight Yell, Bonfire, State pride, and