

the east with the west, further unifying the country as the divide between the North and the South was beginning to mend.

The transcontinental railroad was the first of its kind. It was an engineering marvel completed with great precision and speed. The railroad was an engineering wonder and it set the example for how transcontinental railroads would be built across Canada and Russia some 20 to 25 years later.

Completion of the transcontinental railroad created a new sense of wonder and enthusiasm for discovery and entrepreneurship across the country. It set the stage for a great migration of businessmen, created a new frontier for those seeking a new way of life, enabled faster movement of people and goods, and provided the country with a great opportunity to expand the economy.

Today, we are witnessing a rebirth of passenger rail in America. In the same way that the transcontinental railroad was critical to our Nation in the late 19th century, a strong national passenger rail system is vital today. In order to strengthen intercity passenger rail in this country, today I have introduced the "Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008".

The National Railroad Passenger Corporation, more commonly known as Amtrak, operates a nationwide rail network, serving more than 500 destinations in 46 States over 21,000 miles of routes, with nearly 19,000 employees. Amtrak recently marked the beginning of its 38th year of operation. Our passenger rail service has come a long way since its beginnings in 1971, and has faced many challenges since, but continues to grow stronger with each passing year. Despite uneven Federal investment over the years, Amtrak has persevered, achieving many successes in improved operating efficiency, increased ridership, and higher revenue.

In fact, in FY 2007, Amtrak set a new ridership record for the fifth year in a row, exceeding 25.8 million passengers. At the same time, Amtrak increased ticket revenues by 11 percent to more than \$1.5 billion, a figure that increased for the third straight year. These successes are being enjoyed across Amtrak's entire network. In FY 2007, Amtrak held 56 percent of the air/rail market between New York and Washington and 41 percent of the market share between New York and Boston. This shows that where Amtrak is provided the resources to succeed, it provides a trip-time competitive alternative to air and car.

America needs to look toward Amtrak as we address our growing transportation needs. The Department of Transportation describes the problem of congestion on our highways and in the air as "chronic." Amtrak removes almost eight million cars from the road annually. Airports are experiencing significant delays too, with more than 400,000 flights departing or arriving late in 2006. Amtrak eases air congestion by eliminating the need for 50,000 fully loaded airplanes each year.

Amtrak is also a substantially more environmentally friendly mode of transportation than automobiles or airplanes. According to the World Resources Institute, rail transportation produces 57 percent less carbon emissions than airplanes, and 40 percent less carbon emissions than cars.

Madam Speaker, I lend my strong support to the commemoration of National Train Day on May 10, 2008, and encourage all of my

colleagues to use this excellent opportunity to reflect on the benefits that Amtrak and intercity passenger rail provide to our Nation.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO SHAUNDELL NEWSOME

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to rise today to honor Shaundell Newsome by entering his name in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, the official record of the proceedings and debates of the United States Congress since 1873. Today I pay tribute to Shaundell Newsome, President and CEO of Newsome Marketing Enterprises, for his role in promoting excellence in small business throughout the Las Vegas community.

At the age of 14, Shaundell began his love for marketing while he was attending the High School of Graphic Communication Arts. While he served 10 years in the United States Air Force, he greatly enhanced his communication skills by becoming the Morale Welfare and Recreations Coordinator for his squadron. Following his service in the military, Shaundell joined Station Casinos' Marketing Department, where he helped to successfully launch the company's popular Boarding Pass Rewards Program. He then went on to serve as the marketing director at Sante Fe Station. Looking for a way to focus his attention on providing practical yet "outside the box" marketing solutions for small businesses, Shaundell founded Newsome Marketing Enterprises in 2006.

While working to continue his newly established marketing firm, Shaundell was often recognized for his efforts to create professional opportunities for others, particularly in the minority-business community. As a board member for the 100 Black Men of Las Vegas, he focused on creating new economic development opportunities for the non-profit organization. He also worked with Valley Center Opportunity Zone (VCOZ) to assist small minority businesses within the enterprise zone by presenting workshops, including his well-known "Marketers Anonymous—A 12 Step Plan". He often shares his expertise by giving personal consultation to various organizations and businesses. Shaundell also works closely with the Urban Chamber of Commerce and the North Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, playing a vital role in advocating for small businesses.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor Shaundell Newsome and would like to recognize his small-business accomplishments within the Las Vegas community. I would also like to congratulate him on receiving the Minority Small Business Champion of the Year for the 2008 Small Business Awards.

TRIBUTE TO DR. TAHIRA HIRA

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. LATHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Tahira Hira's appointment to

President George W. Bush's Advisory Council on Financial Literacy.

On January 22, 2008, President Bush established the new Advisory Council on Financial Literacy, chaired by Charles Schwab. Dr. Hira is one of only 16 members appointed by President Bush. The Council's purpose is to help keep America competitive and assist the American people in understanding and addressing financial matters. The Council will work with the public and private sectors to help increase financial education in schools as well as for adults in the workplace.

Dr. Hira came to Iowa State University in 1980. She is the executive assistant to the university president and a professor of personal finance and consumer economics. Dr. Hira has been teaching and conducting research in family financial management, consumer credit, gambling, and consumer bankruptcy since 1976. She has published approximately 100 articles and book chapters and given approximately 200 national and international presentations in her field. Dr. Hira has also received various awards for her work and serves on several national committees and boards.

Dr. Hira's list of awards and accomplishments represents the valuable resource she has provided to Iowa State University and financial education in America. She certainly has earned her position on the President's Advisory Council, and I know she will excel in her special advisory role.

I commend Dr. Tahira Hira for her longstanding dedication and diligence to her profession and for her efforts to improve our Nation's financial literacy. I consider it an honor to represent Dr. Hira in the U.S. Congress, and I wish her the best while serving on the President's Council and in her future work.

CONGRATULATING NURSE SUSAN COBB

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Susan Cobb of Lewisville, Texas. Ms. Cobb has been named one of the Great 100 Nurses of 2008 by the Texas Nurses Association, Districts Three and Four, and the Dallas-Fort Worth Nurse Executives. She is a nurse at the Medical Center of Lewisville.

The Medical Center's mission is to consistently provide high quality health services, information and education in an environment that is compassionate, professional, and responsive to its patients, physicians, and associates. Ms. Cobb is an excellent embodiment of this which her passion and commitment demonstrate.

Each year this recognition is bestowed on nurses who embody excellence in the science and art of nursing. The chosen honorees belong to an array of professional organizations and work in a wide variety of clinical specialties. This is the 18th consecutive year that the Texas Nurses Association, Districts Three and Four, and the Dallas-Fort Worth Nurse Executives have recognized area nurses for their compassion and dedication. The recipients will be honored at a gala event on Monday, May 12, 2008.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to stand today and recognize Susan Cobb. She provides an invaluable service to North Texas each and every day, and I join the community in thanking her for her devotion to saving lives. It is a privilege to represent Susan, and all our fine nurses, in the 26th District of Texas.

CONGRATULATING HIGHLAND
COMMUNITY COLLEGE ON ITS
150TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. NANCY E. BOYDA

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Highland Community College on 150 years of educating the good people of the state of Kansas. Chartered in 1858, Highland Community College was the first college in Kansas, and it has overcome many adversities to remain prosperous and respected to this day. Highland Community College offers a wonderful and necessary service to students who are trying to make more out of their lives.

Community colleges play an important and distinctive role in the American education system—they provide a world class education that is affordable and provides flexibility. Highland Community College facilitates programs for many non-traditional students all over the state of Kansas through its outreach program. It offers many night and weekend classes to those students whose lives can not be built around the typical student's schedule. A degree from Highland Community College will take any student far in life, and for some, it will be the push they needed to pursue additional degrees.

In Kansas, we believe that college should open doors, not close them, and that education should create opportunities, not debt. Sadly, instead of graduating with hope for their future, many of today's college students graduate with loan payments as far as the eye can see. In an increasingly competitive society, higher education is a necessity. Paying for and completing a higher education degree must be a realistic possibility for everyone. The great community colleges in Kansas, in particular Highland Community College, make that a reality for many students.

Highland Community College has made a commitment to providing a low-cost, high-value education. With their leadership, we'll move closer to the day when every Kansas student who wants to attend college can afford to do so and can receive a high quality education that fits their needs as an individual.

Highland Community College has served the State of Kansas and served it well. These words are a mere token of gratitude and cannot begin to repay the debt that we as Kansans owe members of the Highland community. Today, I congratulate Highland Community College on 150 years of success.

SUPPORTING SOLUTIONS TO THE
HOUSING CRISIS

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to support two important pieces of legislation that will both keep families in their homes, and increase the supply of affordable housing.

After years of lax regulatory oversight driven by the discredited ideology of the Bush administration and a rubber-stamp Republican Congress, our Nation is faced with a housing crisis. Sub-prime loans, once the darlings of Wall Street, are now adjusting upward and millions of families have lost their homes or are facing foreclosure. In just the first 3 months of 2008, over 113,000 foreclosure notices have gone out to families in California. President Bush has responded by providing a \$30 billion bailout to Bear-Stearns, a major cause of the mess in the first place. Today, the Democratic-led Congress is proposing a real solution that will assist real families, and all the President has offered is a veto threat.

I support both the Neighborhood Stabilization Act (H.R. 5818) and the Foreclosure Prevention Act (H.R. 3221). Together, they offer a comprehensive approach that will protect families, stabilize home prices, and expand affordable housing options around the Nation.

This legislation will allow homeowners trapped in untenable mortgages to refinance into FHA-backed mortgages. Lenders and borrowers must each take responsibility by lowering the outstanding principal, and demonstrating an ability to repay, respectively. Requiring borrowers to provide a portion of resale profits to the government further lessens taxpayer exposure. The legislation also provides loans and grants to states to acquire foreclosed properties and turn them into affordable units for both sale and rent. Finally, this bill includes tax provisions aimed at assisting first-time homebuyers, easing the burden of property tax bills, and expanding financing of low-income housing projects.

Just as important is what this legislation does not do. Unlike the bill passed by the Senate, these bills do not provide irresponsible and unnecessary tax breaks to homebuilders, nor do they include a tax incentive to purchase foreclosed properties that would likely increase the number of foreclosures.

I urge all my colleagues to support both bills before us today, and vote for policies that will stem the tide of foreclosures and provide real help to struggling families. If the Federal Government can provide a handout to Wall Street, we can certainly offer a hand up to families.

TRIBUTE TO PARTICIPANTS IN 2008
WE THE PEOPLE NATIONAL
FINALS

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Madam Speaker, from May 3–5, 2008, more than 1,200 students from across the country visited Washington, DC, to take part in the national finals

of We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution, the most extensive educational program in the country developed to educate young people about the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. Administered by the Center for Civic Education, the We the People program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education by act of Congress.

I am proud to announce that a group of outstanding students from St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Overland Park, Kansas, through their knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, won the statewide competition, earning the chance to come to our Nation's capital and compete at the national level.

While in Washington, the students participated in a three-day academic competition that simulates a congressional hearing in which they "testify" before a panel of judges. Students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of constitutional principles as they evaluate, take, and defend positions on relevant historical and contemporary issues. It is important to note that independent studies of the We the People program indicate that alumni of this nationally-acclaimed program display a greater political tolerance and commitment to the principles and values of the Constitution and Bill of Rights than do students using traditional textbooks and approaches. With various reports and surveys that reveal the lack of civic knowledge and engagement, I am pleased to support such an outstanding program that continues to produce enlightened and responsible citizens.

Madam Speaker, the names of these outstanding students from St. Thomas Aquinas High School are:

Hillary Bourquin, Rosemarie Boyles, Annie Clark, Michelle Coombs, Alexander Davidson, Blair Donahue, Maria Dudley, Jillian Falbre, Lauren Hannifan, Lisa Hartung, Sarah Hermes, Veronica Holton, Erin Jolley, Emily Majerie, Arica Maurer, Kirsten Milliard, Theresa Nelson, Angela Nigro, Daniel Obermeier, Courtney Pigott, Rose Reynolds, Amanda Schnieders, Jonathan Shoulta, Emily Stone, David Sullivan, Bryan Thelen, Brittany Wilderson, and Jerry Wohletz.

I also wish to commend the teachers of the class, Tim Lillis and Amy Person, who are responsible for preparing these young constitutional experts for the statewide competition and national finals. Also worthy of special recognition is Lynn Stanley, the State coordinator, and Ken Thomas, the district coordinator, who are among those responsible for implementing the We the People program in my State.

I congratulate these students on their exceptional achievements at the We the People national finals.

TRIBUTE TO STATE SENATOR
MARY LOU RATH

HON. THOMAS M. REYNOLDS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to honor a respected and dedicated legislator, a valued educator and community leader, and close confidante and dear friend who, for more than three decades, has dedicated her life and service to her neighbors in Western New York.