

TRIBUTE TO HARLAND MIESER

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, let me take this moment to recognize the career of Harland Mieser of Lafayette County, Missouri. Mr. Mieser served as Associate Commissioner of Lafayette County for 18 years.

Mr. Mieser has been an outstanding public official, serving as a member of the West Central Missouri Solid Waste Management District Region F, the Waverly Regional Youth Center Liaison Council, Inc., Lafayette County Inter-Agency, Prairie Rose Resource Conservation and Development Council, Pioneer Trails Regional Planning Commission, and the Highway 13 Coalition Committee. His public service culminated with position as Lafayette County Commissioner. From 1991–1994 he served as the Eastern Associate Commissioner in Lafayette County and then from 1997–2008 he served as Southern Associate Commissioner of Lafayette County.

As Mr. Mieser retires from his current post, I trust that the Members of the House will join me in thanking him for his outstanding leadership in the Missouri community.

CELEBRATING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BOK TOWER GARDENS

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the upcoming 80th anniversary of the Bok Tower Gardens. President Calvin Coolidge first dedicated the Bok Tower Gardens for visitation on February 1, 1929.

Edward Bok, a Pulitzer Prize winning author, commissioned the building of the gardens and bird sanctuary in the early 1920s in Lake Wales, FL. The gardens were originally designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., atop a 14-acre area on Iron Mountain, one of the highest points in Florida. The gardens have expanded to cover nearly 700 acres today.

Architect Milton Medary was commissioned to design and construct the tower in 1926. The tower stretches 205 feet into the sky and is intended to be the focal point of the gardens. It is primarily made of marble and includes a 60-bell carillon at the top.

Mr. Bok died on January 9, 1930, less than a year after the completion of the tower. He is now buried at the base of the tower. His dream of creating and preserving a place of beauty and peace is still alive today, a true and long-lasting gift to our State. It has played host to concerts, weddings, educational and charity events, as well as numerous other important community benefits. It is also a wonderful place for a family get together.

The Garden Sanctuary and Tower were designated as National Historic Landmarks on April 19, 1993. The Bok Tower Gardens serve as one of Florida's most beautiful natural settings. I urge my colleagues to join me in celebrating the anniversary of this great Florida landmark.

HONORING STATE REPRESENTATIVE TREY MARTINEZ FISCHER AND FAMILY

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Mr. GONZALEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Texas State Representative Trey Martinez Fischer and his wife Elizabeth Provencio on the arrival of their first born, Francesca Maria Provencio Fischer. Francesca Maria was born on January 4th, 2009 at 6:01 a.m. and I'm proud to report that Francesca Maria and her mother are both healthy and doing well.

As both Trey and Elizabeth now know, words cannot quite describe the joy and thrill of being a new parent. I am certain that Francesca Maria will grow up in a loving environment and learn from the great example set by her parents of duty, responsibility, and compassion.

The journey they are embarking upon together will prove to be an unparalleled life experience, and I wish their entire family the best for a healthy and happy lifetime together.

IN TRIBUTE TO THEODORE BIKEI

HON. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Theodore Bikel on receiving the Creative Leadership Award from the National Jewish Theater and the American Theater Festival. Throughout his life, Mr. Bikel has displayed an unwavering commitment to arts awareness, human rights, and Jewish activism, and his service to our nation is truly inspiring. No stranger to the Sunshine State, Theodore Bikel was the co-creator, co-author and co-star of the successful play Sholom Aleichem Lives, performed in early 1997 in several Florida theatres. He is also the writer and star of Sholom Aleichem: Laughter Through Tears, which recently had its world premiere in Washington, D.C. Additionally, on his long list of accomplishments, Mr. Bikel created the role of Baron Von Trapp in the original Broadway production of The Sound of Music and starred as Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof more than 2,000 times. Bikel's career began in Tel Aviv, Israel, where he co-founded the Cameri Theatre, and performed classical and modern drama in Hebrew. Some of his most prominent honors include receiving an Emmy Award in 1988, having held the position of senior vice president of the American Jewish Congress, and accepting both a Doctor of Humane Letters from Hebrew Union College and the title of MAGGID from the World Union for Progressive Judaism. As Mr. Bikel marks his 85th birthday this June with a celebratory concert at Carnegie Hall, I feel grateful for this talented individual whose artistic vision and civic activism have profoundly touched the lives of all Americans.

HELP OUR BORDER COMMUNITIES

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker and colleagues, I rise today to speak about a very important bill that I just introduced, the Save Our Border Communities Act (H.R. 670). The bill would reimburse police, firefighters and other first responders for services associated with U.S. Ports of Entry.

Local law enforcement and first responders are bearing the brunt of protecting our borders. The federal government has not reimbursed border towns for border-related incidents and its drain on local police, firefighters and first responders is increasingly unbearable.

In Imperial County, California, the already strained local police department has announced that due to the high volume of border-related requests, it will no longer respond to most calls from the U.S.-Mexico Port of Entry. The local police department stated they cannot afford to process and transport the numerous individuals with out-of-county misdemeanor warrants to the local jail. Now, instead of being brought to justice, these individuals are set free.

It is about time the federal government pays its fair share. I urge my colleagues to join me in ensuring all our border communities are fully reimbursed for protecting our nation's borders by supporting the Save Our Border Communities Act.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION ALLOWING INTERSTATE SHIPMENT OF UNPASTEURIZED MILK

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, I rise to introduce legislation that allows the shipment and distribution of unpasteurized milk and milk products for human consumption across state lines. This legislation removes an unconstitutional restraint on farmers who wish to sell or otherwise distribute, and people who wish to consume, unpasteurized milk and milk products.

My office has heard from numerous people who would like to obtain unpasteurized milk. Many of these people have done their own research and come to the conclusion that unpasteurized milk is healthier than pasteurized milk. These Americans have the right to consume these products without having the Federal Government second-guess their judgment about what products best promote health. If there are legitimate concerns about the safety of unpasteurized milk, those concerns should be addressed at the state and local level.

I urge my colleagues to join me in promoting consumers' rights, the original intent of the Constitution, and federalism by cosponsoring my legislation to allow the interstate shipment of unpasteurized milk and milk products for human consumption.

DTV DELAY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 27, 2009

Mr. MARKEY of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend you for quickly putting this Senate legislation (S. 328) before the House for immediate consideration. This is a bill that is responsive to the slate of digital television issues confronting consumers and the television industry.

In several weeks, without immediate action, millions of Americans may remain unprepared for the digital television transition. Mr. Speaker, as you know, I have had a long interest in the digital television transition. I held the very first hearing on "High Definition TV" in October of 1987—more than 20 years ago. In 1990, I battled hard and successfully as then-Chairman of the House Telecommunications and Finance Subcommittee to get the Federal Communications Commission to switch from pursuing an "analog" HDTV standard to a "digital" standard. Moreover, I fought to build into the Telecomm Act in 1996 the appropriate way in which broadcasters could utilize "spectrum flexibility" to multiplex the digital signal into several video programming channels or offer wireless interactive television or information services. And I pushed unsuccessfully in the context of the 1997 budget battles to prohibit the sale of "analog-only" televisions by the year 2000—an amendment that was opposed by every Republican in our Committee markup in 1997. The result was over a hundred million analog-only sets were sold into the marketplace even as the government was stipulating it intended to turn off the analog TV signal. The failure to mandate "dual tuner" TVs sooner has compounded the difficulty of this transition immeasurably by increasing the base of TV receivers that need converter boxes to receive digital TV signals.

Most recently, for the last two years as the Telecommunications and Internet Subcommittee Chairman, I convened six DTV hearings, requested and received three Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports, and wrote numerous oversight letters to the FCC, to NTIA, and to industry and consumer representatives in headlong pursuit of ensuring a successful digital television transition on February 17th.

At the last DTV hearing that we held the second week of September—just after the Wilmington, North Carolina switch-over test—the GAO testified:

"NTIA is effectively implementing the converter box subsidy program, but its plans to address the likely increase in coupon demand as the transition nears remain unclear. . . . With a spike in demand likely as the transition date nears, NTIA has no specific plans to address an increase in demand; therefore, consumers might incur significant wait time before they receive coupons as the transition nears and might lose television service during the time they are waiting for the coupons."

In response, I asked the Acting NTIA Administrator to give the Subcommittee a contingency plan for dealing with the expected surge in coupons within 30 days. Now, that contingency plan did not arrive in 30 days. Instead, it arrived to us on November 6th—just after

Election Day. The NTIA's "Final Phase" plan did not echo the GAO's alarm bells, but rather stated the following:

"This Plan demonstrates that the Coupon Program has both sufficient funds and system processing capabilities to achieve this goal . . . and to do so without the creation a large backlog. Also, NTIA has built flexibility into the Program to respond to various or unexpected events. Moreover, based on actual, cumulative redemption data, NTIA would not exhaust the authorized \$1.34 billion in coupon funding despite increased demand leading up to the analog shut-down on February 17th, and, in fact, may return as much as \$340 million to the U.S. Treasury."

That's from the NTIA just over two months ago. "No problem," the agency is saying. In essence the agency is telling Congress, "We have a plan to deal with the surge and we don't need any more money. No large backlog. And we'll have hundreds of millions of dollars left over."

Now, why is this important? It is important because we were actually in session in November. We could have acted during the "lame duck" session if the Bush Administration had said, "yes, we will likely have a shortfall", or "please, Congress, let's err on the side of caution and budget a couple hundred million more just in case . . .". Yet NTIA told us all just the opposite. The agency said everything was fine and they didn't need additional money for coupons.

In late December, I asked for an urgent status update on the program. That's when NTIA wrote back to me—on December 24th—stating that a waiting list was going to begin in January of this year because the coupon program was hitting its funding ceiling. The agency indicated that to solve this issue and spend up to the \$1.34 Billion in the underlying statute for coupons that another 250 million dollars at a minimum might be needed. And that amount would not necessarily reflect the actual demand for coupons the agency was newly projecting. The waiting list now represents approximately 3 million coupons.

In an attempt to respond quickly, I reached out the first week we returned here in January to Ranking Member JOE BARTON (R-TX) and said if we work together on an accounting fix we could start to address the waiting list issue and get the coupons flowing to consumers again and buy some time. I want to thank Rep. BARTON for his willingness to proceed on such a bill.

But that effort has simply become overtaken by events. If we passed it and also gave NTIA a couple hundred million dollars for additional coupons in a measure that passed through the House and through the Senate today, and arrived to the President's desk this evening, we simply wouldn't be able to address the backlog and get coupons out to people who have requested them by February 17th.

Not every media market will be as unprepared as others on February 17th. I know that in the Boston market, our local commercial and noncommercial broadcasters, as well as our local cable operators, have worked diligently to be ready on February 17th and I commend them for their model efforts. Yet even in Boston, it is important to note that a recent test brought a flood of calls to consumer call centers from citizens confused about or unprepared for the switchover. Many other media markets, in part due to the demographic makeup of such markets, will have an

even greater risk of significant dislocation without immediate action. The Bush Administration has simply left us with so little time to make the needed adjustments on a national basis absent a short, one-time delay.

So, although this is the last place we all wanted to be, and in spite of the fact that we toiled mightily to make this effort work, it is my judgment that a short delay is in the public interest in order to protect consumers. I urge passage of this emergency DTV legislation.

LAW ENFORCEMENT STATUS FOR
LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I recently reintroduced, along with my colleague JOHN MCHUGH, The Law Enforcement Officers Equity Act (H.R. 673). The purpose of this bill is simply to give law enforcement status to all federal law enforcement officers!

Many federal officials—for example, the Border Patrol—are classified as "law enforcement officers," for the purposes of determining salary and retirement benefits. But many other officers—such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Inspectors, Veterans' Affairs Police Officers, U.S. Mint Police Officers, Internal Revenue Officers, Customs and Border Protection Seized Property Specialists, and police officers in about two dozen other agencies—do not have equal pay and benefits status.

The tragic irony, Madam Speaker, is that the only time these officers are classified as law enforcement officers is when they are killed in the line of duty. Then their names are inscribed on the wall of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial right here in Washington.

Let me say that again. It is only when they are killed that they are called law enforcement officers, and that is a tragic irony.

My district encompasses the entire California-Mexico border and is home to two of the busiest border crossings in the entire world, so I am very familiar with the work of our nation's border inspectors. They wear bulletproof vests, they carry firearms, and, unfortunately, have to use them. Most importantly, these inspectors are subject to the same risks as other officers with whom they serve side-by-side. However, they are not eligible for early retirement and other benefits, which are designed to maintain a young and vigorous law enforcement workforce that we need to combat those who pose life-threatening risks to our society.

The Law Enforcement Officers Equity Act will provide well-deserved pay and retirement benefits to the officers protecting our borders, our ports of entry, our military and veterans' installations and other sensitive government buildings. The costs of these benefits would likely be off-set by savings in training costs and increased revenue collection. The bill will also reduce turnover, increase yield, decrease recruitment and development costs and enhance the retention of a well-trained and experienced workforce.

Madam Speaker, the simple fact is that these officers have dangerous jobs and deserve to be recognized as law enforcement officers, just like others with whom they serve,