

of the Central Valley upon its 25th anniversary of service to the community and the families of patients at Children's Hospital Central California. I invite my colleagues to join me in wishing Ronald McDonald Charities many years of continued success.

HONORING GABRIEL AND LOUISE AMATO AS THEY CELEBRATE THEIR 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

**HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 7, 2009*

Ms. DeLAURO. Madam Speaker, it is my great pleasure to rise today to join the many family and friends who have gathered to celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of Gabriel and Louise Amato—quite a milestone for this wonderful couple. Gabe and Louise are more than just my dear friends—they are family—and I am so happy to have this opportunity to congratulate them on this golden anniversary.

Gabe and Louise met as teenagers—Gabe was 17 and Louise was 14—at a Catholic Youth Organization. It was kismet and the two soon became inseparable. They later married on Halloween in 1959. Louise was an educator for more than 25 years and Gabe, after serving in the United States Army for 2 years, worked for the APA Transport Company for nearly 30 years. Together they raised three beautiful children, Laurie, Cheryl, and Marc.

Some of my fondest memories include my cousin Gabe and his wife Louise—they are both so energetic, vibrant, and full of life. Gabe continues to be an active athlete playing basketball and bowling every week. He once won the golden ring for bowling a 300 game and just last week came close to repeating that feat when he bowled a 299. And, though she retired a few years ago, Louise is still engaged in the community.

Anyone who knows them can tell you that Gabe and Louise are a special couple. They are fierce friends—never far from those who need a helping hand. I cannot think of a time when I could not turn to them when I was in need and I have no doubt that you would hear similar stories from all of those fortunate enough to have benefitted from their friendship over the years.

Today, as Gabe and Louise celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary and reflect on the life they built for themselves, they can be proud of the many ways in which they have touched the lives of others. Parent, friend, mentor, and, most importantly, spouse, Gabe and Louise have supported each other and all of those around them with a generosity, kindness, and compassion that is impossible to describe—it can only be felt.

It is with the warmest of hearts that I rise today to join their children, Laurie, Cheryl and Marc; their eight grandchildren, Christopher, Lindsey, Justin, Sydney, Erica, Sera, Marc, and Katie; as well as the multitude of family and friends who have gathered today to wish them a very happy 50th wedding anniversary and all the best for many more years of love and happiness.

TRIBUTE TO A CALIFORNIA WATER ICON: THOMAS J. GRAFF

**HON. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 7, 2009*

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Thomas J. Graff, who passed away on November 12, 2009, after a courageous battle with cancer. Tom will be remembered as the dynamic force that helped shape the way that the State of California and the Federal Government manage water and protect the environmental resources of the State. Tom worked for and founded the California office of the Environmental Defense Fund in Oakland. His water achievements were based on an ability to work effectively with water users, legislators, conservationists, economists, and the public. He was known for his insightful thinking, writing and ability to translate complex water issues into understandable dialogue that legislators and the public could understand.

The water and environmental communities have lost a valuable champion, a true leader and a good friend. In a world today where hard feelings and rhetoric seem to capture the headlines, Tom worked to find the common ground and opportunities for sound water management. Tom's shoes will never be filled, but we can set a path to continue to follow his philosophy of finding solutions for our complex water issues.

"Along with much of California, I have been informed and inspired by Tom Graff since the mid-1970s," said Tim Brick, chairman of the board of directors for Metropolitan Water District, Los Angeles, California. "Tom truly recognized the value of water and fought to ensure that the environment gets its rightful share. Long before others, he was a beacon in promoting conservation, water transfers and environmental protections as solutions for California's great water systems, the Colorado River, the Central Valley Project, and the State Water Project. The development of policies and programs to ensure a sustainable Bay-Delta will be his greatest legacy."

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Graff, and I wish to express my sincere sympathy to his family as well as the extended family who have endured the loss of their loved one. I ask that all Members join me to honor this icon for his life's work.

INTRODUCTION OF PERSONAL HEALTH RECORD ACT OF 2009

**HON. PATRICK J. KENNEDY**

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 7, 2009*

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam Speaker, the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 will expedite the adoption of electronic medical records throughout the health care sector nationwide. Creating an interoperable information technology network for health care will decrease health care costs and increase patient safety. While the implementation of electronic medical records were an internal feature of this act, another new and innovative technology, the personal health

record (PHR), has emerged to further strengthen the health care system by engaging individuals directly in their health care experiences. Active consumer engagement promises better patient health outcomes, reduction in health care costs, and greater patient safety. For these reasons, I am proud to introduce the Personal Health Records Act of 2009 today with my colleague Representative DAVID REICHERT.

We are all concerned with rising health care costs. Portable, Internet-based PHRs can be a critical piece of the process of improving the quality and efficiency of the health care system in this country. With PHRs, patients can both electronically import and export pertinent medical information to their health care providers. As a patient travels between multiple health care facilities, the patient's complete medical record can be easily accessed at the nearest computer, thus decreasing health care cost through limiting the number of repeated laboratory and diagnostic tests.

PHRs also engage patients in their medical care decisions by allowing them to personalize their medical history, medication lists, and allergies from a click of their mouse at their home. Patients can avoid repeatedly having to fill out the proverbial office room clipboard repeatedly. Additionally, PHRs can give patients a vehicle for personalized communication with their providers, thus allowing them to receive reminders, as an example, for preventive care, or receive information about medications they have been prescribed.

In order to maximize the potential of PHRs, the Personal Health Records Act of 2009 would define the critical components to be included in PHRs, including past medical and surgical history, medications, and allergies. The legislation also requires the Office of the National Coordinator to develop guidelines regarding the technological standards for interoperability between PHRs and electronic health records, and makes recommendations for the incorporation of PHRs into community and behavioral health programs. As health care provider adoption of PHRs is paramount to their success, Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act would be available for providers that demonstrate meaningful use of electronic medical records through the interoperability of electronic medical records with PHRs.

Since PHRs will change the landscape of how confidential, health care information is obtained across the nation, issues of privacy, security, and patient safety are incorporated into PHR development from the onset. While the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 addresses many of these issues, the Personal Health Record Act further evaluates issues pertaining to PHR privacy, utilization, and patient safety.

The Personal Health Record Act aims to empower individuals to have a greater involvement in their medical care decisions. This engagement will lead to better health outcomes, not only by giving health care providers a more complete picture of a patient's medical history, but also by providing a tool through which the consumer can actively engage in their health care.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass this legislation.

EXTENDING CONDOLENCES TO  
FAMILIES OF SLAIN WASH-  
INGTON OFFICERS

SPEECH OF

**HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN**

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 2, 2009*

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my deep sorrow and most sincere condolences to the families of Sergeant Mark Renninger, Officer Tina Griswold, Officer Ronald Owens, and Officer Greg Richards. These four officers, who so honorably served the Lakewood, Washington, Police Department, were tragically gunned down as they began their shifts last Sunday morning.

I, like all Americans, was shocked and horrified to hear of this brutal crime against four uniformed officers. Having grown up around law enforcement as a young police cadet, I know firsthand the challenges and dangers of the job, and the selflessness of those who wear the uniform and dedicate their lives to protecting their communities.

I come to the floor today to add my voice to all those expressing their grief and their outrage over these senseless killings, and I want to send my thoughts and prayers to the officers' families, especially the children these public servants have left behind. They will need untold strength in the coming days, but I know they will find all they need and more in the memory and example that their courageous parents have left for them.

Let us remember always the service of not only these four officers, but of all those who wear the uniform and make our safety their first priority.

PERMANENT ESTATE TAX RELIEF  
FOR FAMILIES, FARMERS, AND  
SMALL BUSINESSES ACT OF 2009

SPEECH OF

**HON. IKE SKELTON**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 3, 2009*

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, nearly all American families do not qualify for the Federal estate tax. In fact, under the law as currently written in 2009, 99.75 percent of estates are exempt.

The Federal estate tax has been amended many times through the years—most recently in 2001 as part of the Republicans' omnibus tax cut legislation. That measure gradually increased estate tax exemptions and lowered estate tax rates between 2001 and 2009.

In 2002, people with estates valued less than \$1 million (\$2 million for joint filers) after deductions for expenses, debts, and bequests to a surviving spouse or charity were exempt from paying the Federal estate tax. Those with estates above that value were taxed at a rate of 55 percent.

In 2009, people with estates valued less than \$3.5 million (\$7 million for joint filers) after deductions for expenses, debts, and bequests to a surviving spouse or charity are exempt from paying the Federal estate tax. Those with estates above that value are taxed at a rate of 45 percent.

The 2001 tax law phases out the federal estate tax in 2010 but then reinstates the tax in 2011 at the level it was in 2002—\$1 million for single filers and \$2 million for those filing a joint return. This fluctuation in estate tax rates has caused a great deal of confusion for business owners and farmers who are participating in estate planning. In order to provide more certainty to those individuals, the Congress has been working to set a permanent estate tax rate that would exempt nearly all but the very wealthiest Americans.

Through the years, I have voted to eliminate the estate tax or to maintain suitably high exemptions to better shield farmers and small business owners from the burdens of the tax. This year, I cosponsored H.R. 3905, bipartisan legislation written by Congresswoman SHELLEY BERKLEY (D-NV) that would permanently exempt estates valued at less than \$5 million for single filers and \$10 million for joint filers and set the tax rate on estates valued above that amount at 45 percent on a decreasing scale to 35 percent over the next ten years.

I have also cosponsored H.R. 3524, the Family Farm Preservation and Conservation Estate Tax Act, which was introduced by Congressman MIKE THOMPSON. This legislation would add a provision to the federal tax code allowing farmers and ranchers to defer payment of the Federal estate tax as long as the land is owned within the family and remains in agricultural production. H.R. 3524 would also defer the tax for land placed into a conservation easement. The measure would represent a win for farmers, for conservation and hunters, and for all of rural America. That is why it is supported by groups like the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, the National Corn Growers Association, the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, the National Milk Producers Federation, the National Pork Producers Council, the Dairy Farmers of America, and the Agricultural Retailers Association.

While I would have preferred the House of Representatives to consider one of these well-written bills, the House of Representatives has considered a different measure, H.R. 4154, the Permanent Estate Tax Relief for Families, Farmers, and Small Businesses Act of 2009, which would permanently extend the estate tax levels at the current, 2009 rates.

It is very important for families, farmers, and businesses to have greater certainty with respect to estate planning. Groups representing a good number of Missourians expressed to me their views on this issue. The Dairy Farmers of America, which represents nearly 18,000 dairy producers in America, urged Congress to "take action now on this important measure" and to "support H.R. 4154." The American Farm Bureau Federation, while neutral on the bill, indicated the "need for certainty in estate tax law and the importance of maintaining the stepped-up basis." And, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing more than three million businesses and organizations, wrote that Congress should "expeditiously approve a permanent estate tax solution to provide certainty for family-owned businesses and farms." The Chamber further indicated that "H.R. 4154, the 'Permanent Estate Tax Relief for Families, Farmers, and Small Businesses Act of 2009,' is a step towards this goal."

As a rural Missouri Congressman, I understand that farms and small businesses are dis-

proportionately impacted by the Federal estate tax. That is why I supported H.R. 4154. Under the 2009 estate tax guidelines, nearly all small businesses and farms are exempt from paying the tax. Only a small fraction of all estates in America—9,600—are expected to owe Federal estate taxes in 2009. For farmers, USDA data indicate that, after deductions, approximately 554 farm estates throughout our Nation would be considered taxable.

We should strive to reduce the number of farms and small businesses that are subject to the Federal estate tax. As I have mentioned, I have cosponsored legislation to do just that. And, to make clear my view that we should strive for higher tax exemptions, I was one of only 21 Democrats to vote with Republicans against the Rule to consider H.R. 4154 in the House of Representatives and was one of only 18 Democrats to vote with Republicans to send H.R. 4154 back to the Ways and Means Committee so that it could be improved.

At the end of the day, though, both of those procedural votes failed and we were left with two choices—either pass a bill to give farmers and small business owners more certainty or sit back and do nothing, which would allow the rates to become more painful to farmers and small business owners over the next 2 years. To me, that choice was easy. H.R. 4154 is a step in the right direction and I look forward to working with the Senate on this important legislation.

HONORING DIRECTOR ROBERT  
PARKER

**HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 7, 2009*

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a true leader and a dedicated public servant, Miami-Dade Police Department Director Robert Parker.

After honorably serving his country in the Army, Robert Parker continued his service by joining the Miami-Dade Police Department in 1976. With his hard work and dedication to the police department and to the residents of south Florida, he was able to earn his way through the ranks, eventually being appointed as the director in 2004.

As director, Robert Parker was in charge of the eighth largest police department in the country with more than 4,700 sworn and non-sworn personnel serving almost 2.5 million residents and visitors.

Director Parker's retirement culminates a long and illustrious career serving and protecting the residents of Miami-Dade County. The Mortgage Fraud Task Force initiated by Director Parker's department has become a national model of success in targeting mortgage fraud crimes.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you join me in thanking Director Robert Parker for his dedicated service to the great people of south Florida and wish him and his family well in his retirement.