

provided emergency response training to first responders in all fifty States and territories, as well as Federal Government employees, foreign officials, and private entities. The Center is especially well-known internationally for its weapons of mass destruction training facility.

The Center often receives offers of donated goods and services, such as training displays, response equipment, and trailers. These donations would allow the Center to offer stronger training opportunities at a lower cost to the Department of Homeland Security, DHS, and the American taxpayer. Regrettably, the Center does not have the legal authority to accept gifts that would enhance its ability to deliver superior training.

H.R. 3978 would amend the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 to permit the Center to receive donated gifts and services that are related to preparedness for and response to terrorism. The legislation further calls on the Secretary of Homeland Security to annually report to Congress on gifts accepted and how such gifts contribute to the mission of the Center.

Other DHS training centers, such as the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, already have the authority to accept gifts and donations. It is only appropriate that the Center also have this authority.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3978 is a straight-forward piece of legislation that will pay immediate dividends for our first responder community. I support its passage and encourage my colleagues to support it as well.

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#### THE LOSS OF JACK PEEL

### HON. KATHY CASTOR

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 16, 2009*

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today in honor of a brave American veteran and a great Floridian, Jack Peel, who passed away on November 29, 2009.

Mr. Peel was a native Floridian, born in Chipley, and a graduate of Chipley High School. He served his country for four years in the Navy where he made lifelong friends with his fellow sailors. He then joined the Air Force where he remained for the next 26 years and retired as master sergeant.

After retirement from the military, Mr. Peel and his beloved wife Lynette made their home in Bay Crest Park in Hillsborough County, Tampa. There he dedicated his time to public service. He served as president of the Bay Crest Park Civic Association, an active member of the Town N Country Alliance, a Catholic Church community volunteer and advocate. Jack Peel had a talent for persuading his neighbors, policymakers, and the Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners to beautify and enhance Bay Crest and Town N Country. He and Lynette and the outstanding Town N Country community activists worked diligently to improve our community. For his dedication to service, the Civic Association completed Peel Park in December 2009 in honor of Mr. Peel.

Madam Speaker, Jack Peel will be greatly missed. For all who love our community, be inspired by Jack Peel's dedication and service.

#### BUENOS AIRES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

### HON. RAÚL M. GRIJALVA

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 16, 2009*

Mr. GRIJALVA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to all the staff at the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge consists of a beautiful 118,000 acres of mountains, riparian zones, and grasslands in the Southern Arizona desert and contains majestic areas such as Brown Canyon, Arivaca Cienega and the Baboquivari Mountains.

The Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge is a sanctuary for many different types of wildlife including the Pima pineapple cactus, the pygmy-owl and the endangered masked bobwhite quail. Additionally, 325 bird species, 53 species of reptiles and amphibians, 58 mammal species, including mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn, javelina, and mountain lions all call the Refuge home. Without the protection of the Refuge, many of these species would disappear and be lost to us forever. The Refuge is also a vital part of the community and offers guided tours, hiking, camping, horseback riding, mountain biking, excellent birding, and plenty of beautiful picnic areas. The Refuge even offers wonderful educational opportunities through volunteer projects and nature workshops.

The men and women employed at the Refuge work tirelessly to preserve this beautiful area. Through their efforts, the Refuge has successfully reintroduced the endangered bobwhite quail and the pronghorn deer into the wild and ensures their continued protection. These people are truly the guardians of an environmental treasure and view their task as a privilege, not just a job.

In addition to the wonderful staff at the Refuge, an exemplary group of volunteers known as the Friends of the Buenos Aires National Refuge dedicate their time to the community education conservation, and preservation of this wonderful land. This nonprofit group gives selflessly to promote the goals of the Refuge and with the help of the Refuge staff; they recently held the 1st Annual Grasslands Fair to celebrate this beloved land.

The Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, its staff, and the volunteers who dedicate their time are all truly valued players in the protection of America's wild lands. Being a member of the House Committee on Natural Resources and having seen our community grow to over a million people, during my lifetime, I know the importance of protecting areas like the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. It gives me great joy to see such wonderful people giving of themselves to preserve and protect this spectacular region of southern Arizona.

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#### A PROCLAMATION HONORING MICHELE MANISKAS FOR HER CERTIFICATION BY THE NA- TIONAL BOARD FOR PROFES- SIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS

### HON. ZACHARY T. SPACE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 16, 2009*

Mr. SPACE. Madam Speaker,

Whereas, Michele Maniskas has been granted certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; and

Whereas, Michele Maniskas has sufficiently demonstrated adherence and dedication to the five core propositions of teaching set by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; and

Whereas, due to her hard work and dedication to her profession, Michele Maniskas was able to achieve this esteemed honor; and

Whereas, we recognize the values and lessons teachers impart to our children; and

Whereas, the creative ingenuity that Michele Maniskas has demonstrated while educating her students; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that along with Ohio's 18th Congressional District, I congratulate Michele Maniskas for her certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

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#### AUTHORITY TO CONVERT CERTAIN OVERSEAS LIMITED APPOINT- MENTS TO PERMANENT AP- POINTMENTS

SPEECH OF

### HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 15, 2009*

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1517, a bipartisan bill authored by Representative ENGEL and the ranking member on the Committee of Homeland Security, Representative KING.

As chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, I am grateful to these members for putting before us today a bill that aims to fix a discrete but important issue at Customs and Border Protection.

In short, this bill gives the Commissioner the authority to noncompetitively convert approximately 35 overseas CBP employees into full-time permanent civil service positions.

These employees were originally hired by the Immigration and Naturalization Service under "limited overseas appointment" authority between 1987 and 2003.

Over time, the nature of their work changed, but their employment designation did not.

Since 2005, CBP, the Office of Personnel Management and the Department of State have been trying to fix the glitch, but realize they need the help of Congress.

Doing so will not only ensure that the employees continue to receive the appropriate benefits, but will also provide them with the protections they deserve as dedicated employees serving the CBP mission abroad.

Further, this conversion of employment status will ensure that CBP and the United States honor agreements between our country and our foreign counterparts, such as Ireland, governing U.S. personnel overseas.

Going forward, using the authorities provided to the Commissioner in H.R. 1517, it is my hope that the Commissioner will take the histories of these dedicated 35 individuals into account when applying CBP's rotation policy.

In our attempt to "right the system," CBP should not unduly disrupt the lives of these dedicated individuals, who provide a valuable service to this country.

CELEBRATING METRO GOLD LINE  
CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY'S 10  
YEARS OF SERVICE

**HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 16, 2009*

Mr. SCHIFF. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority as it celebrates ten years of service and commitment to the community. Since the Construction Authority was established by the California State Legislature to design and construct the Pasadena Metro Gold Line, it has completed 13.7 miles of light rail, which averages 24,000 daily weekday boardings.

One decade ago, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, faced with serious budgetary problems, delayed the construction of the light-rail line to Pasadena. Senate Bill 1847 was introduced to create the Construction Authority and finish the work that had already been started on the new rail line. The newly created Construction Authority was not only able to complete the project on time but was also able to build it under budget.

Today, the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority is continuing its work in connecting downtown Los Angeles to the San Gabriel Valley and beyond. Funding has been secured to extend the line to the city of Azusa and plans are in place to continue the Gold Line to Montclair and Ontario International Airport. The success of the Gold Line is a testament of the collaborate efforts between the staff of the Construction Authority and the elected officials, civic leaders, and residents of the surrounding communities.

The Gold Line not only provides a reliable and efficient source of transportation to residents of the greater Los Angeles region, it also alleviates traffic and is a part of our fight to reduce pollution. The congestion on the Gold Line corridor highways has continued to increase as the Inland Empire grows in population. As we work to find solutions to solve our traffic congestion dilemma, extending the Gold Line into our eastern cities is clearly part of the answer.

It is with great pleasure that I congratulate the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority on its ten years of success. I am proud of the role I have played in helping the Gold Line become the pride of the San Gabriel Valley and I wish it continued success!

THE BELLEVUE WOLVERINES

**HON. DAVID G. REICHERT**

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 16, 2009*

Mr. REICHERT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to applaud a phenomenal high school football program in my District—the 8th of Washington—for winning another State Championship—their seventh in nine years.

The Bellevue Wolverines have an illustrious history of football success in the State of Washington, and they continued the trend on Saturday, December 5, defeating the Liberty Patriots, 23–17, to secure another 3A title. Head Coach Butch Goncharoff and his assist-

ants provide some of the best coaching and vision in the country and the program—well known for their great on-the-field success—often makes positive impacts in the community as well.

I congratulate every member of the roster for their continued and storied success on the field. I thank coach Goncharoff, his assistants, Athletic Director Brian Hercules and Principal David Wellington for creating an environment that allows student-athletes to thrive on the field, in the classroom and in their community. Once again, congratulations and I wish the Wolverines all possible success in the future.

A PROCLAMATION HONORING LISA  
ABELE FOR HER CERTIFICATION  
BY THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
PROFESSIONAL TEACHING  
STANDARDS

**HON. ZACHARY T. SPACE**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 16, 2009*

Mr. SPACE. Madam Speaker, Whereas, Lisa Abele has been granted certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; and

Whereas, Lisa Abele has sufficiently demonstrated adherence and dedication to the five core propositions of teaching set by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; and

Whereas, due to her hard work and dedication to her profession, Lisa Abele was able to achieve this esteemed honor; and

Whereas, we recognize the values and lessons teachers impart to our children; and

Whereas, the creative ingenuity that Lisa Abele has demonstrated while educating her students; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that along with Ohio's 18th Congressional District, I congratulate Lisa Abele for her certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

EARMARK DECLARATION

**HON. HAROLD ROGERS**

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 16, 2009*

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Madam Speaker, pursuant to the House Republican standards on congressionally-directed funding, I am submitting the following information regarding funding included in H.R. 3326—Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2010.

Requesting Member: Congressman HAROLD ROGERS

Bill Number: H.R. 3326

Account: PA,A

Legal Name of Requesting Entity: Blue Grass Army Depot

Address of Requesting Entity: 431 Battle Field Memorial Road, Richmond, KY 40475

Description of Request: The funding of \$3.92 million will be used for the Blue Grass Army Depot Superficial Water Oxidation-Conventional Demilitarization. These funds will provide the Army with a state-of-the-art environmentally friendly means of processing the problematic energetic wastes generated at the Blue Grass Army Depot.

HONORING THE LIFE OF FORMER  
CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLYMAN NAO  
TAKASUGI

**HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 16, 2009*

Mr. HONDA. Madam Speaker, today I honor the life and achievements of my dear friend, former California State Assemblymember Nao Takasugi. Nao dedicated his life to public service with humility, integrity, and commitment to the American ideals of equality and justice.

Nao was a 19-year-old student at the University of California, Los Angeles, when he and his family were incarcerated in an internment camp for Japanese Americans during World War II.

His family was forced to sell most of their possessions, but was able to keep the family store, the Asahi Market in downtown Oxnard, which they had owned since 1907.

The Takasugi family was able to save the store during their imprisonment by entrusting the family business to a Mexican American employee, Ignacio Carmona. When the Takasugi family returned to Oxnard in 1945, Mr. Carmona returned the business back to the Takasugis, after faithfully carrying on the business for three years.

In 1943, Nao was among approximately 4,000 Japanese American college students who were released from the internment camps and allowed to attend college on the East Coast. Nao earned his business administration degree at Temple University in Philadelphia and a master's in business administration from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania in 1946. When he returned to Oxnard, he ran his family's Asahi Market.

His family's imprisonment inspired him to commit his life to strengthening our democracy in public service, and did not cause deep embitterment. As Oxnard City Councilman, Mayor, and then California State Assemblyman, he ably represented all of his diverse constituents, crossing racial and ethnic divides, and building bridges across party lines.

At the age of 87, Nao died of complications from a stroke on November 19, 2009. He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Judy, and their five children, Scott, Russell, Ron, Tricia and Lea.

I was truly saddened by the loss of my dear friend Nao Takasugi. He was a gentle soul, and never let his kind demeanor get in the way of his strong beliefs about justice and civil rights. When he spoke, people listened as he was always true to his convictions and sense of honor. I will miss him dearly and will always reflect on his life as a metric of how I should conduct my own.

“THIS CHRISTMAS,” IN HONOR OF  
ALL OUR ARMED FORCES AND  
THEIR FAMILIES THIS CHRIST-  
MAS SEASON

**HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 16, 2009*

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today with a poetic tribute in honor of our