

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IT'S A SOUTHERN THING

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 9, 2009

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, as we kick off 2009, people across the country are making their new year's resolutions and families are carrying on with their special traditions to start the year out on a good note. Of course by mid February you should be able to get a close parking spot at the gym since that's about the time motivation for the fitness resolution begins to wane. However, there are some traditions that endure year after year, particularly in the South where we seem to value our heritage and culture a little more than our friends to the north.

Since I grew up in Texas, black eyed peas and football were the norm for my family, and everyone I knew, on New Year's Day. Everyone had to have at least one bite for good luck, like it or not, it was the rule. It wasn't until I met my first northerner that I realized this was a southern thing unique only unto us.

There are stories that date the "good luck" tradition all the way back the pharaohs of Egypt, but for us it goes back to the War Between the States. During General Sherman's March to the Sea in late December 1864, he ordered the Union troops to "burn and destroy" everything they saw, and "leave a trail that will be recognized fifty years hence."

In the aftermath of the devastation of the South, the only fields that were spared were the crops of black eyed peas and corn. The Northern soldiers considered them food for the livestock and didn't waste time burning them, thereby leaving them as the only real source of food left for the starving southerners. As a result, black eyed peas were seen as the saving grace of the South and became a sentimental symbol of better days that lie ahead.

Now there are a lot of theories on why we must eat them on New Year's Day, but they all revolve around the principle that they bring good luck and prosperity in the coming year. Every family has a different way of cooking them, if you're from the South you can bet your family has a recipe.

In Texas, some just like to serve plain ole' "East Texas Caviar" (as black eyed peas are referred to in Texas). My friends over in Louisiana like to "kick it up a notch" and add tomatoes and Cajun spices, some folks make Hoppin' John with rice and hammocks, and most everyone serves them with cornbread and some type of greens such as collards, mustard or turnip greens, or just cabbage or cole slaw to symbolize money. But you can't just eat the greens and expect a prosperous year, you have to have the peas too. Just one bite, it's the rule. (Although some say you have to eat 365 peas, one for each day or eat "every bean and pea on your plate"—I leave that one up to you!)

I have even heard of people putting a penny in the pot and whoever gets the penny in their

bowl gets the "best" luck of the year. Maybe this is like the baby in the King Cake? Whatever the case, it is a tradition that runs deep in the South and I am glad to see that it is still alive and well. Both my grandmothers had their special recipes, and every New Year's Day I still hound my kids and grandkids to make sure they eat their peas. So, I hope you all had your black eyed peas and for all you transplants living in the great State of Texas, I hope you get with the program and try some East Texas Caviar to start your year off right. It's a Southern thing.

And that's just the way it is.

CELEBRATING SAN YSIDRO'S
CENTENNIAL YEAR!

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 9, 2009

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker and colleagues, I rise today to commemorate the Centennial of the great community of San Ysidro—the gateway to America. San Ysidro is not only home to the world's busiest land border crossing, but is also a multicultural tight-knit community with a rich history and culture like no other. As California's Border Congressman, I am very proud to represent San Ysidro and will continue to be a vocal advocate for our border community. Please join me in this year-long celebration. "¡Adelante San Ysidro!"

HONORING SPECIAL KIDS DAY

HON. PETER J. ROSKAM

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 9, 2009

Mr. ROSKAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize an important community service organization located in Elmhurst, Illinois in my congressional district called Special Kids Day.

Special Kids Day was created in 1990 as a holiday event for children with special needs and their families to visit Santa Claus without obstacles. This venture has evolved into a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing celebratory events for children with disabilities and their families in an environment designed to accommodate their special needs.

On the first Wednesday each December, Special Kids Day holds their flagship event. Volunteers help children get their picture taken with Santa and distribute goodie bags with toys and candy. Other surprises from face painters to balloon animals help make these events a memorable time for special needs children. All of this allows these children and their families to enjoy the magic of the Christmas season without some of the challenges of making a trip to the mall at the holidays.

Today, the Special Kids Day organization has grown to include dozens of volunteers

who serve hundreds of families in the Chicagoland area. For the first time, Special Kids Day also began holding a Carnival Day at the Annual Elmfest in Elmhurst this year.

Madam Speaker and distinguished colleagues, please join me in honoring the time and effort of Special Kids Day volunteers. This organization's selfless, charitable spirit is what makes Illinois' Sixth District such a pleasure to represent.

THE TERMINATION OF RFE/RL
AND VOA RADIO BROADCASTS IN
AZERBAIJAN

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 9, 2009

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise to express deep concern about Azerbaijan's cessation of local broadcasts of Radio Free Europe and Voice of America. After threatening for months to remove RFE/RL and VOA from the FM airwaves, Baku did precisely that on January 1.

The official justification for this unfortunate decision is that a 2002 Azerbaijani law restricts such frequencies to local broadcasters. The Helsinki Commission, which I chair, sent a letter on November 24, co-signed by Co-Chairman Senator BENJAMIN CARDIN and Ranking Minority Member CHRISTOPHER SMITH, to President Ilham Aliiev in which we urged him to reconsider. We pointed out that keeping Congressionally funded RFE/RL and VOA off the FM airwaves was an unwise and unfriendly move and that ending these programs was a poor way to start a relationship with incoming President Barack Obama. But Baku did not budge. Nor, might I add, have we even received the courtesy of a reply since November.

In fact, there are grounds for even graver concerns. Baku had pledged that only FM broadcasts would be ended. On January 6, however, Azerbaijani authorities tried to close down RFE/RL's Internet operation—which they had said would not be touched.

It is difficult to see these actions in any light other than a desire to restrict information available to the public. As the State Department said on December 30, "These media organizations play a crucial role in supporting democratic debate and the free exchange of ideas and information. This decision, if carried out, will represent a serious setback to freedom of speech, and retard democratic reform in Azerbaijan."

I concur completely. Azerbaijan's record on media freedom was poor before this, with heavy state influence on the airwaves, three journalists in jail and frequent criticism by the OSCE, Council of Europe and freedom of speech advocates. Now, Azerbaijanis without access to cable or the Internet—which means most of the listening audience—are cut off from objective, impartial sources of information.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

Azerbaijani relations with the United States will surely be negatively affected by this decision. I regret that when President Ilham Aliiev eventually meets President Barack Obama, they will have to spend time discussing why Baku has shut down U.S.-funded radio stations, instead of exploring ways to deepen the relationship between our countries.

The Helsinki Commission intends to examine U.S. international broadcasting in a future hearing and discuss ways of ensuring the continuance of this vital service. Meanwhile, it is my hope that President Aliiev will find a way to keep RFE/RL and VOA on the air.

BCS/UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

HON. JASON CHAFFETZ

OF UTAH

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 9, 2009

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Madam Speaker, the University of Utah Football Team deserves to be National Champions. The Running Utes of Utah had a remarkably perfect 13-0 season, the only undefeated team out of the 119 in the NCAA's Football Bowl Subdivision. They started the season by defeating the perennial powerhouse Michigan Wolverines. They beat the Oregon State Beavers, who one week earlier had beaten the #1-ranked USC Trojans. They went on to beat the TCU Horned Frogs and the BYU Cougars, who were both ranked in the top 15 of the BCS at the time. Finally, in the Sugar Bowl, the University of Utah crushed the University of Alabama, who was ranked #1 in the BCS for much of the season. The Utes were able to turn back the Crimson Tide, but were still wiped out of consideration for the BCS National Championship.

Perhaps the Bowl Championship Series, the so-called BCS, would best be referred to as the Good 'Ol Boys Championship Series. The University of Utah bowled over 13 opponents this year without a single loss. It would be seemingly inappropriate for the Utes to be bowled over by the good 'ol boys off the field. The University of Utah Football Team deserves to be National Champions.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF ROBERT H. CHRISTY, JR., CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT FOR BUNCOMBE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

HON. HEATH SHULER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 9, 2009

Mr. SHULER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Robert H. Christy, Jr., on his impending retirement. He has faithfully and effectively served as the Buncombe County Clerk of Superior Court for the past 18 years and will retire on December 31, 2008.

Since his initial swearing in on September 1, 1990, Bob Christy has overseen the court system during a time of tremendous growth. During that time, his office has grown from 47 employees to 65. Criminal and civil court filings have more than doubled during his tenure. Previously practicing law in the community, Christy's experience as an assistant clerk of

court to J. Ray Ellingburg for 7 years prepared him well for the clerkship.

As Clerk of Court, Christy managed Buncombe County's District Court and Superior Court, an operation that entails approximately \$25 million in annual revenue. Beyond monetary responsibilities, Christy supervised record-keeping in the local courts for all civil actions, special proceedings, court minutes, liens and other actions.

Mr. Christy found opportunity in the clerkship to express his great compassion for the elderly, the bereaved, and the struggling of Buncombe County. Over the past 18 years, the Clerk of Court has handled such delicate matters as juvenile crime, adoption, domestic violence, and issues of wills and estates. Christy operated the clerk's office with an open door policy in which he counseled on legal matters but also strove to alleviate the emotional concerns of those in need.

As a public servant, Christy had a great passion and respect for the office that he held. During his tenure, he served as president of the North Carolina Clerks Association, overseeing the executive committee in decision-making that in turn affected 10,000 clerks in the 100 counties across the state. He served on the Governor's Crime Commission and the boards of the North Carolina Courts Commission and the North Carolina Credit Union. He worked closely with the bar association in the county and is known for having strong relationships with area attorneys.

In his private life as well, he is known for activism and involvement. The Democratic Party in Buncombe County has honored Christy with several awards. He is an active member of Central United Methodist Church. In retirement, Christy will be returning to private legal practice with his long-time friend, Asheville attorney Jack Stewart.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor Mr. Robert Christy today, to thank him for his tremendous service to the community, and to wish him well in his retirement.

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD'S SERVICE IN THE U.S. SENATE

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 9, 2009

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, this week, in this Capitol, we are witnessing a convergence of a number of events that will long stand out in our Nation's collective memories. We are on the front edge of a new session of Congress, preparing for a landmark moment in the history of America's presidency. And, at the same time, we are celebrating a major milestone for one of this Nation's most devoted and accomplished public servants—U.S. Senator ROBERT C. BYRD.

It was 50 years ago, that Senator BYRD, for the first time, took the oath of office to serve in the United States Senate—an oath he has now taken a record-setting nine times.

Yesterday, as numerous Members of the House and Senate raised their own hands and took their own very first oaths, I could not help but think about what it must have been like for our Senior Senator from West Virginia to

watch these new ranks at the start of their own Congressional careers.

I was reminded of my first day of service in this body. I recall being humbled by the responsibility that had been placed in my hands and awed by the auspicious ceremony and the grandeur of this ornate Chamber.

On that first day, I was relieved at the knowledge that I was blessed with the wisdom, the support, and the mentorship of ROBERT C. BYRD. Throughout my career here, he has been a constant source of encouragement and sage advice.

Today, as we embark upon this new session cognizant of the tremendous challenges before us—a struggling economy, two wars, a strapped Federal budget, and growing public need—we can breathe easier knowing that we are all blessed to have the continuing service of ROBERT C. BYRD to steer us through the rocky shoals.

Congratulations to Senator BYRD—our trailblazer, our Leader, our Big Daddy. May he continue to serve the people of West Virginia and the entire Nation for many years to come.

ST. PETERSBURG MAYOR RICK BAKER NAMED ONE OF NATION'S OUTSTANDING PUBLIC OFFICIALS

HON. C.W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 9, 2009

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Baker who last November was named one of Governing magazine's eight public officials of the year.

Now beginning his 8th year as mayor, Rick has brought insurmountable energy and passion to serving the people of St. Petersburg and revitalizing the entire community. His catch phrase is, "Another great day in St. Petersburg," and under his leadership, every day has become another great day for our community.

As the only mayor honored this year, the magazine dubbed Mayor Baker as "Mr. Inclusive" for his work to revitalize the city's economy, improve its parks system, and improve the city's schools.

This is one of many honors Rick's hard work and commitment to public service have earned him and the city. Just last September, General Colin Powell's America's Promise Alliance named St. Petersburg one of our Nation's 100 Best Communities for Young People.

During ceremonies September 22 at Union Station, the organization cited St. Petersburg for its effort to improve its schools by forming corporate sponsorships. In particular, it said, "St. Petersburg has a strong backbone—the mayor—who, since 2003, has increased corporate partners for its schools from nine to nearly 80."

It was Rick Baker whose vision led to the establishment of the Mayor's Mentors & More program 6 years ago. With the support of the Pinellas Education Foundation, which funded a city staff position to lead mentor training, the city has trained more than 500 mentors over the past 2 years.

Madam Speaker, as Rick Baker embarks upon his final year as mayor, it is good that he