

TRIBUTE TO KENT OLSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PROFESSIONAL INSURANCE AGENTS OF NORTH DAKOTA

HON. EARL POMEROY

OF NORTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. POMEROY. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor the distinguished career of Kent Olson. I am pleased to have known Kent Olson for the many years he served as the Executive Director of the Professional Insurance Agents of North Dakota working with him on important insurance issues for North Dakota farmers.

Kent Olson is a model of the highest standards of honesty, integrity and professionalism. As Mr. Olson prepares to begin retirement, I want to pay tribute to his leadership of the professional insurance agents in North Dakota focusing on the importance of quality continuing education for its members that translated into excellent service for families and farmers in North Dakota. Throughout the years, quality education for professional insurance agents has been known by one name: Kent Olson.

Among his many achievements, Kent Olson is an expert in crop insurance and has been passionate in support of the key role that crop insurance plays in the farming economy of our state and of our entire nation.

In addition to his work in our state, Kent has contributed his many talents to the national PIA agents association, putting on seminars and getting personally involved every year. His involvement typifies his belief in our democracy and embodies the motto of PIA as being, "Local Agents Serving Main Street America." Kent believes passionately in the value that local professional insurance agents always provide. And with equal passion, he believes that insurance should continue to be regulated by the State, not by the federal government.

I am pleased to note that although Kent will be retiring, he will never give up his passion—whether they are for the Main Street insurance agents, who have come to call him a close friend, or for his family, or for his music.

Kent Olson is one of those people whom everyone respects, and with many good reasons. I have had the pleasure of calling Kent Olson a colleague and a friend, and that will never change.

I am pleased to congratulate and commend Kent Olson on the occasion of his retirement as executive director of the Professional Insurance Agents of North Dakota.

RECOGNIZING AT&T FOR JOBS CREATION AND COMMITMENT TO CLEAN ENERGY

HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. BACA. Madam Speaker, in this time of economic uncertainty, I rise to thank one company who is actively working to create new jobs and practice a clean, environmentally friendly business model, AT&T.

Through a new \$18 billion initiative, AT&T is pledging to increase its broadband capacity.

Not only will this initiative increase Internet speed and accessibility for customers, but perhaps more importantly it will create 3,000 new jobs.

Over the next ten years, AT&T also plans to create or save an additional one thousand jobs through a plan to invest \$565 million in replacing its current fleet of vehicles with 15,000 domestically manufactured Compressed Natural Gas and alternative fuel vehicles.

Research shows that this new fleet will save 49 million gallons of gasoline over the next ten years. It also will reduce carbon emissions by 211,000 metric tons in this same time frame.

Madam Speaker, I applaud AT&T for its initiative in taking the lead in the movement to green our economy. Not only will these new initiatives help lead our nation out of its current economic downturn, but they also help to create an environmentally sustainable future for our children and grandchildren to enjoy. These actions set AT&T apart as an exemplary company, and I hope that others will soon follow their lead.

TRIBUTE TO THE OMEGA PSI PHI FRATERNITY

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize my fraternity, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated, the first African-American national fraternal organization to be founded at a historically black college, for their 7th Annual Florida Political Summit in Tallahassee, Florida.

For nearly 100 years, my fraternal brothers have faithfully carried out their mission of fostering the growth of men, both college and post college, by providing an outlet and opportunity to serve the community as set forth by our founders at Howard University, Edgar A. Love, Oscar J. Cooper, Frank Coleman, and Ernest Just.

Since its inception in 1911, Omega Psi Phi brothers have been advocates of taking leadership to prevent violence against women and children in the African-American community, supported efforts of the United Negro College Fund and the Congressional Black Caucus, and most recently partnered with the American Cancer Society and the National Association of Basketball Coaches in Coaches vs. Cancer in empowering basketball coaches, their teams and local communities to make a difference in the fight against cancer.

While attending Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, FAMU, in Tallahassee, Florida, I had the distinct honor of serving as Basileus of the Upsilon Psi Chapter of Omega Psi Phi. My experiences as Basileus have served as the cornerstone in my education and leadership skills that I have carried over into this esteemed Chamber in representing the 17th Congressional District of Florida.

In an esteemed effort to continue Omega Psi Phi's mission, I know the men of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity will discuss their legislative concerns ranging from civil rights, health care reform and veteran's affairs to public education, foreign policy, and economic issues while sharing their experiences and raising awareness of issues affecting our daily lives.

Madam Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join me in wishing my brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity a successful political summit as these men continue to build a strong and effective force of men dedicated to its Cardinal Principles of manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift.

REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF MUSIC IMPRESARIO RALPH MERCADO

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise to ask my colleagues to pause and remember the life of a good friend, Ralph Mercado, the legendary Latin music executive who recently passed away on March 10, 2009. As much an icon as the musicians that he worked with and promoted, Mercado was a visionary innovator who helped popularize tropical music worldwide, including New York's mixture of popular Latin rhythms know as "salsa."

Mercado etched his name in the history books by building a record label whose various components (from a publishing company to a video and film production arm) helped make and take salsa to some of the largest stages around the world. A catalog of award-winning international hits across three decades transformed the Latino music industry, bringing respect not only to talented artists but also providing young Latinos with a way to connect with their parents, their roots and their communities.

It all started in Brooklyn on Sept. 29, 1941. The son of a Dominican dockworker and a Puerto Rican factory worker, Mercado often commented that he learned merengue, the typical dance from the Dominican Republic, in the hallway of the family's fifth-floor walkup as soon as he could walk. He first fell in love with the rhythms while at the Palladium Nightclub when he was only 16, watching the big bands of Machito, Tito Puente and Tito Rodriguez. As a teenager, he was famed for producing "waistline parties" in apartment building basements where a couple's admission was a penny per inch of their dates' waistline.

Using the same concept, he then opened the 3 & 1 Club where he began booking local Latin bands such as Eddie Palmieri and Richie Ray & Bobby Cruz, among many others. This led to Mercado's first management, booking, and promotions company called Showstoppers. He promoted legendary R&B acts that included James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight & the Pips, the Stylistics, the Chi-lites, starting a salsa-soul music trend.

Mercado also continued to open many doors to up and coming artists. He helped to expand the Fania All-Stars, promoted dances at the Cheetah Nightclub, and presented Latin jazz at the Red Garter and, later, at the Village Gate and other downtown venues. His partnership with Jack Hooke, the late Tito Puente's longtime manager, helped create the Salsa Meets Jazz Series at the Village Gate and the Latin Jazz Jam as part of the JVC Jazz Festival.

A great judge of talent, Mercado opened RMM Management in 1972 representing Eddie

Palmieri and Ray Barretto. He went on to manage virtually every name in the industry, including its two biggest stars: Tito Puente and Celia Cruz. His concerts grew more popular and by 1987 the wildly successful "Latin Tinge" nights at the Palladium on New York's 14th Street were bringing 3,000 "salseros" to dance every Thursday night. Mercado managed these events until 1992, when he re-focused his energies on the creation of a record label, RMM.

Mercado expanded his venture into numerous companies including RMM Records, RMM Filmworks, and two publishing houses. With over 140 artists signed to RMM Records, the label sold millions of recordings a year. The recipient of countless awards and proclamations, Ralph Mercado was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Tribute by Billboard Magazine in 1999.

Always an innovator, Ralph Mercado pioneered the presentation of salsa music in Africa, South America, Asia, and Israel. He was one of the first to bring Latin music concerts to such prestigious venues as Radio City Music Hall with Julio Iglesias' New York performance; Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall; the Beacon Theater; and Madison Square Garden.

The truth of course is that Mercado's death this week leaves a tremendous void in the hearts of not just his family and friends but also countless Latin music fans around the world. However, his body of personal and professional work leaves a distinguished legacy whose impact can be seen not just in the industry he helped create, but also in the countless lives that his music touched. Little boys and girls can dream of singing the songs that their parents know and love thanks to Ralph's extraordinary commitment, energy and discipline.

So Madam Speaker, rather than mourn his passing, I hope that my colleagues will join me in celebrating the life of Ralph Mercado, Jr. His is an inspirational story for all Americans, one that exemplified greatness in every single way.

HONORING MAYELA ROSALES

HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor an exceptional businesswoman, journalist and community activist from Naples, Florida, Mayela Rosales. As Executive Vice President of Azteca America SWFL and host of the most popular Spanish language TV show in Southwest Florida, D'Latinos al Dia, Mrs. Rosales is an example of what can be achieved through hard work and dedication.

With a degree in Journalism and Communications from the University of Zulia in her native country of Venezuela and 12 years of experience in the field, she came to the U.S. 13 years ago. Since then, she has worked towards ensuring that the fast-growing Hispanic community in Southwest Florida has access to news and information through Spanish language television programming and print. In 2003, Media Vista Group, the company she owned, integrated with Media Vista Publica-

tions and now produces the D'Latinos Magazine, D'Latinos online and D'Latinos al Dia program. Mrs. Rosales is Executive Director of the monthly magazine and host of the television show, which has been the only live, Spanish language program in the area for six years and airs every weekday in more than 400,000 homes.

In 2006, Mrs. Rosales, in partnership with her husband Orlando Rosales and others, acquired local TV station WTPH 14 Azteca America Southwest Florida in Naples. The station serves as a venue for Spanish language programming and news including D'Latinos al Dia.

In addition to her business ventures and career in journalism, Mrs. Rosales is a dedicated wife to husband Orlando and mother of two boys, Gabriel and Daniel. She is also active in a number of civic and charitable organizations including the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce, the Children's Museum of Naples, the American Heart Association, the Fifth Third Bank, the Ronald McDonald House, Hospice of Naples, Catholic Charities and Literacy Volunteers, and was the founder of the Council for Hispanic Business Professionals.

As we celebrate Women's History Month, I ask you to join me in congratulating my dear friend Mayela Rosales for her invaluable contributions to the Hispanic community and her dedication to professionalism and communicating accurate and valuable information to residents of Southwest Florida.

TRIBUTE TO THE BARTELSON BRAVES

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding group of student athletes from Bartelso, Illinois.

The Bartelso Braves of Bartelso Elementary School, defeated Centralia Trinity Lutheran 49-26 to capture the Southern Illinois Junior High School Athletic Association Class S State Championship. The win followed victories in the quarterfinals over Rome and in the semifinals over Waltonville.

I want to congratulate Coach Gigi Kohrmann and Assistant Coach Abby Winkeler for all of their work with their team. I especially want to congratulate the members of the 2008-2009 Bartelso Braves state championship basketball team: Emily Koelling, April Gebke, Madison Thole, Kaitlyn Albers, Katlyn Albers, Paige Varel, Torre Kohrmann, Nicole Loepker, Noel Loepker, Jillian Menkhaus, Erin Brueggemann, Sophie Rickhoff, Elle Gebke, Chloe Beckmann and Madison Haake.

These young ladies have made our community proud, and have brought home the championship trophy to Bartelso. I wish them all the best in their future academic and athletic endeavors.

HONORING MILCA GUTIERREZ

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. RADANOVICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Milca Gutierrez upon being named as the Children's Miracle Network's "California Champion Across America" for 2009. Miss Gutierrez will be honored on Tuesday, March 17, 2009 at Children's Hospital Central California at an event to kick off the local and national public awareness program.

Milca Gutierrez, of Fresno, California, was diagnosed when she was four months old with a rare disorder called osteogenesis imperfecta, commonly known as brittle bone disease. This rare disorder affects the connective tissue and causes bones to break easily and without any apparent reason. At the age of eleven, Miss Gutierrez has been seen at Children's Hospital Central California over 180 times and has undergone over ten operations; she remains positive with her motto "It's just a bone."

Miss Gutierrez is a constant source of brightness and support, whether to herself or others, she has a unique ability to always help those around her. Once a year she and her family travel to their native hometown in Mexico to provide clothes, toys and stuffed animals to families in need. She is able to live an active and full life; she loves swimming, math and dreams of becoming a doctor. Her unique situation has placed her in a position to advocate for children's hospitals across the nation, serve as a "Champion" for the State of California and act as an ambassador for the seventeen million children who are treated at children's hospitals every year. The Children's Miracle Network sponsors a variety of events to help raise money for children's hospitals; including the Champions Across America initiative, where one child from each state is selected to serve as a champion to help highlight the importance of a children's hospitals. Miss Gutierrez, along with her fellow champions, and her family will travel to Walt Disney World to participate in the Children's Miracle Network Celebration and to Washington, D.C. to highlight the vital work of children's hospitals.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend and congratulate Milca Gutierrez upon her achievements and strength. I invite my colleagues to join me in wishing Miss Gutierrez many years of happiness and success.

IN HONOR OF JOHN KURKOSKY

HON. MICHELE BACHMANN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mrs. BACHMANN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor John Kurkosky of Annandale, Minnesota for creatively using his song-writing and singing talents to support his neighbors in need.

A self-professed "shower singer," John makes a hobby out of writing and singing country, rock and gospel songs. Five years ago, he wrote a song, "Ice Fishin' My Buddies and Me" that gained popularity last year when it was featured on the local news story about