

Exploration Rovers Spirit and Opportunity—captured the imagination of the American public and the world when they landed on Mars to begin a 3 month-long NASA mission. The mission objective was to search for signs that water may have been present for long periods of time—signs that could tell us whether the Red Planet had been hospitable to life in the past. Within the first several months of the Mars mission, the NASA Web site experienced over a billion site visits. The Mars Exploration Rovers have been a wildly successful mission, with more than 13 miles of harsh Martian terrain traversed and over a quarter million awe-inspiring images from the Martian surface captured, in addition to many thousands of scientific spectra that lends to our study of Mars.

Spirit and Opportunity have made many important discoveries over the last 5 years. One of the most significant discoveries was evidence of water and geological information that supports an understanding that ancient Martian environments included periods of wet, possibly habitable conditions.

I wholeheartedly support H. Res. 67, the resolution offered by my friends and colleagues from southern California, Mr. SCHIFF and Mr. DREIER to honor NASA, their team from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and Cornell University on 5 years of great engineering and scientific discovery.

TRIBUTE TO Y-YARD AUTO AND TRUCK, INC.

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 Y-Yard Auto and Truck, Inc. of Effingham, Illinois.

Y-Yard Auto and Truck, Inc. was awarded the Automotive Recyclers Association CAR Star award in recognition of their commitment to environmental stewardship in the automotive recycling industry.

I would like to congratulate Y-Yard Auto and Truck, Inc. for this achievement, earned by upholding the highest in standards of environmental consciousness, safety, and customer service setting a leading example in their industry and community.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. SUE WILKINS MYRICK

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mrs. MYRICK. Madam Speaker, I was unable to participate in the following votes. If I had been present, I would have voted as follows:

Rollcall vote 125, on motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 987, the John Scott Challis, Jr. Post Office Designation Act, I would have voted "aye."

Rollcall vote 126, on motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 1217, the Specialist Peter J. Navarro Post Office Building Designation Act, I would have voted "aye."

Rollcall vote 127, on motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 1284, the Major Ed W.

Freeman Post Office Designation Act, I would have voted "aye."

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR GENERAL ROBERT E. DUIGNAN

HON. KEN CALVERT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. CALVERT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to an individual whose dedication and contributions to the community of Riverside, California and to the United States of America are exceptional. This country has been fortunate to have dedicated, honorable, and steadfast leaders who willingly and unselfishly give their time and talent to make our communities better places to live and work. General Robert E. Duignan of the United States Air Force is one of these individuals and today I thank him for 36 years of service to our great nation. On Sunday, January 25, 2009, General Duignan was honored with a retirement celebration at March Air Reserve Base in Riverside, California.

General Duignan took his first plane ride at the age of 13, traveling from Seattle to New York, and from that moment he knew that he wanted to fly airplanes. He attended the University of Washington on an ROTC scholarship and earned a bachelor's degree in business. He entered the Air Force during the Vietnam War, a time when it was not popular to be in the military, and he experienced firsthand the objection to the war on his college campus. However, he never changed course and after graduation he spent 14 years at Travis Air Force Base, flying C-141 cargo planes on missions across the world, sometimes to pick up a single wounded soldier.

In 1989, General Duignan was promoted to Deputy Commander of Operations for the 459th Military Airlift Wing. While serving in this post, General Duignan witnessed the September 11, 2001, attack on the Pentagon and focused his efforts on the Global War on Terror as the Director of Plans and Programs at Headquarters AFRC. After two years, he returned to March Air Reserve Base and has worked tirelessly in support of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As the Commander of the 4th Air Force he has supervised the Reserve's long-range airlift and air refueling units located throughout the continental United States, Hawaii and Guam. It is also important to note that during his career, he has accumulated more than 5,000 flying hours as a pilot flying the C-141, C-5, T-38 and T-37 aircrafts.

As we look at the incredibly rich military history of our country we realize that this history is comprised of men, just like General Robert Duignan, who bravely fought for the ideals of freedom and democracy. Each story is unique and humbling for those of us who, far from the dangers they have faced, live our lives in relative comfort and ease. Today I offer my gratitude for the decades of service and I salute Major General Robert Duignan as he retires from the United States Air Force.

FAIR TAX

HON. HENRY E. BROWN, JR.

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. BROWN of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I rise today to highlight a unique and innovative economic stimulus proposal that doesn't rely on large amounts of government spending, borrowing from foreign governments, or rebate checks. Instead, the Fair Tax would be a permanent economic stimulus that would have none of the transparency issues of conventional spending, or of the current tax code under the IRS. As a co-sponsor of H.R. 25, the Fair Tax Act, I believe that simplification of the 45,000 page tax code will empower the American people through returning their earned spending power to them, and by reducing government spending.

The Fair Tax replaces all federal income and payroll based taxes with a progressive national retail sales tax, a prebate to ensure no American pays federal taxes on spending up to the poverty level, dollar-for-dollar federal revenue neutrality, and, through companion legislation, the repeal of the 16th Amendment. It abolishes all federal personal and corporate income taxes, gift, estate, capital gains, alternative minimum, Social Security, Medicare, and self-employment taxes and replaces them with one simple, visible, federal retail sales tax administered primarily by existing state sales tax authorities.

As April 15th approaches, imagine this: no tax forms to wade through, no worries about deductions, withholding, or underpayment, and no payroll tax. Instead you, just like every American, would have more take-home income that could be put towards things like mortgage bills, thereby addressing one of the root causes of this economic crisis.

I hope that in the future we will consider such innovative proposals as the Fair Tax, and I thank my colleagues Rep. JOHN LINDER from Georgia who has done so much to publicize the idea of the Fair Tax, and Rep. STEVE KING of Iowa who called this Special Order.

Madam Speaker, we can do something better than haphazard spending to get us out of this economic mess. We can simplify a tax code that destroys wealth, and replace it with one that lets Americans keep their entire paycheck. It's time for new solutions, and not more of the old tax and spend.

HONORING THE KNIGHTS OF PETER CLAVER, INC. AND THE CENTENNIAL OF THEIR FOUNDING

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Knights of Peter Claver, Inc. and to celebrate this group's century of dedication to God, Church, and Community through Charity.

In November of 1909, a group of forty African American men became the first initiates of a Catholic fraternal order called the Knights of

Peter Claver. This group was founded in Mobile, Alabama with the aim of creating a Catholic fraternal society for men who were traditionally not able to belong to such organizations. Today, the Knights of Peter Claver, Inc. has over 18,000 members, is active in over thirty states, and includes divisions for men, women and children. In my home state of Texas, this group is particularly active and has been involved with numerous community outreach programs throughout the state.

The Knights of Peter Claver and other such organizations have made incredible contributions to society. Throughout its history, this group has supported community efforts, scholarship and various charitable programs. Additionally, during times of strife for the African American Community, the Knights of Peter Claver supported non-violent actions to fight many social injustices.

This August, The Knights of Peter Claver, Inc. will celebrate the centennial of their society at their 94th National Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana. I ask my fellow Members of Congress to join me in honoring this group and to celebrate their hundred years of dedication to God and service to community.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ROBERT HALE

HON. STEVE AUSTRIA

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. AUSTRIA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Robert Hale, for his outstanding service to the community on the occasion of his retirement.

On behalf of the people of Ohio's Seventh Congressional District, I am honored to congratulate Robert Hale on being recognized by the Filipino-American community, his business associates and employees, and his family upon his recent retirement.

His dedicated service to the citizens of Dayton and the Filipino-American community is both admirable and commendable. Hale spent the last 25 years working at Dayton Mailing Service, Inc., a company he founded in 1984. He recently retired and his daughter has taken over daily operations of the company.

Robert has been an avid supporter of the Philippine-American Society of Greater Dayton, the Association of Philippine Physicians of Greater Dayton, Filipino-American Ladies Organization of Dayton and the former Philippine Folk Arts Society. Hale is a member of the Optimist Club and joined the Peace Corps in 1962.

He has been a driving force within the business and Filipino-American communities in the Dayton area and has earned the respect and admiration of all those with whom he has served and the gratitude of the people that have come to know him.

The people of Ohio's Seventh Congressional District and I extend best wishes upon retirement and ongoing success in all endeavors.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE EVERY STUDENT COUNTS ACT

HON. ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the "Every Student Counts Act," legislation that will prioritize graduation of all of our Nation's high school students. My friend, Senator TOM HARKIN, the Senator from Iowa, is also introducing this legislation in the Senate.

Madam Speaker, as you know in 2001, The No Child Left Behind Act passed with broad bipartisan support. The purpose of No Child Left Behind was to ensure that every student in America would receive a quality education. However, over the past eight years, NCLB has not lived up to its promises. Certain aspects of the law are difficult to implement and are not bringing about the results we thought it would. One of the major shortcomings of NCLB is its failure to hold schools accountable for dropouts. Although we believed we addressed this issue in the original NCLB legislation, this portion of the law has not been implemented as we had hoped. Instead, under current law, the only meaningful accountability standard for high schools is students' scores on standardized tests, with virtually no concern given to how many students graduate or drop out of school. Unfortunately, this myopic accountability standard has created an incentive for high schools to push out students who are struggling academically, so that their test scores are not counted in the assessments. Furthermore, the current accountability system also has allowed States to report graduation rates inconsistently and in misleading ways. Finally, NCLB does not require the disaggregation of graduation rates by subgroup, leading to incomplete data on how our schools are doing with one subgroup compared to others.

What is clear is the fact that the current high school accountability system is failing both our students and our Nation. Each year, about 1.23 million secondary school students, approximately one-third of all secondary school students, fail to graduate with their peers. In addition, nearly 2,000 secondary schools—roughly 12 percent of all secondary schools in the United States—produce about half of the Nation's secondary school dropouts. In these schools, the number of seniors is routinely 60 percent or less than the number of freshmen three years earlier. And almost half of the Nation's African-American students and nearly 40 percent of Latino students attend these so called "dropout factories," while only 11 percent of white students do.

In Virginia last year, nearly 30,000 students did not graduate from high school with their peers. But the numbers are worse for minorities—only about 50 percent of African American students and 60 percent of Hispanic students graduate on time with a regular diploma, compared to 75 percent of whites.

These numbers are just the tip of the iceberg. Research shows that the lifetime earnings difference between a high school dropout and a high school graduate is about \$260,000. This loss in potential earnings of a dropout can cause serious hardships throughout their lifetime. We cannot sit back and allow this

problem to escalate, or our inaction will create a generation of lower and stagnant earnings and a poorer quality of life. We must reverse this trend and hold schools accountable for graduation rates and dropouts, so all students are graduating with a high school diploma and improving their outcomes in life.

Additionally, reducing dropouts improves America's position in both the global economy and workforce. Attaining a high school diploma is the first step in becoming a member of the educated workforce. Having unprepared workers sets us back considerably, diminishing our role as a global leader in the economy. The major competitive advantage America has in the global economy is an educated workforce. Yet, with an estimated 3.5 million Americans ages 16 to 25 who do not have a high school diploma and are not enrolled in school, we are slowly losing this advantage. Because of the need for well-educated workers to keep our country competitive, we can't allow—or afford—our Nation's high school students to dropout and not reach their full potential.

Until recently, federal policy did not place nearly enough importance on graduating the Nation's high school students. The regulations released by the Department of Education in October 2008 did much to correct the lack of attention to graduation rates in the federal accountability system: they require a uniform graduation rate calculation and improvement in graduation rates over time. Though these regulations are a laudable step in the right direction, they do not go far enough in setting consistent, high graduation rate goals and aggressive, attainable graduation rate growth targets. Without clear guidance and meaningful accountability, most secondary schools can continue to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress, AYP, by making negligible annual improvement in graduation rates and can do so with a consistent, or even growing, graduation gap.

The Every Student Counts Act will bring meaningful accountability to America's high schools by requiring a consistent and accurate calculation of graduation rates across all fifty states to ensure comparability and transparency. The legislation builds on the National Governors Association's Graduation Rate Compact, which was signed by all 50 of the Nation's governors in 2005. Under the Every Student Counts Act, graduation rates and test scores are treated equally in AYP determinations. Moreover, the Every Student Counts Act would require high schools to have aggressive, attainable and uniform annual growth requirements as part of AYP. This will ensure consistent increases to graduation rates for all students by meeting annual, research-based benchmarks with the long-term goal of reaching a 90 percent graduation rate. The bill would also require the disaggregation of graduation data by subgroup to make certain that schools are held accountable for increasing the graduation rate for all of our students and require that school improvement activities focus on closing any achievement gaps.

Recognizing that some small numbers of students take longer than four years to graduate, the bill will give credit to schools, school districts and states for graduating these students while maintaining the primacy of graduating the great preponderance of all students in four years. The Every Student Counts Act will provide incentives for schools, districts and states to create programs to serve students