

wife team, along with enthusiastic Chorus members, and a host of supportive parents and community members, has touched the hearts and minds of children across New York State and other locations where Vitamin L has been invited to perform.

With its focus on early childhood development, Vitamin L encourages children to think about moral issues in a non-threatening, fun, and very personal way. By singing the songs, watching the Vitamin L Chorus act out scenes of things like the consequences of "jumping to conclusions" and having opportunities to talk with Vitamin L Chorus members, young audiences see the importance of valuing positive character and moral behavior.

Vitamin L's first published group character-building songs titled, "Walk a Mile," won the nationally recognized Parent's Choice Gold Award shortly after its release in 1989. Three more Vitamin L recordings of character building songs received similar praise from the Parent's Choice Gold Awards in subsequent years. The recordings have also received very positive reviews in numerous national publications, such as School Library Journal, Booklist, and Time Magazine.

I thank Jan and Janice Nigro for their unwavering commitment to improving their community and congratulate them on 20 successful years with the Vitamin L Project. Their contributions have touched countless people, and enriched the lives of my constituents in New York's 22nd Congressional District and well beyond. The world could use more people who contribute to their county, state, and country, like Jan and Janice and I am grateful for the work they have done, what they are doing today, and their bright future.

RECOGNIZING KAZAKHSTAN FOR ASSUMING LEADERSHIP OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)

HON. ENI F.H. FALEOMAVEGA

OF AMERICAN SAMOA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Mr. FALEOMAVEGA. Madam Speaker, amid regional combat, conflicts, and challenges, Kazakhstan assumed leadership this month of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), an organization of 56 member states with vast potential for strengthening regional and global cooperation, security, peace, and prosperity.

This is a remarkable historic achievement for a nation that only 19 years ago gained its independence from the former Soviet Union. It is also a recognition of the vision and leadership of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev who has charted a course to establish not only a modern state but an emerging democracy.

In the early days of its statehood and under the leadership of President Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan demonstrated to the international community its commitment to nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation. It voluntarily renounced the world's fourth largest nuclear and missile arsenal and shut down the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. This decision has enhanced global security and reduced the threat of weapons of mass destruction falling

into the hands of terrorists. Kazakhstan's experience qualifies it to lead the OSCE in its efforts to increase regional security.

Meanwhile, Kazakhstan has consistently demonstrated its commitment to the principles and values that OSCE member states embrace. The nation has achieved significant progress on democratization, human rights, and economic liberalization. This is no small feat for a country in which more than 140 different nationalities and 40 religions are represented. Yet surprisingly in Kazakhstan, these people and faiths coexist peaceably because of a commitment to the shared values of tolerance, understanding, cooperation, and unity.

Great steps have been made on the path of democracy, but many more strides must be taken before the goal is reached. That is why Kazakhstan views democracy not as a sprint but a marathon; its perspective is not for the short but the long term.

Because Kazakhstan understands the challenges of democracy-building and the importance of inter-ethnic and inter-faith dialogue to avoid or resolve conflict, this perspective and experience will serve it well in its OSCE leadership role.

Kazakhstan is a leading democratic force in Central Asia today, a region of growing strategic importance to the United States, the OSCE, and the world. Central Asia is where East and West meet. Increasingly, it is where much of our focus will and must be now and in the years ahead. As Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee overseeing this region, I can state this unequivocally. It is also the reason my colleague Representative BUCK MCKEON and I recently established the Congressional Caucus on Central Asia.

Kazakhstan moves and interacts with ease and confidence in its home region and the surrounding areas that include Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Iran—all areas where it has interests that make dialogue and cooperation possible but not involvement that precludes it. Because of this, Kazakhstan can function as an honest and trusted broker, helping the United States and other OSCE members. This can lead to improved East-West dialogue and, hopefully, to conflict resolution.

For all the strengths, experiences, and perspectives that Kazakhstan offers, OSCE member states' choice of this new democracy to lead the organization showed correct judgment and foresight in light of the challenges and threats confronting the world. President Nazarbayev has matched the OSCE's judgment and foresight in appointing Secretary of State–Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev to serve as the OSCE Chairman-in-Office. This skilled and seasoned diplomat, who once served as Kazakhstan's Ambassador to the United States, will bring to his new post and the OSCE the needed leadership and focus on measurable results.

His recent speech in Vienna outlining Kazakhstan's priorities during its OSCE chairmanship reveals a commitment to revitalize the organization, reestablish its relevance on key issues, and refocus it to achieve meaningful outcomes. I am encouraged by the vision he sketched. In a world where new crises often seemingly intractable, even insoluble—emerge almost daily, we need an OSCE infused with purpose and energy and committed to full engagement and results. Knowing the OSCE Chairman-in-Office as I do, I am con-

fident that he can and will lead the organization to achieve the outcomes that all OSCE member states desire.

As a major step toward that end, I fully support the proposal that President Nazarbayev and OSCE Chairman-in-Office Saudabayev have put forward—namely, that of holding an OSCE summit. Not since 1999 has a summit been held. In my view, such an assembly would offer many advantages and opportunities to the United States and other OSCE member states for advancing the prospects and priorities of regional and global cooperation, security, peace, and prosperity.

The proposed summit warrants the United States' support and is worthy of our best efforts because it is in our national interest. For this reason, I call on President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton to help facilitate the summit through their good offices, and I look forward to working with Chairman-in-Office Saudabayev and the leaders of OSCE member states in any way I can to help execute the forward-looking vision that Kazakhstan has outlined for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

HONORING THE ALBANY PARK COMMUNITY CENTER

HON. MIKE QUIGLEY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Mr. QUIGLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Albany Park Community Center for receiving the League of Women Voters Award for outstanding leadership in voter education.

The Center received the award for its dedicated service to increase voter awareness and civic participation in the Albany Park community, a multi-ethnic, working class neighborhood in Chicago. In order to accomplish its goals, the Center held 25 adult education classes that focused on voting, placed bulletin boards with election-related content inside the Center, assisted voters in locating their polling places and understanding their local ballots, registered voters, and participated in the 2008 Mock Election coordinated with the League of Women Voters of Illinois. The Mock Election showed how successful their efforts had been when 318 of the 322 ballots were cast correctly.

They succeeded in reaching over 300 students through their adult education classes and successfully registered newly-naturalized citizens and others who had never voted or who let their registration lapse. Many of the students had levels of education or English language skills, and the program catered directly to their needs.

As part of the "Albany Park Votes!" program, members of the Center went above and beyond their job descriptions, aiding and registering 58 members of the community, most of whom went on to vote in the next election. The program was especially successful in educating the entire community in the civil process, as most of the adult students brought educational materials to their children and encouraged them to vote in the Mock Election, thereby reinforcing the importance of voting and preparing them for when they become eligible voters. In this way, Albany Park Community Center's program will have a long term

impact on the community's involvement in the civil process.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the Albany Park Community Center for their dedicated efforts to increase voter awareness and civic participation. Their efforts demonstrate how great the democratic process can be.

EMERGENCY AID TO AMERICAN SURVIVORS OF THE HAITI EARTHQUAKE ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. NIKI TSONGAS

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 26, 2010

Ms. TSONGAS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 2949, the Emergency Aid to American Survivors of the Haiti Earthquake Act. The true scope and magnitude of the heartbreaking tragedy in Haiti continue to unfold. Hundreds of thousands of Haitians are still without reliable access to water, food, shelter, and other basic essentials. Children of all ages find themselves without family, relatives, or loved ones. While remarkable humanitarian efforts continue to reach more of those in need every day, the rebuilding effort in Haiti is one that will take more than a decade.

Americans across the country have been moved by the terrible disaster and have generously given support in any way that they can. In the Merrimack Valley and the Fifth District of Massachusetts which I represent, concerned residents have volunteered their time, donated money, organized fundraising efforts, and provided needed supplies. For example, this weekend, a restaurant in Lawrence, Massachusetts is providing free lunch to all those making a donation to the Haiti relief fund.

Our military has also done incredible work in reaching survivors, opening airports in order to facilitate the distribution of aid, and helping to maintain order.

I am pleased that the House of Representatives will pass bipartisan legislation to extend temporary aid to help the thousands of Americans who are evacuating Haiti in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake.

As of Monday, 14,000 American citizens have been evacuated from Haiti, with 40 percent of them receiving temporary repatriation assistance. The Emergency Aid to American Survivors of the Haiti Earthquake Act will provide these individuals with help in securing and paying for connecting flights, temporary lodging, food, and medical assistance.

Last week, Congress passed and the President signed bipartisan legislation, which I cosponsored, speeding up the tax deduction for charitable contributions for Haiti so that individuals making contributions by the end of February can claim these charitable contributions on their 2009 tax return.

The need in Haiti will be great for many years to come. Support from U.S. foreign aid agencies and the international community will be essential, along with efforts from ordinary citizens, like the one taking place in Lawrence this weekend.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PARKER GRIFFITH

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Mr. GRIFFITH. Madam Speaker, on rollcall Nos. 17, 18, and 19 I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

INTRODUCTION OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY APPLICANTS' ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL REPRESENTATION ACT

HON. JOHN S. TANNER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Mr. TANNER. Madam Speaker, I am joined today by my colleagues, JIM McDERMOTT Chairman of the Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, SAM JOHNSON, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Social Security, and JOHN LINDER, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, in introducing the Social Security Disability Applicants' Access to Professional Representation Act. This important, bipartisan legislation will help individuals with severe disabilities navigate the often lengthy and complex process of applying for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income, SSI, disability benefits.

Specifically, this bill will improve access to quality, professional representation for disability applicants by making permanent a temporary provision to expand access that is due to expire on March 1.

For many years, attorneys who represent Social Security disability claimants have been able to have their fees withheld from the claimant's past-due benefits and paid directly to them by SSA. By providing a way to ensure that attorneys are paid if the claim is successful, this system has helped to ensure that disability applicants—even those who are very low income—have access to professional representation. This representation is particularly important for those applicants who appeal their case by seeking a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. The fee paid to representatives is limited to 25 percent of the claimant's past-due benefits, subject to a dollar cap, and is only paid if the claimant wins.

In 2004, Congress adopted a provision to temporarily expand this fee-withholding system in two ways: by extending the system to SSI claims, and also by allowing qualified non-attorney representatives to participate. To be a "qualified non-attorney," a representative must pass an examination administered by the Social Security Administration, SSA, and meet other criteria designed to protect applicants.

This expansion of the fee-payment system has been very successful, and disability groups and other stakeholders have strongly supported making it permanent. In addition, both SSA and the Government Accountability Office have examined the program to extend fee-withholding to non-attorney representatives and found it was working well.

The Social Security Disability Applicants' Access to Professional Representation Act

would ensure that these successful programs continue. The bill has no cost, and even generates some savings—\$55 million over 10 years—due to user fees paid by representatives who participate.

Ensuring that individuals with severe disabilities have the help they need to navigate the complex benefit application process is a goal on which we can all agree. I urge you to support this bipartisan legislation to move us closer to this goal.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MICHELE BACHMANN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Mrs. BACHMANN. Madam Speaker, on January 26, 2010, I was unexpectedly detained and could not vote on H. Res. 1011, recognizing the importance of cervical health and of detecting cervical cancer during its earliest stages and supporting the goals and ideals of Cervical Health Awareness Month. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

HONORING PIT MARTIN

HON. MIKE QUIGLEY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Mr. QUIGLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of former Chicago Blackhawk, Pit Martin. Pit was born in Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec, played 17 seasons in the NHL, and died in a tragic snowmobile accident two winters ago. He was only 64.

Pit is remembered as a hockey player, and for good reason because he was a darned great one. His storied career spanned four teams and 19 years—including 11 seasons with the Chicago Blackhawks. In 740 games, Pit scored 243 goals, dished out 384 assists, and was the "M" on the Chicago Stadium's iconic "MPH" line with Jim Pappin and Dennis Hull. He was named to four All-Star teams and led the Hawks to two Stanley Cup Finals.

But anyone who stood 5 feet, 8 inches tall and weighed 168 pounds in the NHL can never be defined by numbers alone—and so it was with Pit. After the 1969–70 season, he was awarded the Bill Masterson Trophy, exemplifying the qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship, and dedication to hockey. He was never the biggest dog in the fight, but during the 1,101 games he suited up for, no one fought harder, worked harder, and did more with less.

When Pit passed away, Hall-of-Fame linesman Matt Pavelich summed it up best: "He was small, but he wasn't timid. I just remember him as a real nice guy." The Blackhawk family and the city of Chicago miss him.

Let's see if we can finish what he helped start, and bring home a Stanley Cup this year, for Pit, and all of Chicago.