

Tarver III, who passed away at age 63 on January 4, 2010.

Ben Tarver was passionate about serving the people of Pleasanton. He moved his family to Pleasanton in 1974 and raised three children with his wife Margo. He started his 18 years of public service by fighting to preserve open spaces and promote smart development. He succeeded in preserving land that is now a part of the East Bay Regional Park District.

Ben Tarver first served as a planning commissioner and was then elected to the City Council in 1988 and elected Mayor four times from 1992–2000. Ben had a deep rooted sense of public service and strong belief in giving back to the community in which he lived. When he was not coaching youth soccer or playing in a league himself, Ben was working with the school district to open up school gyms for community use, promote public parks and youth activities.

Ben also represented the City of Pleasanton through appointments to numerous other Boards, Committees and Commissions. He served on the Bay Area Air Quality Management District Board, the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency Board, the Tri-Valley Wastewater Authority, the Livermore-Amador Valley Waste Management Agency, and fulfilled the role of President of the Alameda County Mayor's Conference and Chair of the Alameda County Local Area Formation Commission. He was an active member of the League of California Cities, serving as Chairman of the Revenue and Taxation Policy Committee and a member of the Telecommunications Task Force.

Ben's years of community service touched the lives of many and improved the quality of life in Pleasanton for decades to come. He led by example and in the words of former Pleasanton Mayor Tom Pico, "Ben was a great steward for our city. He set a high standard for integrity and did everything possible to protect Pleasanton's future."

Ben Tarver's dedication to public service leave a legacy that will continue to benefit the people of Pleasanton, the state of California and our great nation for generations to come. It is for these reasons that Congressman PETE STARK and I ask our Colleagues to join in honoring the memory of Ben Tarver and in sending our thoughts and prayers to his beloved family and friends.

**HONORING KATIE STAGLIANO, A DISTINGUISHED FINALIST OF THE 15TH ANNUAL PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARDS**

**HON. HENRY E. BROWN, JR.**

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 25, 2010*

Mr. BROWN of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Katie Stagliano, one of four distinguished finalists of the 15th Annual Prudential Spirit of Community Awards.

Katie, a fifth-grade student at Pinewood Preparatory School in Summerville, S.C., donated more than 1,000 pounds of fresh produce to local soup kitchens. Even more impressive, Katie produced the vegetables from five gardens that she tends. She has since recruited friends, family, members of the community

and businesses to support her effort to feed the hungry. Katie is a remarkable young woman who has displayed an incredible sense of kindness and commitment to the hungry in South Carolina's First District.

Thank you, Katie, for your exemplary volunteer service, and congratulations on receiving this distinguished honor.

**MARGARET REYEZ**

**HON. THADDEUS G. McCOTTER**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 25, 2010*

Mr. McCOTTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor Margaret Reyez, who is the recipient of the ATHENA award, which honors outstanding women for their leadership.

After a 13-year career at St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia, Michigan, Margaret found her true calling when she became an Information and Media Center Clerk for the Westland Public Schools Student Libraries. In the position she still holds, Margaret promotes literacy and the benefit it brings. Margaret is also a featured history presenter in the dramatic program of Greenfield Village. Appearing as an 1871 era schoolmarm at the Scott Settlement School, Margaret brings history to life and continues her championship of literacy. Certified in 1987 as a coordinator with Rainbows for All God's Children, a support group for children suffering the loss of a parent through death or divorce, Margaret lent her caring heart to the most vulnerable in her community. In 1990, Mrs. Reyez was certified as a Youth Minister, devoting herself to that role at SS. Simon and Jude Church in her hometown of Westland. Margaret Reyez graduated in 2001 from Schoolcraft College with an Associates Degree in Liberal Arts. She is involved in numerous community service programs including the Red Wagon Literacy campaign.

Mother to three adult children and five grandchildren, perhaps the greatest testament to Margaret Reyez comes from her daughter who credits her mother with instilling this in her children, "You can be and do anything you want to if you just keep trying and don't give up."

Dedicated to her community, she has tirelessly worked to identify the needs of families within the Wayne Westland School District, and is considered a mentor and role model to women in her community.

Madam Speaker, Margaret Reyez has forged a legacy of commitment and dedication to helping families in the Cities of Wayne and Westland. I ask my colleagues to join me today in honoring Margaret, and I congratulate her upon receiving this honor.

**H.J. RES. 45—INCREASING THE STATUTORY LIMIT ON THE PUBLIC DEBT**

**HON. GARY C. PETERS**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 25, 2010*

Mr. PETERS. Madam Speaker, there is no way I can in good conscience vote for an al-

most \$2 trillion increase in the debt limit, without first exploring other alternatives. We need a plan for reducing spending in both the short and long term, and a workable path to balance our budget and shrink our national debt. For example, reducing the authorization for TARP, cutting wasteful agriculture subsidies to corporate factory farms and cracking down on offshore haven tax cheats could help reduce the debt while Congress works toward enacting a long term, bipartisan solution that will aggressively reduce our budget deficits.

This year, Congress needs to cut spending and create a bipartisan debt commission, as well as enact a strong PAY-GO law that requires any new spending programs be offset elsewhere in the budget. We must find a way to control budget deficits or another debt increase will likely be inevitable. That's the responsible strategy for generating surpluses like we enjoyed in the 1990s.

Last week, the Senate had a genuine opportunity to take on our national debt in a bipartisan manner as proposed by Senators GREGG and CONRAD. Their proposal, which was supported by a majority of the Senate including moderate Democrats and Republicans but unfortunately killed by a stubborn minority, would have created a bipartisan commission that would craft fiscal reforms that Congress would then have to vote on as a single package.

I am voting to reject the Senate's almost \$2 trillion debt increase. Any debt increase that Congress considers going forward should include a plan for long term debt reduction, such as Senator GREGG's debt commission.

**CELEBRATING 110 YEARS OF THE VFW**

**HON. TED POE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 25, 2010*

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, The Veterans of Foreign Wars, VFW, celebrated its 110 years of service recently. Decades ago on September 29, 1899 a small group of Spanish-American war veterans came together to speak on behalf of the many veterans who returned home wounded or sick. With no medical care or pension, these brave men were left to fend for themselves. The first three chapters were formed and rapidly gained popularity throughout the United States, and by 1936 proudly declared a membership of almost 200,000 veterans.

The VFW has been in the forefront of helping convey the acknowledgments and benefits deserved to those who fought for our country. I would like to name a few achievements of the VFW. They assisted in establishing the Veterans Administration, the GI Bill for the 20th Century, and fought for compensation of war related injuries and illnesses.

Today, the VFW and Auxiliary volunteer in the community and donate to college scholarships and provide financial assistance to service men and women and their families. Their list of accomplishments is long and diverse. I would like to thank each member and the VFW as a whole for their steadfast hard work in giving back to those who gave so selflessly.

A TRIBUTE IN RECOGNITION OF SISTER JENNIE LECHTENBERG UPON HER RETIREMENT FROM PUENTE LEARNING CENTER AFTER 25 YEARS AS ITS FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 25, 2010*

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Sister Jennie Lechtenberg on the occasion of her retirement from PUENTE Learning Center—the educational organization she founded which has served more than 80,000 students since its inception 25 years ago.

Sister Jennie's visionary and lifelong commitment to educating residents of low-income, underserved communities dates back to 1954 when she joined the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. After earning a Bachelor's Degree from Holy Names College in Oakland, California, Sister Jennie worked as a teacher and administrator in Los Angeles-area Catholic schools for more than three decades.

It was during a three-month sabbatical in 1983 that Sister Jennie received her inspiration for PUENTE Learning Center. After launching tutoring programs for low-achieving first- and second-graders at several public schools in Boyle Heights located in the heart of my congressional district, Sister Jennie observed firsthand that the children struggling the most in school came from homes in which parents lacked basic education and/or English-language proficiency.

It was then Sister Jennie made it her mission to address the broader educational needs of the entire family. To enable parents to assist their children academically, she initiated an English-language-acquisition class for adults. As an intergenerational, family-oriented educational organization, these classes served as the organization's academic foundation. In recognition of the center's broader purpose to improve the lives of adults and children in the home and in the community, Sister Jennie aptly named the center PUENTE—the Spanish word for bridge and an acronym for People United to Enrich the Neighborhood Through Education.

Sister Jennie's vision and commitment to PUENTE's future also brought key support from generous donors. Prior to being elected Mayor of Los Angeles, Richard J. Riordan purchased property for PUENTE on Boyle Avenue. Classes were held on the property in 10 double-wide trailers. At Sister Jennie's urging, foundations, corporations, and individuals supported an ambitious \$10 million capital campaign launched in 1992 to fund the construction of the center's 40,000-square-foot permanent home in Boyle Heights. The stunning new technologically-sophisticated center opened in 1995.

During this same time period, efforts were underway to expand PUENTE into South Los Angeles, an impoverished community struggling to recover from the 1992 riots. Following the civil unrest, the ARCO Foundation invited PUENTE to establish a satellite campus on land that previously housed an ARCO service station that had been destroyed in the riot. A

small, two-classroom center opened on the donated property in 1994 in temporary trailers where students received English instruction and basic computer skills.

Community demand in South Los Angeles for additional classes, especially for children and adolescents, prompted the launch of a second capital campaign to construct a permanent \$5 million South Los Angeles home. The 20,000-square-foot facility opened in November 1999. A multi-purpose room was added to the new facility in December 2001.

Today, approximately 2,000 students attend classes each day in Boyle Heights and South Los Angeles. PUENTE's tuition-free programs include: Preschool Readiness; Charter Kindergarten; After School Enrichment; High School Tutorial; and Adult Education including English as a Second Language, Adult High School Diploma, Job Training, and Computer Repair/A+ Certification Preparation.

Madam Speaker, on March 18, 2010, the community will gather at a gala dinner to honor Sister Jennie's outstanding contributions as founder of PUENTE and to celebrate the 25th anniversary of this life-transforming organization which has given hope and opportunity to countless individuals at the centers in Boyle Heights and South Los Angeles.

I ask my congressional colleagues to please join me in thanking Sister Jennie for her many years of exemplary service to the community. In addition to witnessing her incredible contributions to Los Angeles over the years, I am also proud to call her a dear friend.

As Sister Jennie transitions into retirement, we commend her for her leadership and hard work to develop PUENTE into the nationally and internationally renowned educational center for children, youth and adults that it is today.

We extend to her our most heartfelt gratitude and best wishes.

IN CELEBRATION OF TOWN OF NORMAL MAYOR CHRIS KOOS BEING NAMED AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL HERO BY THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

**HON. DEBORAH L. HALVORSON**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 25, 2010*

Mrs. HALVORSON. Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize Mayor Chris Koos of the Town of Normal, for being named by Governor Patrick Quinn as an "Environmental Hero" by the State of Illinois. The award is given in recognition of a strong commitment to the health and protection of the environment in Illinois.

Through strong leadership and commitment to sustainable practices, Mayor Koos was at the forefront of creating a pedestrian-friendly community that has attracted Fortune 500 companies and over \$200 million in private investment. In addition, Uptown Normal is the first neighborhood in the United States to require Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for new buildings.

Having had the opportunity to work with Mayor Koos, I know first-hand that this award is well deserved. His dedication to innovative, cleaner and greener initiatives, has improved the quality of life for the citizens of the Town of Normal. For this, I commend him for his ef-

orts and wish him and the Town of Normal continued growth and success for years to come.

HEALTH INSURANCE INDUSTRY FAIR COMPETITION ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. BART STUPAK**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 24, 2010*

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, the insurance industry and Major League Baseball are the last industries in our country not subject to Federal anti-trust laws.

The insurance industry can collude to set rates, resulting in higher premiums than true competition would achieve.

Because of the exemption, rate increases are not reviewed by the Federal Government.

Today I held a hearing of the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations evaluating the most recent and egregious example of this. In California, WellPoint's Anthem Blue Cross plan recently raised premiums by an astounding 39 percent.

One of the most effective actions Congress can take to lower health care costs is to remove the health insurance industry's anti-trust exemption.

This legislation would create competition in the health insurance market and lower the overall cost of health insurance for consumers.

According to the American Medical Association, 94 percent of insurance markets in the United States are now highly concentrated. In my state of Michigan, one company controls 63 of the health insurance market.

Insurers are thriving in the anti-competitive marketplace, raking in enormous profits and paying out huge salaries to top executives.

Meanwhile, American families are struggling to pay their mortgages, credit card bills and medical expenses. Many are losing their health insurance altogether with the loss of their jobs.

Yet health insurance companies continue to thrive, at the expense of struggling Americans.

It is about time that insurance companies play by the same rules as every other American industry.

I urge Members to support this legislation, to establish a fair insurance market that encourages competition and lower costs.

HONORING THE LIFE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF GEORGE RIOS UPON HIS RETIREMENT

**HON. ZOE LOFGREN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 25, 2010*

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and accomplishments of a distinguished member of my community, George Rios. After more than thirty years of service, George is retiring from the City of San Jose on March 6, 2010.

In the great tradition of the American Dream, Mr. Rios is the son of Mexican immigrants. He grew up in Oakland, California and spoke no English as a child. His father was a