

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-

forts 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

stucco factory worker, and his mother took care of George along with his 2 brothers and 1 sister. To help support the family, George and his brothers and sister took odd jobs, such as picking fruit, and loading and unloading produce.

Mr. Rios graduated from high school in 1969, and then went to college at San Jose State University and graduated in 1974. He graduated from University of California's Davis King Hall School of Law in 1977.

After completing his legal studies, George worked at San Jose Legal Aid helping indigent clients with civil legal issues. After two and a half years at Legal Aid, George was hired at the Office of the San Jose City Attorney. He began work in January of 1980 under then-City Attorney Bob Logan. After only five years, he was promoted to the position of Assistant City Attorney. George has handled complex lawsuits for the City including arguing numerous cases in State and Federal courts. He has argued 2 cases before the California Supreme Court and assisted in arguing one case before the United States Supreme Court.

George has served on the Mayors' Gang Prevention Task Force and the Task Force to implement Fast Track rules in Superior Court. He has been active in the Bar, served as a pro tem judge, a trustee for the Santa Clara County Bar Association, and as a member of the La Raza Lawyers Association. He has also served on the Board of Directors of the Almaden Valley Counseling Center, and as a member of the California Council for Criminal Justice and the Legal Advocacy Committee of the League of California Cities.

George is a tremendous role model and is a valued member of the San Jose community. I wish him, his wife and three sons the very best as he enjoys his retirement.

#### H.R. 4264 THE EQUALITY FOR WOMEN FARMERS ACT

### HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 25, 2010*

Ms. ESHOO. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of and very proud to cosponsor the Equality for Women Farmers Act, introduced by Congresswoman DELAURO.

I thank Congresswoman DELAURO for her leadership on behalf of women farmers. After being presented with the facts about the U.S. Department of Agriculture's history of discrimination toward women farmers, Congresswoman DELAURO became their champion and crafted H.R. 4264, the Equality for Women Farmers Act.

Like Congresswoman DELAURO, I'm proud of the important role women farmers have played in the development of our nation's food system, but I was shocked to learn about the discrimination that many women farmers have been subjected to by the USDA.

In December, Congresswoman DELAURO and I listened to six extraordinary women farmers who shared their stories about discrimination from the USDA. This discrimination has come in many forms including denied access to even an application form.

More than 1,900 women farmers across the U.S. have detailed the discrimination they suffered in seeking farm loans and assistance

from the USDA and how such actions have seriously disadvantaged them.

The discrimination cost some of the women farmers their livelihoods and discouraged future generations of women farmers from considering this an honorable profession.

I applaud the USDA and the Obama administration for reaching an agreement with black farmers over racial discrimination, however, we can not forget about the other groups that have faced discrimination at the USDA, including women farmers.

The Equality for Women Farmers Act changes USDA policy to provide a procedure for compensating women farmers who have suffered years of gender discrimination from the USDA. This legislation will establish a compensation fund for women farmers and set up a process to review and adjudicate their claims.

I support the Equality for Women Farmers Act because I believe strongly that all farmers, regardless of gender, should be given the opportunity to succeed. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

#### HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF LANCE CORPORAL JOSHUA H. BIRCHFIELD

### HON. JOE DONNELLY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 25, 2010*

Mr. DONNELLY of Indiana. Madam Speaker, today, I rise to solemnly honor Lance Corporal Joshua Birchfield for his dedication and service to the United States of America. LCpl Birchfield, a 24-year-old member of the Marine Corps, was killed on February 19, 2010 by small arms fire while conducting combat operations in Helmand Province during his first tour of duty to Afghanistan. Joshua risked everything to serve his country, and for that we are eternally grateful.

Joshua graduated from Westville High School in 2004 and enlisted in the Marine Corps on April 18, 2008. He joined the Marines after seeing a TV news segment focused on the hardships military families endure when they are separated, especially during the holidays. He was deeply inspired by those who dedicated their lives in the service of others, and he wanted to share the burden they were carrying on behalf of our nation. LCpl Birchfield was stationed in Helmand Province as a rifleman with the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1 Marine Expeditionary Force based in Twentynine Palms, California. For his service and support in Operation Enduring Freedom, he has been awarded multiple military awards including the Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, National Defense Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon and the NATO Medal.

A baseball enthusiast, Joshua was a hero to many in the Westville community and will be remembered as the selfless and compassionate human being he was. Joshua is survived by both his parents and sisters, extended family and many friends.

It is my solemn duty, and humble privilege, to honor and remember Lance Cpl. Joshua H. Birchfield and a life cut tragically short. Joshua stands as a testament to the great honor pos-

sessed, and sacrifices made, by our men and women in the armed forces, and their families. We were all blessed by his presence and we are all diminished by his passing. I, and the grateful citizens of Indiana's Second District are deeply saddened by his loss, especially for his family, our community and our country. We mourn his passing and offer solemn gratitude for his service.

#### IN RECOGNITION OF THE FARMINGTON/FARMINGTON HILLS FOUNDATION FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES ON CELEBRATING ITS 15TH ANNIVERSARY

### HON. GARY C. PETERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 3, 2010*

Mr. PETERS. Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Foundation for Youth and Families. As a Member of Congress, it is both my honor and privilege to recognize this important milestone and pay tribute to this outstanding organization.

The Foundation was created in 1995 with the focus of assisting youth through supporting after-school programs. Over the Foundation's 15 years it has awarded almost \$500,000 to 37 different non-profit groups. The Foundation has since grown and expanded its focus to support a wide-range of community based programs which work to enrich the lives of Farmington and Farmington Hills residents. Each year the Foundation holds an annual gala to highlight the work of programs it has supported, as well as raise support and awareness for future projects. At its 2009 gala, the Foundation introduced its "Bountiful Backpack" program, which arose out of the need to ensure that the substantial number of children who are on free and reduced lunch in our schools continue to have those same healthy nutritional options outside of school.

This year the Foundation honors George and Delores Riley, whose philanthropic work has left a profound positive impact on the communities and citizens of Farmington and Farmington Hills. After nearly 30 years of running a highly successful communications business, in 1998 George Riley sold his company and started the Riley Foundation. According to Mr. Riley, he started the foundation to "really help children." Mr. Riley's vision and commitment continues today with the Rileys' children.

The Riley Foundation's latest major project created a park in downtown Farmington which has been a haven for children and their families in the Farmington area. Beyond local projects, the Riley Foundation has done extraordinary work for the less fortunate worldwide and has recently partnered with public television to develop a new broadcast center for the Metro-Detroit market.

Madam Speaker, I am honored today to recognize the Farmington/Farmington Hills Foundation for Youth and Families on the occasion of its 15th anniversary and wish them many more years of continued success in creating a stronger Farmington/Farmington Hills community through its support of projects which enrich the lives of area residents.