

Outside of his professional life as an engineer, Mr. Davis was a true community leader. He served as the Chief of the Bagdad Volunteer Fire Department for 25 years and was active in the Bagdad Village Preservation Association and Bagdad Waterfronts, Florida. Mr. Davis cherished his family and friends as part of the Emerald Coast Sandpipers RV club, as a member of the Blackwater Pyrates service organization, and as a lifelong member of the Bagdad United Methodist Church.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, I am privileged to honor the life and service of John Davis. My wife Vicki and I offer our prayers for his wife, Janet, his daughter Amelia, and their family. He truly will be missed.

CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF BOY SCOUT TROOP 175

HON. KENNY MARCHANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 15, 2012

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I celebrate the 50th anniversary of Boy Scout Troop 175 of Irving, Texas. The troop has a remarkable history of serving the community and developing young men into leaders.

Troop 175 was originally chartered at W.T. Hanes Elementary School in Irving. It then relocated its charter in 1981 to Northgate United Methodist Church in Irving.

Since its founding in 1962, Troop 175 has produced 27 Eagle Scouts with the first recorded promotion in 1971. The distinguished group of Eagle Scouts from Troop 175 include Craig Barton (1971), Paul Roberts (1975), Bobby Bell (1976), William Meers (1976), Mark Corry (1977), James Bush III (1986), Clyde Hogan Jr. (1988), Adrian Carrales (1989), Joseph Bush (1989), Andrew Bartlett (1991), Gregory Yoas (1992), Robert Daniel (1992), Travis Brandt (1998), James Cross (2000), Ryan Scott Barnett (2003), Stefan Austin Hopkins (2004), Reagan McNabb (2005), Ashwin Tharappel (2005), Robert Samczuk (2006), Frank Wright III (2006), Alexander Bichler (2007), Anish Tharappel (2007), Austin McNabb (2008), Samuel Anderson (2008), Colton Sligar (2010), Campbell Castleberry (2011), and William Canales (2012).

Throughout its 50 years, the troop has been guided by the leadership of Scoutmasters including Clyde Hogan, David West, Jerry Cross, Peter McNabb, James Roman, and Mark Sligar.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 24th Congressional District of Texas, I ask all my distinguished colleagues to join me in congratulating Boy Scout Troop 175 for its 50 years of developing fine young men and community involvement.

IN SUPPORT OF THE SYRIAN PEOPLE

HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 15, 2012

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to express my horror and outrage at the

events currently taking place across Syria. It has now been 15 months since the first protests flared up in response to the imprisonment of 17 teenagers in Dara for writing anti-government graffiti on a wall, and the death toll has risen to well over 13,000 men, women, and children.

For the past three decades the Syrian people have lived in a restive peace. Israel had claimed it to be its safest border, and minorities were treated relatively well compared to surrounding countries. President Assad transitioned easily into power after the death of his father, and was hailed as a reformist who would lead Syria onto the world's stage as a constructive member of the international community.

However, the reforms never came, and the emergency law put into place over 50 years ago remained. People were living in a constant fear that they would be turned in by a friend or neighbor for even a simple comment against the regime. The mail and internet were tracked by government officials, and websites such as facebook were blocked. This was not the secular democracy the West expected for a reformed Syria. It is instead an authoritarian dictatorship.

In the beginning the protests in Syria were small and peaceful, but were met with such brutality from the regime that they incited even greater public resistance. The Syrian people were rising up and claiming their natural right to freedom. President Assad authorized the massacre of women and children in a desperate attempt to retain control over a country that no longer wants him.

Mr. Speaker, this conflict has escalated into civil war. Those who have fared well under Assad's government have no desire for change, but the impoverished majority has found its voice and is unwilling to return to the status quo. I believe that the United States should stand with those who are fighting for democracy and human rights.

Kofi Annan's peace plan was a valiant effort to bring an end to the violence through diplomacy, but it has not yielded the results hoped for, and President Assad has shown no inclination to keep his promises. The time has come for greater action. Yesterday Secretary Clinton rightly criticized Russia for its continued support of the Assad regime, specifically the weapons it has been providing to the regime. This and other actions by the Russians undermine the efforts of the United Nations to broker a solution to meet this crisis.

The recent massacre in Houla a few days ago, which left over 50 children dead, is the most shocking example of official terror that has been occurring weekly over the past 15 months. President Assad has lost the confidence of the Syrian people who no longer regard his regime as legitimate. I believe that for the good of the country and for the cause of peace in the region President Assad should step down.

What began as a peaceful stand against tyranny has morphed into the bloodiest movement of the Arab Spring. With a grip as tight as the Assad family has had over this country for decades the outcome was foreseeable, but nobody could have envisioned anything as bloody as this.

Mr. Speaker, Syrian men and women fighting for democratic ideals should not be abandoned to face the wrath of a tyrant alone. They should know that they have a friend in

the United States and the United Nations. I call upon both to redouble their efforts to find a solution to the crisis in Syria. As a member of the Committee on Homeland Security I have seen how America is an example of democracy and peace, and I wish to see the same outcome for Syria. I stand today to show my support for the rebel fighters and all those in Syria who are fighting against oppression and cruelty.

HONORING RITA CANNAN

HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 15, 2012

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Rita Cannan on her retirement from the Can Am Crown International Sled Dog Races.

Rita is stepping down from the Can-Am International Sled Dog Races after 15 years as its President and 19 years of dedicated service overall. Her remarkable efforts helped transform the community of Fort Kent, Maine into a premier dog sled racing location on the mushing map of North America.

The Can-Am International Sled Dog Races loses an incredible asset with Rita's departure. She is extremely well known in the Fort Kent community as a businesswoman and a civic leader. Rita has served as a member of the planning board, president of the Greater Fort Kent Chamber of Commerce, a trustee of the Northern Maine Medical Center, a member of the Aroostook County Tourism Board, a member and president of the Rotary Club, a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, a member of the Fish River Scenic By-Way Committee, and as a director of the University of Maine at Fort Kent Foundation. Without question, Rita's leadership was instrumental to the growth of Can-Am.

The recipient of countless awards and commendations issued by the town of Fort Kent and the State of Maine, there has been little left unsaid about Rita's enormous value to the community. I am pleased to join the members of the Can-Am Crown International Sled Dog Races, and the people of Maine, in congratulating Rita Cannan on her retirement.

Mr. Speaker, please join me again in congratulating Rita on achieving this milestone, and thanking her for her all that she has done for the community of Fort Kent.

DR. BENJAMIN T. DURAN

HON. DENNIS A. CARDOZA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 15, 2012

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Benjamin Duran in the event of his retirement after fourteen years of dedicated service as Superintendent/President of Merced Community College District.

Dr. Duran has spent forty years as an educator in Merced County. His career began as a high school teacher in Le Grand. He served as Vice Principal of Le Grand High School from 1976 to 1980 before becoming the Assistant Director of Merced County's migrant

education program. He returned to Le Grand in 1983 as Superintendent of Schools, a position he held until 1991. Dr. Duran's career with Merced College began in 1991 when he became the Vice President for Administrative Services.

Dr. Duran chaired the Community College League of California's 2010 Commission on the Future. He has served as President of the California Community Colleges (CCC) Chief Executive Officers Board of Directors and President of the CCC Economic and Workforce Development Program Advisory Committee. He was a member of the Hewlett/Irvine Foundation Task Force on Basic Skills Development, the CCLC Board of Directors, and has served as Staff Developer for the California School Leadership Academy.

In addition, Dr. Duran has been involved in numerous community organizations and initiatives, among them include the Greater Merced High Speed Rail Committee, the Merced County Regional Arts Council, the Mercy Medical Center Board of Directors, and the Merced School Employees Federal Credit Union Board of Directors. His professional associations include the UC Merced Foundation Board of Directors, the CSU Stanislaus Community Advisory Board and Center for Public Policy Studies. He is a member of the California Association of Latino Superintendents and a director of the California Dollars for Scholars Program.

Dr. Duran and his wife, Dr. Rose Mary Parga-Duran have two children in college. Dr. Parga-Duran is presently serving as the District Superintendent for the Merced City School District. Upon his graduation he is looking forward to becoming engaged in the community as well as watching his children continue to grow into adulthood. He also is looking forward to spending more time with his eldest daughter and two grandsons who live in Southern California.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in honoring Dr. Benjamin Duran for his dedication to Merced College and our community as a whole.

IN SUPPORT OF H. RES. 289 "COMMEMORATING CARIBBEAN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH"

HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 15, 2012

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 289, which celebrates June as Caribbean American Heritage Month and recognizes the significant contributions of Caribbean Americans that have made strengthened our country and made it better.

This month also marks the 50th anniversaries of independence for the Caribbean nations of Jamaica and of Trinidad and Tobago. Although a half century has passed since they gained their independence, the struggle they waged to win their freedom still stands as a testament to the ideals of our own great nation.

I am privileged to represent a large segment of Los Angeles County, which is home to the second largest foreign-born population of any major metropolitan area. There are an estimated 500,000 Americans of Caribbean herit-

age living, working, and enriching the quality of life in Southern California.

Mr. Speaker, Americans of Caribbean heritage have made a positive impact on virtually every aspect of American life, including the arts, science, business, education, athletics, military, and government. For example, in the area of government and public affairs America has benefitted from the contributions of Colin Powell, a former Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice; former Members of Congress Mervyn Dymally of California, and Shirley Chisholm of New York, and current Congresswoman YVETTE CLARKE of New York; Kamala Harris, the Attorney General of California; and Maryland Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown.

American art and culture has been enriched by the legendary performances of Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, Cicely Tyson, and Sheryl Lee Ralph; the writings of authors W.E.B. DuBois and Malcolm Gladwell; the music of Grace Jones, Gil Scott-Heron, and Christopher Wallace, "The Notorious B.I.G."; and the prowess of great athletes like Carl Lewis, Tim Duncan, Patrick Ewing, Sandra Richards-Ross, Dwight Freeney, and Ndamukong Suh.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that on June 29 the Caribbean Heritage Organization will be holding the 2012 Caribbean Heritage Salute to Hollywood and the Stars gala in Los Angeles honoring industry stalwarts Sheryl Lee Ralph, Antonio Fargas, Lorraine Toustaint, and Rob Edwards.

I also wish to recognize the leadership of the Institute of Caribbean Studies. The ICS has been very effective in advocating on behalf of the Caribbean American community and each year it hosts a Legislative Conference Week as part of the month long celebration. The conference focuses the attention of policy makers and experts on issues of particular concern to the Caribbean American community such as trade, job creation and economic empowerment, Haitian disaster relief and economic reconstruction. I congratulate the ICS, the Caribbean Heritage Organization in my home county of Los Angeles, and the many community organizations and volunteers across the nation for their efforts in making Caribbean American Heritage Month the success that it is.

During this month I hope all Americans will join with me in celebrating the remarkable history, culture, and contributions of Caribbean Americans to our nation's past and future.

HONORING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 15, 2012

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 150th anniversary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). I represent the city of Davis, which is home to the University of California, Davis (UC Davis). The USDA has a natural partner in UC Davis given its outstanding history of agricultural research and outreach. In California, USDA has reduced crop pests and disease, protected

over 120,000 wetlands in California, and worked to keep the farming culture strong. I would like to submit for the RECORD the following letter dated May 16, 2012, from Val Dolcini, the State Executive Director of the USDA Farm Service Agency in California. This letter illustrates just a few successes of USDA over the last 150 years and, with our support, their accomplishments will continue in the future.

USDA AT 150: FARMS, FOOD, JOBS

One hundred and fifty years ago, in the midst of a great Civil War, President Lincoln signed legislation to establish a Department of Agriculture to "acquire and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture . . . and to procure, propagate, and distribute among the people new and valuable seeds and plants."

Armed with these broad mandates, the "People's Department," as he called it, set about to serve American farmers and a mostly rural American landscape.

At that time, half of all Americans lived on farms, compared with about 2 percent today. The U.S. population in 1862 was about 31.4 million and today, that number has increased tenfold to almost 313 million people.

Since its inception, the department has continued to fulfill Abraham Lincoln's original vision to touch the lives of every American, every day in almost every way. Now, the modern USDA works in food science, agricultural research, nutrition assistance, bio-fuel production, economic and community development, natural resource conservation, international trade, credit and a host of other issues.

By any measure, it's been a very successful 150 years for the USDA. Americans benefit from safe, abundant and reasonably priced food. We produce 85 percent of what we consume and therefore enjoy food security.

Our food, fuel and fiber industries provides employment for more than 20 million Americans, and agricultural exports continue to post significant trade surpluses, which, in turn, have generated almost 1 million jobs alone.

Looking to the future, the USDA must continue the legacy of contributing to the strength and health of the nation by becoming a more modern and effective service provider. We must tighten our belt, just as many Americans are doing with their household budgets.

In the past few decades, American agriculture has become one of the most productive sectors of our economy, thanks to farmers, ranchers and growers adopting technology, reducing their debt and effectively managing risk.

The USDA is adopting these same strategies in its Blueprint for Stronger Service, announced by Secretary Tom Vilsack earlier this year. The blueprint aims to build a modern and efficient service organization that is closely aligned with technological innovations—and better suited to respond to 21st century agricultural challenges.

The challenges ahead are many, both for the USDA and American agriculture. But by focusing on a strong safety net for farmers and ranchers, supporting policies that encourage sustainable productivity, and promoting vibrant markets that help feed consumers at home and abroad, the "People's Department" will continue to help create jobs, support working families, strengthen rural communities and build on the success and productivity of the American farmer.