

CONGRATULATIONS TO EDINA
HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS' TENNIS
CHAMPS!

HON. ERIK PAULSEN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to commend the Edina High School girls' tennis team on their 2014 Minnesota State Championship.

The Edina Hornets clinched the state tennis team title with a strong performance top to bottom in their 6–1 victory over Prior Lake. Senior Caitlyn Merzbacher and Freshman Sophia Reddy led the way in Singles play, but it took a complete team effort to take home the title.

Credit goes to Coach Steve Paulsen, who now can now count this as his 19th state title, including 18 in a row. With such a consecutive title streak on the line, it's easy to see these Edina athletes have no problem coping with pressure.

Tennis is a game with tremendous ups and downs that takes focus, mental toughness, and an ability to overcome mistakes. Edina's success is a testament to the time spent day after day honing those skills.

What makes it even more impressive is that these Hornet athletes are able to thrive at their sport while still meeting their academic, family, and social commitments. Family and friends should be tremendously proud of what these girls have accomplished.

It is my pleasure to honor and congratulate the Edina High School girls' tennis team on bringing home another state title!

IN HONOR OF SHIRLEY
MCDOWELL'S CAREER

HON. RICHARD HUDSON

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Shirley McDowell of Concord, North Carolina for her faithful work as Executive Director at Hospice and Palliative Care of Cabarrus County. Upon retiring she will have served 28 years building a team of caregivers that have served our community during times when families have confronted terminal illness.

Under Shirley's leadership, Cabarrus County's Hospice service has grown into a strong program that effectively helps those in need. She guided this program through all of the changes in healthcare over the years and directed Hospice through acquisition of land for a permanent building and the construction of the Tucker Hospice House in Kannapolis.

The impact that Shirley has had on our community is profound, and we are grateful for her commitment to help those in need. I am proud to represent Shirley McDowell and we are thankful for her years of service.

HONORING ISAAC PALMER

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable person, Mr. Isaac Palmer.

Mr. Isaac Palmer was born on May 23, 1914 in Sharkey County, Mississippi, the oldest of nine children born to the late Reverend Littleton and Frances Nathaniel Palmer. Mr. Palmer was married to the late Vera Lee Bell Palmer for over 50 years. He has eight children: Betty, Geraldine, Odell, Isaac Lavelle, Nina, Patricia, David (deceased) and Fred (deceased).

Mr. Palmer wanted to attend school badly; but, he had to leave school when he was twelve years old, in the 6th grade, to work on the farm and help provide for his younger sisters and brothers. However, he didn't let this stop him. He learned to read, write and speak more fluently by studying the Holy Bible. Mr. Palmer was a "jack of all trades", doing things like driving tractors, farming, welding and being a mechanic, just to name a few.

At an early age, Mr. Palmer accepted Christ as his Savior. He was an active member of New Hope Baptist Church in Blanton, Mississippi, where he served as Senior Deacon and Superintendent of the Sunday school for many years. During this time, he led many children, friends and acquaintances to Christ. He has been and remains a laborer for Christ for more than 85 years.

Though Mr. Palmer only had a 6th grade education, he remains passionate about helping and encouraging his children and other young people to get as much education as possible. To help out, he would drive his own children to and from Alcorn and Jackson State Universities, as well as their friends who lived in the area (free of charge), after working all day.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Isaac Palmer for his dedication to serving and giving back to his family and community.

HONORING JOE GERGELA

HON. TIMOTHY H. BISHOP

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Joe Gergela, who will retire at the end of this year from his position as the Long Island Farm Bureau's Executive Director, a position he has held for 26 years.

Joe's highly effective advocacy for Long Island agriculture was first cultivated early in his life, harvesting potatoes and other vegetables with his father and grandfather. He came to know the satisfaction of a hard day's work and the vital role family plays in a working farm, which form the backbone of the economy and tradition of Long Island's East End. In doing so, Joe celebrated the rich agricultural heritage that has been the pride of eastern Long Island since the 1600s. But he also learned the struggles farming families face, which strengthened his resolve to fight for our farm-

ing communities as the leader and chief advocate of the Long Island Farm Bureau.

At the helm of the Farm Bureau, Joe has worked tirelessly for the over 600 farms covering nearly 36,000 acres of land in Suffolk County, in which my district lies, and the thousands of acres of farmland in adjacent Nassau County. During my tenure in Congress, Joe has been a trusted and valued counsel upon whom I have relied for expert knowledge of agricultural and environmental policy. I enjoyed my regular visits that Joe coordinated for me with board members of the Long Island Farm Bureau that became known as "coffee with the congressman," which I found to be invaluable forums. These annual coffee meetings gave me the opportunity to hear directly from East End farmers who imparted firsthand accounts of their success and challenges with issues relating to water quality, open space preservation, the Farm Bill, immigration reform and access to affordable labor, and how we could work together to maintain Long Island's robust agricultural footprint.

Joe has been an invaluable resource to my staff and me, providing real life knowledge about working farms but also helpful insight on public policy. He has helped my office build meaningful relationships with the agriculture community and has always been ready to assist when there were opportunities to work together. Most recently, Joe helped coordinate a visit to Long Island for the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, to focus USDA's attention on our land, wineries, farm stands, related small businesses, and the hard-working Long Islanders behind these successful, growing ventures.

Mr. Speaker, I have been proud to call Joe a friend and colleague for many years now. I know there will be many farmers, small businesses, and Suffolk County residents who will miss his tenacious dedication to farming and farmers on Long Island. On behalf of New York's First Congressional District, I congratulate Joe on his years of outstanding service and his many accomplishments with the Long Island Farm Bureau, and I wish him well in retirement and his future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING THE SIXTH ANNUAL
CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA

HON. BILL POSEY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Mr. POSEY. Mr. Speaker, on December 20, 2014, Brevard County families, businesses and local community organizations will gather together to celebrate the Sixth Annual Christmas Extravaganza. This wonderful event, which will take place at the Max K. Rodes Park in West Melbourne, will provide an uplifting message of hope during this Christmas season as so many families are still facing difficult challenges.

The House at Palm Bay, Brevard County Parks & Recreation and their business partners have recognized the importance of providing a positive venue for residents and children to celebrate Christmas.

What makes the Christmas Extravaganza so special is that there is no cost to attend—everything is absolutely free to the public. From cotton candy and hot dogs, to live music performed by the Bay West Church Band, and

fun activities for children, such as face painting, rock wall climbing, bounce houses, and a robotics demonstration, the sponsors of this annual event have committed to serving others during this Christmas season and giving back to their community in order to make a difference in someone's life.

This year, over sixty local businesses and organizations have made donations of food, gift certificates, equipment, cash and goodie bags. Toys for Tots will again make donations of toys for local children while the Sheriff, law enforcement officials and firemen have all volunteered their time. Florida Institute of Technology has partnered with The House at Palm Bay's Christmas Extravaganza team to provide free trolley rides for children and adults alike. Also, this year the Heritage High School Marching Band will be performing along with members of The House at Palm Bay's drama team which will provide their rendition of the Music Box, a Musical Drama for all ages.

Senior Pastor Ken Delgado of The House at Palm Bay said, "The essence of Christmas is about sacrificial giving. Parents do everything possible, to their own hurt, to bless their families. What an honor it is to see the business community sacrificially coming together to create a moment where families can find love, hope and joy—it's the example of the love, hope and joy that was expressed through the life of Jesus Christ 2000 years ago."

The Cities of Palm Bay and Melbourne have issued proclamations of support for this year's Christmas Extravaganza and the Brevard County Commission passed a resolution commending these efforts and encouraging families to attend.

I salute all those who have given so much to make the Annual Christmas Extravaganza possible, and applaud all the communities across our great nation who have seized upon this opportunity to spread the Christmas spirit through good deeds and charitable acts.

FEDERAL HOME LOAN BANKS

HON. LEE TERRY

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to recognize the 25th anniversary of a grant program that has benefitted thousands of individuals and families across the country—the Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLBank) system's Affordable Housing Program (AHP). The AHP is a flexible source of grants designed to help community-based lenders and their partners develop affordable housing solutions for very low- to moderate-income individuals and families.

The AHP receives its funding through annual contributions of 10 percent of the FHLBanks' net income. The Federal Home Loan Banks have awarded over \$5.1 billion in AHP funds since Congress created the program in 1990. These funds represent the largest single source of private grant dollars available for housing and community development in the country.

By developing affordable housing—and creating stable communities in the process—AHP funds have a long-term, positive economic impact. Many projects are designed for seniors, the disabled, homeless families, first-time

homeowners and others with limited resources. More than 845,157 housing units have been built using AHP funds. And I'm happy to say that the Federal Home Loan Bank system is the largest single funding provider to Habitat for Humanity, an organization that I have strongly supported during my 16 years in Congress.

Created by an act of Congress in 1932, the Federal Home Loan Banks are 12 regional cooperative banks that community-based financial institutions utilize to make home loans, small business loans and agriculture loans in every corner of America. Nearly 8,000 lenders are members of the Federal Home Loan Bank cooperative, representing approximately 80 percent of America's insured lending institutions. The FHLBanks and their members have been the largest and most reliable source of funding for community lending for over 80 years.

The FHLBanks have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to serve their members and to meet the affordable housing and community development needs of individuals, families and local communities through the Affordable Housing Program. As Congress contemplates the future of housing finance, I encourage members of Congress and the Administration to look to the Federal Home Loan Banks as an example of a system that works well.

AN IRANIAN OPPOSITION GROUP'S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, you may not know it, but there is a group that, like the United States, thinks the Supreme Leader of Iran needs to go. They are a group of Iranians called the MEK. They want their countrymen to be free from the oppressive regime that has ruled with an iron fist since 1979. But the MEK is locked up in a prison-like camp in Iraq. 112 of its members have been killed.

How we came to this point is a story worth telling. After the Iranian revolution, the MEK opposed the Supreme Leader. So the newly installed Islamic regime systematically arrested and executed members of the MEK. The MEK fled and found refuge in Iraq. They built a home in the middle of the desert in a place called Camp Ashraf. In August 2002, the MEK disclosed two previously unknown nuclear facilities in Iran.

The Natanz enrichment facility and Arak heavy water facility triggered the IAEA inspection of Iranian sites for the first time.

After the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, the MEK gave over all of its weapons to the U.S. Army 4th Infantry Division. In return, the U.S. promised to protect the MEK, labeling them "protected persons" under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

On January 1, 2009, U.S. forces handed control over to the Iraqi Security Forces. Then Prime Minister Maliki was beholden to Tehran so when the Supreme Leader asked him to crack down on the MEK, he obeyed. Maliki either allowed or facilitated two deadly attacks on the defenseless residents living in Camp Ashraf. In July 2009, 11 residents were killed

and 500 more injured. Two years later, in April 2011, the Camp was attacked again.

Videos would show Humvees running over residents and snipers shooting at residents as they ran for their lives. The attackers were not trying to talk. They were trying to kill. And they succeeded. 36 residents were killed and 345 injured.

I and other Members of Congress met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in June 2011. The meeting that was supposed to last 20 minutes but went for 2 hours came to an abrupt halt when our delegation asked to see Camp Ashraf where the MEK members lived. Maliki's mood immediately changed and he said that there was no way we were going to see the Camp. Maliki did not allow us to go because he had something to hide.

After pressure from the Government of Iraq and the U.S. Government, the remaining residents agreed to be transferred to Camp Hurriya near Baghdad as the UN worked to resettle them in some other country besides Iraq or Iran. But a new camp would still not keep them safe—not while Maliki was under the thumb of an Iranian regime that wanted to decimate the MEK. On three more occasions in 2013, 65 more unarmed residents were killed and over 600 injured. The UN has now resettled 600 residents, but there are still 3,200 living in squalid conditions in Camp Hurriya. They are confined to the Camp, not allowed to leave.

Lawyers and family members cannot visit them. After a series of rocket attacks killed many of them, residents dug trenches and slept inside them because they had no other way to protect themselves. These conditions are worse than an American prison. This is no way to treat thousands of people who have risked their lives for three decades so that their countrymen may know the sweet taste of freedom. One day, I believe, we will not be talking about ensuring Iranian freedom fighters like the MEK have another country to live in. One day, the Supreme Leader will supremely fall.

Democracy and freedom will once again flourish in Iran. And the freedom fighters, who have now been fighting for decades, can finally return home to join their families and their countrymen in building a new, peaceful Iran.

And that's just the way it is.

IN HONOR OF THE BIRTH OF MARY PARKS NATONSKI

HON. RICHARD HUDSON

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Pepper and David Natonski on the birth of their beautiful daughter. Mary Parks Natonski was born on her Thanksgiving Day due date at 7:02 a.m., November 27th, 2014; weighing 8 pounds and 8 ounces and measuring 21 and 1/2 inches long.

She was born to Pepper Pennington Natonski and David Richard Natonski, my Chief of Staff and KEVIN YODER's (KS-03) Chief of Staff respectively. I must admit, she clearly has her mother's punctuality—and her father's size.

Mary Parks gets her name from her two remarkable great-grandmothers, Mary Allen and