

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

LOOKING BACK OVER THE PAST 13 YEARS OF THE CATALINA ISLAND CONSERVANCY

HON. ALAN S. LOWENTHAL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 10, 2016

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Mr. Speaker, as Tony Budrovich readies to take the reins as president and CEO of the Catalina Island Conservancy, it is important to step back and look over the successful tenure of Ann M. Muscat, who announced her June 25 retirement last year. She has served as president and CEO for more than 13 years—the second longest tenure of any previous Conservancy president.

Ann will continue to serve the Conservancy as its president emeritus until October 7, 2016. She will focus on serving as a resource to Tony, transitioning donor relationships, continuing fundraising for the Conservancy's first every capital campaign, IMAGINE CATALINA, and completing design of the new visitors' center, The Trailhead.

"Ann and the Conservancy have achieved a lot," Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe said. "I've had the great pleasure of working with Ann and her team, all of them consummate professionals who are dedicated to getting things done."

"Under Ann's leadership, the Conservancy has become a living laboratory of innovation in conservation, education and financial sustainability for nonprofit organizations," Catalina Island Conservancy Board of Directors Chair Stephen Chazen said. "The Conservancy has significantly improved the Island's ecological health, greatly increased access to Catalina's wildlands and expanded and enhanced its educational programs to better serve students living in Avalon and visitors from the mainland."

Here is a look back at how the Conservancy and its stewardship of Catalina Island have flourished since Muscat joined the organization in 2003.

During Ann's 13-year tenure, and through its Catalina Habitat Improvement and Restoration Program (CHIRP), the Conservancy staff has completed vegetation mapping of the entire Island, including non-native and invasive plant species. It has controlled and eradicated numerous invasive plant species that were eliminating native and rare biodiversity. It also expanded the native plant nursery's scope to include landscaping initiatives on the Island, along with restoration, and significantly expanded the native seed collection.

The Conservancy has been a leader in removing non-native and highly destructive animal species from the Island, leading to the rediscovery of native plants previously believed to be extinct. It also brought the Catalina Island fox back from the brink of extinction and supported the successful recovery of the bald eagle.

Its wildlife biologists have implemented innovative social (repatriation) and scientific methodologies (contraception) for managing the bison herd. They also have conducted bird and small mammal surveys, discovering nesting sea birds on cliffs and nearby rocks, and implementing protective measures for bat populations.

In addition, the Conservancy has pursued research partnerships with universities and museums from across the country, including a multi-institution collaboration that resulted in a comprehensive look at the Island's oak woodlands.

Working with the Long Beach Unified School District, the community and philanthropic organizations, the Conservancy has greatly increased access to natural and intellectual resources over the past 13 years. It implemented extensive educational enrichment and internship programs for the local school population through the establishment of the K–12 NatureWorks workforce development and STEM education initiative.

In its continuing service to the local community, the Conservancy provided free access to the wildlands of Catalina for Island families without vehicles. It implemented a free of charge Naturalist Training Program for tour operators and local businesses, as well as Conservancy front line staff.

To ensure visitors to the Island could access the wildlands and learn about Catalina's ecosystem, the Conservancy created the 37.5 mile Trans-Catalina Trail. It also has secured funding and developed plans for further trail improvements and expansions.

It significantly expanded and improved the Jeep Eco-Tour program and developed a signage and way finding system across the Island. It added new running and biking events, an Island Ecology Travel Program and Wild Side Art Program to increase access and awareness. In addition, it increased volunteer program initiatives to include AmeriCorps, American Conservation Experience and numerous university-level spring break programs.

So that visitors and others had more information about Catalina Island and the Conservancy, it added a Nature Center in Avalon and a Mobile Nature Station that has served Avalon and Two Harbors, along with interpretive panels in the Garden and at campgrounds and trailheads. The Conservancy also expanded and revamped its outreach and marketing materials, including maps, field guides, monthly e-newsletters, videos, an extensive photo library and expanded web site.

To serve a greater good beyond Catalina's shores, the Conservancy launched a successful radio show and web site, *Isla Earth*, on environmental issues that aired for 10 years on over 320 radio stations across the country.

To provide the needed programs and ensure the organization's long-term financial health, the Conservancy has focused on raising revenues and creating a sustainable business model that will ensure the Island will con-

tinue to be restored and protected for future generations.

In the past 13 years, the Conservancy has increased its operating budget nearly three times through an increase in philanthropic giving and mission-based earned income. It has significantly expanded its donor base and created a reserve fund to address deferred maintenance projects across its 42,000 acres. Projects have included improvements at Airport in the Sky, across its road and bridge system, a new pier, replacement and expansion of its vehicle fleet and upgrades to its numerous buildings.

The Conservancy also revamped its organizational structure, adding new departments and expanding existing functions while providing professional development and training for all staff. The Conservancy's staff has doubled in size and moved to a more customer service/community orientation. The Conservancy also expanded and updated employee housing, adding 14 new units, to support recruitment and retention of staff.

The Board of Directors and the Conservancy's staff have worked together to develop a strategic vision for the organization's future, called IMAGINE CATALINA. They worked with nationally recognized sustainability architect William McDonough and landscape architect Thomas Woltz to develop a long-term strategic vision.

It imagines an Island that represents California as it can be, demonstrating how nature and humans can thrive together. It envisions Catalina and the Conservancy serving as models for science-based conservation, for training tomorrow's stewards of the natural world, for connecting people to nature and for creating sustainable finances and operations.

To implement IMAGINE CATALINA, the Board and staff launched the Conservancy's first-ever capital campaign, and they are more than three-fourths of the way to fully funding the first phase. They plan to celebrate the groundbreaking for the campaign's flagship project, The Trailhead Visitor Center, on June 24. Another groundbreaking is scheduled on October 14 for the next major project, improvement and expansion of Catalina's trail system, and planning is well underway for a major ecological restoration effort on the Island's West End.

"Ann and her team's excellent stewardship work at the Catalina Island Conservancy is leading edge and has served as a model for many other land trusts," said California Council of Land Trusts Executive Director Darla Guenzler.

Ann has also been a leader beyond Catalina. She was a founding Board member of the California Council of Land Trusts and served as its Chair of the Board. She is also a member of the Steering Committee for the Southern California Open Space Council and an Advisory Board member of USC's Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

COMMENDING THE PACIFICA
INSTITUTE FOR ITS WORK

HON. SUZAN K. DELBENE

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 10, 2016

Ms. DELBENE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the Pacifica Institute in Bellevue for their work to generate interfaith dialogue and promote cross-cultural ties. Pacifica Institute has built up ties of mutual understanding and strengthened communities throughout the state of Washington.

Pacifica Institute has continually engaged the community in activities to foster shared experiences. Their efforts have helped remove barriers, building confidence and trust to create a peaceful society through newfound relationships.

Through their vision of promoting social justice through shared networks, Pacifica Institute has provided our district with the opportunity to foster mutual appreciation in a respectful environment.

I'm pleased to join Pacifica Institute in their annual Ramadan Interfaith Friendship Iftar in Redmond this weekend. I am looking forward to coming together with members of our community to celebrate various religious backgrounds.

As President John F. Kennedy said, "If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity." Pacifica Institute works to do just that. Its commitment to educating communities serves as a positive voice bringing people together to combat prejudice and intolerance.

TIBET AND THE VISIT OF HIS HO-
LINESS THE DALI LAMA TO
WASHINGTON, D.C.

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 10, 2016

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, His Holiness the Dalai Lama will be in Washington, DC next week. As the spiritual leader of Tibetans, the Dalai Lama is an energetic and unfailing ambassador for human rights and the rights of the Tibetan people. Sadly, his visit reminds us again about the dire situation of the Tibetan people inside China.

The Tibetan people have a right to practice their religion, preserve their culture, and speak their language. They have a right to do so without restriction or interference. The Chinese government does not agree. To them, the Tibetans are a people to be pacified. Their faith and culture are problems to be solved, not a heritage to be preserved, honored, and protected. To them, the Dalai Lama is an agitator and revolutionary, not a world-renowned and respected voice for peace and harmony.

The recent State Department Human Rights Report offered a withering criticism of the Chinese government's oversight of Tibetan and Tibetan areas of China. It said the "government engaged in severe repression of Tibet's religious, cultural and religious heritage by, among other means, strictly curtailing the civil rights of China's ethnic Tibetan population, including the rights to the freedom of speech,

religion, association, assembly, and movement."

I am the Chair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. Our reporting on Tibet draws similar conclusions about China's rough oversight of Tibetans. Over the past several years, the Chinese government has constructed more obstacles to efforts by Tibetans to preserve their culture and religion.

Sadly, we know that Tibetans have used self-immolations as a protest against the religious and political oversight of the Chinese government.

It is difficult to fathom the despair and desperation felt by Tibetans who take this last act of defiance. The Chinese government has blamed the Dalai Lama and "foreign forces" for self-immolations instead of looking at how their own policies created such deep grievances.

The Chinese government also expanded its efforts last year to transform Tibetan Buddhism into a state-managed institution. They sought to undermine the devotion of the Tibetan people to the Dalai Lama and control the process of selecting Buddhist leaders.

One Chinese government official admitted that control over the selection of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, including the next Dalai Lama, was "an important political matter" and a critical part of the Chinese government's "sovereignty over Tibet."

The Chinese government wants a Tibetan Buddhism that is attractive to tourists, but which allows the Communist Party to completely manage its affairs.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Religion said recently criticized China's efforts to control Tibetan Buddhism and the process of selecting leaders. He said "the Chinese government is destroying the autonomy of religious communities . . . creating schisms, and pitting people against each other in order to exercise control."

This is exactly what the Chinese government has done to other religious groups, including Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, and Falun Gong. When the faithful don't fall in line, they are jailed, harassed and bribed until they do.

Religious freedom is an essential part of dealing with the grievances of the Tibetan people, but China's answer is always the same—control, manage, and repress. It is counterproductive and it violates China's international obligations.

The China Commission has a prisoner database that contains records on 643 known Tibetan political and religious prisoners. 43 percent of those detained are monks, nuns, and religious teachers. Almost all were imprisoned since 2008.

Substantive dialogue between the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese government and Communist Party have not occurred in the past five years. This is the longest break since the dialogue started in 2002.

A government "White Paper" on Tibet, published this April, states that China will "only talk with private representatives of the Dalai Lama" to discuss "the future of the Dalai Lama" and how he can "gain the forgiveness of the central government and the Chinese people."

Instead of asking for the Dalai Lama's forgiveness for the decades of brutal repression, the Chinese government asks for his. This is the state of affairs in Xi Jinping's China.

This is unfortunate and counterproductive. If China's goal is to build a "harmonious society" in Tibet, it cannot be done without the Dalai Lama.

He is the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. His views are widely shared by those in Tibetan society, he can be a constructive partner for China in addressing continuing tensions, and deep-seated grievance, in Tibetan areas.

In our dealings with Chinese government and officials, Members of Congress and the Administration should affirm the peaceful desires of the Tibetan people for greater autonomy and freedoms within China.

We should stress that China's policies are counterproductive, they are brutal, and they hurt China's international prestige.

We also need to speak with a unified voice to end the repression of the Tibetan people. U.S. leadership on this issue is critical, because our allies in Europe and Asia can be bullied by Chinese threats of economic boycotts.

U.S. officials must demonstrate that Tibet matters, human rights matter, and religious freedom matters to U.S.-China relations and China's future stability and prosperity.

RECOGNIZING DELEGATES AT THE
CONGRESS FOR FUTURE MED-
ICAL LEADERS

HON. KEN BUCK

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 10, 2016

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize five high school students from the fourth district of Colorado, who were selected to represent the state of Colorado as delegates at the Congress for Future Medical Leaders. The students are Carter Goodard of Frederick Senior High School, Alexandria Rivera of Sky View Academy, Victoria Rubio of Silver Creek High School, Anna Schulhoff of Legend High School, and Megan Weigand of Erie High School.

The Congress of Future Medical Leaders is an honors program that recognizes exceptional high school students who are pursuing careers as a physician or in medical research.

These students are the future leaders of the medical field and our country. Through their studies, they have embodied the meaning of hard work and perseverance to achieve their goals, and will better the health of future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to recognize these five students for their hard work and service to their community. I wish them luck in their future endeavors.

RHODE ISLAND VETERANS OF
FOREIGN WARS 97TH ANNUAL
STATE CONVENTION

HON. DAVID N. CICILLINE

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 10, 2016

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the men and women of the Rhode Island Veterans of Foreign Wars, which is holding its 97th Annual State Convention this Saturday.