

was presented a special recognition from the Vatican for her efforts in working with the Apostleship of the Sea World Conference held in Houston. And last year, the seafarers center presented her with the Tall Ship Award, which goes to an individual not directly involved in the maritime field who has served the seafarers center.

A recent profile of Lou Lawler in the Houston Chronicle had this headline: "The Jewel of La Porte: Lou Lawler Loves to Give to the Community." Through her work at the seafarers' center, Lou's love has rippled around the world. Although we will never be able to match what Lou has done for us, this Friday is an opportunity for our community to give some of that love back to Lou. We thank her for her friendly smile and her warm greeting. We thank her for her leadership by example. We thank her for reminding us every day how much difference one person can make.

TRIBUTE TO NICHOLAS POLONSKI

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 11, 1996

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Nicholas Polonski, the founder of the Northside Community Development Council in the Greenpoint-Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, NY. Mr. Polonski has been a tireless advocate for the residents of the Northside neighborhood of Brooklyn for over 40 years.

The Northside Community Development Council was formed by Nick Polonski after he had led a successful fight against a large paper machinery company located in Greenpoint. His experience in community advocacy is vast. He has successfully advocated for tenants' rights, for welfare for needy people, and against the planned closure of a firehouse, among many other causes.

As a serviceman in World War II he was awarded the Silver Star for Gallantry in Action for having saved the lives of wounded officers during enemy combat. He repeated such valiant acts following his return to civilian life by saving the life of a police officer in a motorcycle accident many years later.

The Northside Community Development Council celebrated its success on September 6, 1996 by holding its annual dinner and dance. At that dinner-dance, the council honored Brooklyn Borough president Howard Golden; Monsignor David Cassato of Our Lady of Mount Carmel; Pat Ferris, district coordinator for senator Martin Connor; John Talmage, executive assistant to councilman Ken Fisher; David Sweeney, executive director for Greenpoint Manufacturing & Design Center; James Mallon, executive director for Northside and Peter McGuinness Senior Citizen Centers; Tillie Tarantino, executive director of Swinging 60's Senior Center; Captain Fries, commanding officer of the 94th Precinct; and John McDonough, vice president of Republic Bank.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join with me today in tribute to Nicholas Polonski for his commitment to the well-being of his community. I also want to stand in recognition and appreciation of the success of the Northside Community Development Council and to the talent and dedication to public serv-

ice of those honored at its annual dinner dance celebration.

BIPARTISANSHIP

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 11, 1996

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington report for Wednesday, August 14, 1996, into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

LEGISLATIVE WRAPUP: A CASE FOR BIPARTISANSHIP

Only a few months ago the 104th Congress was being widely criticized as one of the least productive sessions in modern history; a Congress long on promise but short on results, a Congress that was very busy, spending long hours in session, but achieving very little. Its sessions were as contentions and uncompromising as any in memory, epitomized by the bitter fight over the budget that closed much of the government for a total of 27 days and set a new low for harsh debate. This Congress was on the brink of failure, blocked by the ideological fervor of the majority that could not be translated into laws.

But that changed in the last week of the congressional session before the August recess. In a flurry of legislative activity; Congress, with my strong support, approved several important bills, including: landmark welfare legislation, a health insurance bill, a catch-up minimum wage bill, a rewrite of the safe drinking water laws, and a package of incentives for small business. This Congress can now boast a stronger record of achievement after a very rocky and unproductive start.

WHAT HAPPENED

What brought the majority and minority together after months of gridlock was a shared fear on the part of the Members of returning to their constituents this fall empty handed and the willingness to compromise on extreme positions. Ideology quickly gave way to pragmatism, and Republicans and Democrats struck deals with each other and the President to shape legislation. They decided that they needed laws enacted, not just confrontational issues. The difference in attitude was most striking among the House leadership. The Speaker, who shunned compromise only last year, is now praising the importance of compromise.

Now there is a scramble among the parties to claim credit for the recent successes. Some Members claimed it was the greatest week in the history of the Congress and the most significant Congress in a generation, but by any reasonable measure that is overstating the record. This Congress' modest accomplishments scarcely measure up to the Congresses of the past which adopted the Bill of Rights, emancipated the slaves, approved the Social Security Act, or oversaw two world wars. But without any doubt the last week of July saw the most serious legislative week in the 104th Congress. The virtues of bipartisanship have been rediscovered and there has been a rush of important legislation.

WHAT WAS APPROVED

The bills that were passed in a burst of lawmaking do alter the lives of millions of Americans. The bills impact on everything from paychecks to the purity of tap water. They include:

Welfare reform.—Congress passed a major overhaul of the federal welfare program by

ending the federal guarantee to the poor, limiting assistance to five years requiring recipients to work in exchange for benefits, and giving states more flexibility to administer their programs.

Health insurance.—Congress approved a modest health insurance bill which expands access to health insurance by making it easier for people to get coverage when they have pre-existing medical conditions, and to keep it when they change or lose jobs. The measure also gradually increases the deductibility of self-employed health costs from 30% to 80%.

Minimum wage.—Congress increased the minimum wage for the first time in five years, raising the hourly wage from \$4.25 to \$5.15 over a two-year period.

Small business incentives.—The minimum wage bill also includes incentives for small businesses: an increased deduction for business-related equipment costs, more flexible rules on subchapter S corporations, and several other measures to encourage business growth.

Environmental laws.—Congress also approved two important environmental bills. It passed a rewrite of the safe drinking water law which gives the Environmental Protection Agency more flexibility in regulating contaminants in drinking water and provides assistance to states and localities in complying with the law. Congress also revised food safety laws to increase protections for children while easing burdensome restrictions on helpful pesticides.

Among the other important achievements of this Congress are a sweeping overhaul of the telecommunications law, the most significant rewrite of federal farm programs since the Great Depression, and a long-awaited measure to give the President a line-item veto power.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT

It is important, however, not to overstate the legislative success of the last week. After all, the minimum wage and the health insurance bills are fairly modest and conventional pieces of legislation. The minimum wage increase simply compensates for some of the effects of inflation, and is not really an advance. The health insurance bill makes a modest improvement in the health care system by making it easier for people who already have insurance to keep it if they can afford it. That is a useful step, but it does not begin to deal with the two great problems of health care: the rapidly escalating cost of care and the fact that one-seventh of the population of the country is still uninsured. The safe drinking water bill was enacted because it promises a large amount of federal aid to communities to improve their water systems.

CONCLUSION

I think the legislative legacy of the 104th Congress has for all practical purposes been written in the last few weeks. In September the Congress might add to its list of accomplishments as it finishes work on bills to crack down on illegal immigration, take new steps to combat terrorism, and reform some other programs like housing. But most of the rest of the session will be dominated by work on routine appropriations bills and on a few hot button social issues, such as an override vote on the President's veto of a bill outlawing late term abortions, a bill to make English the official language of the United States, and a bill to allow states to deny recognition to same-sex marriages.

I think the Nation has been well-served as Congress has moved from gridlock to a more positive phase. People have been turned off by efforts to promote a revolutionary agenda, to shut government down, and to fight ideological wars. I've always felt the American people have a strong strain of pragmatism about them and my guess is they