

AFRICAN GROWTH AND  
OPPORTUNITY ACT**HON. PHILIP M. CRANE**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 24, 1997*

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join with so many of my colleagues today in reintroducing legislation intended to open a new era of trade and investment relations between the United States and the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

For more than three decades, the United States has supported a variety of foreign assistance programs designed to aid the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. Unfortunately, traditional foreign aid alone will not lead to the level of economic development that we would all like to see on the African continent. In the long run, private sector investment and development must serve as the catalyst for Sub-Saharan African countries to compete in the global marketplace, to become self-reliant, and to raise the standard of living for their people. At present, however, there is no initiative underway to engage the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa as business partners through trade and investment.

I believe that we have an opportunity in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress to fill this major gap in U.S. trade policy and in our relations with the region, which consists of a diverse set of 48 countries, many of which have undergone significant political and economic change in recent years. At this time, more than 30 Sub-Saharan African countries have taken steps, under the guidance of bilateral and multilateral donors such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, to create the necessary environment to attract private sector investment. In addition, more than 25 nations in the region have held democratic elections since 1990.

Given the changes that are taking place in Sub-Saharan Africa, I believe that it is appropriate for us to shift our policy toward the region. In particular, we must reach out to the Sub-Saharan African countries which have instituted programs to put their economies on the right track; we want them to succeed in charting a new course for their future. I also must note the reforms underway in Sub-Saharan Africa present many new trade and investment opportunities for United States exporters and workers, particularly in the area of infrastructure development. The legislation I am introducing today is designed to bring our private sectors together by providing the necessary framework to open a mutually beneficial trade and investment dialogue between the United States and Sub-Saharan African countries.

The legislation being reintroduced today, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, calls for the negotiation of free-trade agreements with countries or regions in Sub-Saharan Africa that are taking appropriate steps to reform their economies. To help give momentum to these negotiations, and to focus greater attention on Sub-Saharan Africa by the United States private sector, the bill calls for the creation of a United States-Sub-Saharan Africa trade and economic cooperation forum. This forum will provide regular opportunities for policy leaders and heads of state to meet to discuss issues of mutual interest and to keep the trade negotiations on track.

In addition, the bill would extend the generalized system of preferences [GSP] program, which provides duty-free access to the United States market to imports of eligible items from developing countries, permanently for Sub-Saharan Africa. It also would allow the President to designate countries in the region as eligible for additional GSP benefits on products currently excluded from coverage by the program. Recognizing that textile and apparel products development could result in immediate job creation in Sub-Saharan Africa that would not threaten existing jobs in the United States, the bill also states that the administration should continue its "no quota" policy toward the region on these products.

As I again offer this legislation, I would like to take the opportunity to recognize significant contributions made to this initiative by two of my colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee, Congressman CHARLIE RANGEL and Congressman JIM MCDERMOTT, who worked with me throughout the past Congress to build a consensus. To initiate consideration of the issue by the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, I have scheduled a hearing on this legislation in the Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee, which I chair, for Tuesday, April 29. I look forward to listening to the testimony that the subcommittee will receive that day and to continuing to work with my colleagues on a bipartisan basis to move this legislation forward.

IN HONOR OF "LET'S CELEBRATE"—MAKING A DIFFERENCE  
IN THE LIVES OF JERSEY CITY  
RESIDENTS FOR 15 YEARS

**HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 24, 1997*

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an extraordinary organization, "Let's Celebrate," which is committed to making a difference in the lives of the residents of Jersey City. Let's Celebrate's contributions will be recognized during festivities to be held at Casino in the Park Restaurant in North Bergen on April 25, 1997.

The mission of Let's Celebrate was born in 1981 when a small group of Jersey City clergy formed a coalition to combat hunger and homelessness. Their efforts decreased hunger and homelessness in Jersey City. This led to the incorporation of Let's Celebrate as a non-profit organization dedicated to moving people from hunger to wholeness, in 1982. Jersey City residents have become the beneficiaries of the enormous commitment and compassion of the visionaries who founded "Let's Celebrate."

The original mission of Let's Celebrate has been greatly expanded over the past 15 years. The first turn in the road toward self-sufficiency, paved by the efforts of this organization, was the Emergency Food Network, a collection of food pantries focused on meeting the emergency food needs of both individuals and families. Within a short period of time, the need for prepared meals became obvious, due to the number of clients served by Let's Celebrate who did not have access to cooking facilities. Thus, The Square Meal Soup Kitchen was established on December 7, 1983, a day which will long be remembered by those who

have since passed through their doors. Initially located at St. John's Reform Church on Fairview Avenue, The Square Meal moved to Christ Church United Methodist in Journal Square, where it remained until July 1991 when it then relocated to its original, and current, home at St. John's Reform Church.

Later, Let's Celebrate's goal to reduce hunger expanded to include job training. With a major grant from United Parcel Service, as well as additional financial support from Philip Morris, the Job Power program was born. This training program in the culinary arts has graduated 85 students ready to be productive members of the work force. In 1995 Let's Celebrate instituted the Housing Plus program to assist individuals with special medical needs. This invaluable program enables clients to receive medical case management along with help on housing issues. Another service provided by Let's Celebrate is the G.E.D. program located at the Square Meal Community Center, providing area residents the opportunity pursue a high school diploma.

It is an honor to have such an exceptional organization working in my district benefitting the underprivileged of Jersey City. Let's Celebrate has helped enhance the meaning of community service.

TRIBUTE TO PYRAMID ACADEMY  
IN MEMPHIS, TN

**HON. HAROLD E. FORD, JR.**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 24, 1997*

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise to praise the achievements of the students, faculty, and the principal of Pyramid Academy in Memphis, TN. Pyramid Academy is an alternative school serving teen mothers and children with behavioral problems. Most of the students at Pyramid come from a world of obstacles and disadvantages. Many of them have been thrown off track by poor choices or a lack of direction.

As its name symbolizes, however, the Pyramid Academy, is giving these young men and women the building blocks they need to rise to the top. The school administrators transformed the way they educate and rehabilitate their students. They moved away from a punitive approach toward a holistic one, focusing on dropout prevention, personal development, responsible parenting, and achievement. Before this transformation, police walked the halls, and in the words of the principal, the school was nothing more than "a holding tank."

Those who doubt or question the power of placing high expectations and standards on our students, need only look to the example set by Pyramid Academy. As evidence, five young ladies from Pyramid Academy won first place in the African-American Knowledge Bowl, sponsored by the Memphis City Schools. I would like to include the names of the Grand Champion Knowledge Bowl team and ask the House of Representatives to join me in honoring their achievements: Meisha Harris, Tamika Williams, Edwina Jefferson, Cortisa Thomas and Alicia Currie. These young women are sources of inspiration for the House of Representatives. They are my heroes. I would also like to include, in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, a newspaper article chronicling their achievement.