

Despina Marangos was born in Bethlehem, PA, on November 14, 1917. Despina's parents, Zaharias Kyriacou from Cyprus and Chrsanthi Protoulis from Lesbos, Greece, had entered the United States through Ellis Island in the early 1900's.

When Despina moved to New York at age six and enrolled in P.S. 116, her English language skills were limited. yet she graduated as valedictorian of her class and went on to attend Julia Richman High school where she was an honor student.

Despina's devotion to her family and community was evident in her willingness to act as an interpreter. Her devotion to her family was further exhibited during the Depression when Despina entered the work force at an early age to work with her mother in the garment industry.

At age 20, Despina met Pantelis John Maragos from Cyprus. They were married just before her 21st birthday on November 6, 1938, at Zodofo Pygi Greek Orthodox Church in the Bronx. Despina and Pantelis celebrated their 59th wedding anniversary just yesterday.

Despina continued to work until her daughter, mary Ann, was born in 1943. but, during World War II, Pantelis was sent overseas with the Navy. Despina was forced to move in with her parents and take a job at a defense plant in Long Island City. She worked nights and cared for her child during the day.

After the war, Pantelis returned and their son, John Zaharias, was born in 1950. Despina continued to enrich her life with reading, helping her children and caring for her aging parents. She also found time to be a den mother and an officer in the Women's Auxiliary and in the Parents' Association.

In 1959, a new phase of Despina's life began when she went back to work for the Christmas season at Macy's. Her work was so exemplary that Macy's retained her for 30 years. Since retiring, she has remained active in the retiree chapter of her union, Macy's Local 1S, and in the senior center she and Pantelis attend, where she is a board member.

As grandparents, Despina and Pantelis often travel with their granddaughters, Cindy and Denise. Even with Pantelis recovering from a stroke a year ago, they still make short trips. They are both working hard on his recovery and look forward to the day they can travel freely again.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues rise with me in this tribute to Despina Marangos, the daughter of immigrants who has combined the best of her hellenic heritage with the opportunities America has provided.

#### THE TROPICAL FOREST CONSERVATION ACT

**HON. ROB PORTMAN**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, November 7, 1997*

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to introduce with my colleagues, the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. KASICH, and the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. HAMILTON, the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998. The purpose of this bipartisan legislation is to re-channel existing resources to facilitate debt for nature swaps with lesser developed countries

that contain some of the world's most biologically diverse tropical forests. Now is the time for action.

Despite all of the controversy over global warming, there is a consensus that tropical forests provide a wide range of benefits to citizens of the United States and people around the world. Tropical forests harbor a major share of the Earth's biological resources, which provide the ingredients for life-saving medicines and the genetic sources to revitalize agricultural crops that supply most of the world's food. They play a critical role as carbon sinks in reducing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and moderating potential global climate change. And these forests regulate hydrological cycles on which far-flung agricultural and coastal resources depend. In short, tropical forests are essential to sustaining life, treating deadly diseases, and preserving the agricultural economy.

Tragically, over half of the tropical forests on Earth have disappeared and the rapid rate of deforestation and degradation of these sensitive ecosystems continues unabated. In the past year alone, more than 30 million acres of tropical forests were lost. Such a record cannot continue without a dramatic impact on our environment for our generation and those to come.

Many of these biologically rich environments are located in less developed countries with significant amounts of U.S. debt. These countries have urgent needs for investment and capital for development and have allocated a significant amount of their forests to logging concessions. Poverty and economic pressures on the populations of developing countries have, over time, resulted in clearing of vast areas of forest for conversion to agriculture, which is often unsustainable in the poor soils underlying tropical forests. Mounting debts put more pressure on countries to sell off or convert their tropical forests for other uses.

The Tropical Forest Conservation Act addresses the underlying causes of tropical deforestation and gives countries tangible incentives to protect their tropical forests.

The act builds upon the framework of President Bush's Enterprise for the Americas Initiative [EAI]. Under EAI, up to \$154 million was provided to environmental trust funds in Latin American countries to protect tropical rain forests through debt for nature swaps.

The Tropical Forest Conservation Act amends the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to provide the President authority to: First, reduce debt owned to the United States that is outstanding as of January 1, 1997, as a result of concessional loans; second, to reduce any amount owed to the United States outstanding as of January 1, 1997, as a result of any credits extended under title I of the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954; and third, to sell to any eligible purchaser, or reduce or cancel, any loan made before January 1, 1997, to any eligible country or any agency under the Export-Import Bank Act of 1945. Appropriations are authorized for these purposes for fiscal years 1999, 2000 and 2001.

The bill initially targets specific countries and gives the President discretion over time to designate countries that meet the criteria for designation. It facilitates debt for nature swaps in those developing countries that have tropical forests with the greatest degree of biodiversity and under the most severe threat.

Such countries must also meet the criteria established by Congress under the EAI, including, among other things, that the government must be democratically elected, has not repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism, is not failing to cooperate on international narcotics control matters, and does not engage in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.

Each beneficiary country will establish a tropical forest fund. Amounts deposited in the fund will be used to preserve, maintain, and restore tropical forests in those countries. There is accountability in the process—such funds shall be administered and overseen by U.S. Government officials, environmental non-governmental organizations active in the beneficiary country, and scientific or academic organizations.

The goal of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 is to help protect the planet's remaining storehouses of biological diversity. These forests have a direct impact on U.S. taxpayers—on the air we breath, the food we eat and the medicines that are developed to cure disease. Action is needed now in these developing countries to address the underlying causes of deforestation and environmental degradation so that these important ecosystems can be preserved before it is too late.

This legislation has strong support in the environmental community, including Conservation International, the Nature Conservancy, and the World Wildlife Fund strongly support this legislation.

We look forward to working with our colleagues on a bipartisan basis and with the administration to protect these invaluable resources.

#### TRIBUTE TO HENRY KUIPER

**HON. DUNCAN HUNTER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, November 7, 1997*

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary service and dedication of a constituent in my district, Mr. Henry "Hank" Kuiper of El Centro, CA. Hank is a devoted member of this community serving the city of El Centro for the past 12 years, 3 of these as mayor. He is soon retiring and I would like to take a moment to commend his dedicated service in local government and community programs.

Hank's involvement and accomplishments extend well beyond his 12 year tenure with the city council. Aside from being a member of the small business community, he also served as a member of the Joint Powers Insurance Authority, Air Pollution Control Board, Citizens Advisory Committee—Centinela State Prison, Border Trade Alliance, Free Trade Commission, and was appointed by Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt to the Colorado River Flood Way Task Force.

Hank is a symbol of commitment and dedication to his fellow citizens and community. He has pledged a great share of his life to the service of others and he has surely made El Centro a better place to live. Today, let us honor him for his unwavering contributions. Mr. Hank Kuiper is well deserving and I wish him great happiness in his future endeavors.