

Ying Vang, Executive Director; Yao Lo, Special Projects Director; and Mr. Kue Xiong, Special Assistant.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud that Hmong veterans and their families, under the leadership of these two St. Paul-based, non-profit community organizations, helped to organize national recognition ceremonies in recent years to honor the Hmong and Lao veterans at both the Vietnam War Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery. These events were the first of their kind and attracted international media coverage. They drew thousands of people from Minnesota and across the nation to Washington, D.C. I was deeply honored to provide remarks and participate in these historic events, including the dedication of the monument at Arlington National Cemetery, which prompted the following editorial in the Washington Post which I would like to include in the RECORD at this time.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the Southeast Asian community in St. Paul are playing an increasingly positive role as they pursue education, home ownership and fill key roles in our society. Although serious challenges persist, this generation will have a magnificent impact upon shaping tomorrow's Minnesota. It is important that Congress honor their history, culture and background today.

Once again, I would like to salute all those who supported and cosponsored H.R. 371 which I plan to reintroduce during the 106th Congress.

[From the Washington Post, May 20, 1998]

DEBTS TO THE HMONG

To anyone with a memory and a commitment to keeping one's word, it is bound to come as a shock that the United States is still not fulfilling its obligations to its Hmong and Lao allies in the Vietnam War. Eleven years ago, Congress authorized the Vietnam Veterans National Medal for the now-American survivors of the secret army that helped America fight its battles in Laos in 1961-73 and that paid dearly for it. Yet only the other day was the medal actually bestowed on the few thousand veterans of that army who had gathered in Washington. In a march meant to recall their earlier escape across the Mekong River to Thailand, the Hmong group crossed the Potomac to the grave of John F. Kennedy, the first American president their units had served.

The Hmong, or "Meo," and Lao recruits formed under CIA direction at a time when their very presence and role were officially denied. Diverting large numbers of North Vietnamese soldiers from their primary (American) targets, the secret army gathered intelligence, protected U.S. navigational sites and rescued hundreds of downed American pilots. In turn, the United States took on specific protective obligations and of course an overwhelming moral obligation. These debts were fulfilled only raggedly when Communist North Vietnam swept over Laos. Hmong and Lao soldiers and the families were alternately repressed by the victorious forces and forced into exile. Some 135,000 now live in the United States.

Their current complaints go well beyond the tardy receipt of medals for their valor. A concern for their kin has made them advocates of an American policy to press the Laotian government harder to ensure fair treatment for those left behind and to begin Hmong-language broadcasts on the now American-supported Radio Free Asia. They also protest the recent immigration-law changes that limit benefits to non-citizens, including elderly Hmong who have been un-

able to learn English for the citizenship exam.

In Arlington Cemetery, the Hmong unveiled a memorial to their combat veterans and American advisers. In the Lao and Hmong languages the writing on the monument states, "You will never be forgotten." They almost were.

OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT IN IRAQ

HON. LAMAR S. SMITH

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today regarding a very important bipartisan issue that will need to be addressed in the 106th Congress, that is compensating the families of the Americans who were killed on April 14, 1994 while serving in Operation Provide Comfort over Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I have been very disappointed by the Pentagon's handling of this issue and their refusal to treat fairly the families of the American service personnel who were killed on this incident. I have several constituents whose loved one was killed in this incident and I am disappointed that the Department of Defense has not treated them more fairly.

On April 14, 1994, 15 Americans, 14 military personnel and 1 civilian, and 11 foreign nationals, were killed when two Army Black Hawk helicopters, were shot down over the "No Fly zone" in Iraq by two Air Force F-15's. According to the General Accounting Office, this loss of life resulted from 130 separate mistakes by the Air Force and the Army. After this incident, the Department of Defense made \$100,000 ex gratia payments to the families of the foreign nationals in addition to the other death benefits they received from their own countries. While making these payments to the foreign families, the Administration was unwilling to give the same treatment to the next of kin of the Americans.

My subcommittee held a hearing on this issue on June 18, 1998 and heard from both the Pentagon and the families. Before the hearing, I requested the Pentagon be prepared to answer whether authority exists under current law to compensate the families at the same level as the foreign families. During their testimony, the Pentagon was unable to provide a credible answer for why they did not treat the Americans in the same matter as the foreign families. First, they could not answer whether they had the authority to make the payments to the Americans, then after the hearing, when the Department did provide the Subcommittee with a response they did not answer the direct question posed. Rather than providing a statutory bar to payment under Section 127 of Title 10, the Department's response discusses "limitations that have historically been applied" and "compelling reasons against making such payments".

It would appear that historical applications and compelling reasons were compromised when the Department chose to make ex gratia payments to the families of foreign nationals killed in the same incident with Americans. By doing so, the Department has placed the Government in the position of appearing to value foreign nationals lives more than American lives.

It is clear that some remedy must be affected to rectify the inequities created by the actions taken by the Department in this incident. Our service personnel deserve to be treated better. I have been working with Congressmen COLLINS, CONYERS, and WATT of North Carolina to fashion a bipartisan solution to this problem.

The Subcommittee did not have time to act this year, but we will revisit this issue next year. I hope that the Pentagon will correct this injustice and make the payments to the families without Congress having to take action. However, if the Administration is not willing to act, the Immigration and Claims Subcommittee will consider legislation in the 106th Congress to give the American families the same treatment as the foreign families received.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained in the district on October 13th and 14th. As a result, I missed rollcall votes 527-531. If I had been present, I would have voted "aye" on rollcall 527, "nay" on rollcall 528, "aye" on rollcall 529, "nay" on rollcall 530 and "aye" on rollcall 531.

THANK YOU MR. BRENT AYER

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, today I want to pay tribute to the career of Mr. Brent Ayer. Brent has served my office in the capacity of Chief of Staff for two years; however, he has served the United States House of Representatives loyally for twenty-one.

As Chief of Staff, Brent has performed his duties with meticulous skill and care. His ability to organize and prioritize keeps the office running like clockwork. Brent is a true asset to my staff, providing a level of leadership and wisdom that could only be gained through twenty-one years of service.

How best to describe twenty-one years on Capitol Hill other than stating the obvious point that Brent is the kind of employee rarely seen this day-and-age in the workforce. He is the consummate Capitol Hill staffer and a model for anyone wishing to answer the call of service to his country and Congress.

Brent's tenure in the House of Representatives began in the office of Rep. Goodloe Byron, where he was hired as a staff assistant in 1977. He stayed on with Rep. Beverly Byron after Goodloe's death and advanced to Chief of Staff.

Brent's career path moved from Rep. Byron's office to Rep. RON KLING in 1994 and, finally to work for me.

Brent has a well-earned reputation for untangling really tangled messes. No task is too large or too small for him to handle. Whether Brent is attending a White House signing ceremony for legislation he helped his boss push through or defending a two-year-old child with Leukemia against a large health insurance company, he handles his duties with ease.

Brent's ability to get into the trenches has been a true motivating factor toward emphasizing a team atmosphere in our office.

Speaking of team efforts, included in the long list of Brent's accomplishments one of his greatest assets is his running ability and knowledge of the sport, which has helped Team Gordon successfully win the Capital Challenge six consecutive years.

He has been a staffer's advocate, too, and the House is a better place to work because of his tenure.

Brent was instrumental in establishing a fitness program for staffers. He helped begin a program of assisting new offices in setting up—thereby easing the transition to Congressional life for new staff. Every staffer and former staffer who worked with or under him praised his leadership, his calmness, and his ability.

I have heard Brent explain his long tenure in this way, "I came in, I put my head down, I did my work; when I looked up twenty-one years had passed." With well earned accolades and a long list of good memories in hand Brent will end his era of congressional service on November 15, 1998.

On that day the House of Representatives will lose a strong and capable resource and veteran, his colleagues, both past and present, will lose a friend and mentor and I will lose a Chief of Staff, the likes of which come along once in a lifetime—if one is as lucky as I.

It is with sincere thanks and gratitude that I say good bye and good luck to Brent Ayer.

REPUBLICAN EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENTS

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to clarify what has been done in the 105th Congress regarding the many education issues facing our schools today. Work on education reform has now been completed, and I want to update my colleagues on the accomplishments of the Republican Congress, and the challenges of the future.

During this Congress, we approved 22 major education initiatives, including: the Reading Excellence Act (H.R. 2614), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (P.L. 105-17), a school nutrition bill (H.R. 3874), A+ Education Savings Accounts (H.R. 2646), a quality Head Start bill (S. 2206), a charter schools bill (H.R. 2616), and the Dollars to the Classroom grants (H.R. 3248). In addition, we are sending \$1.1 billion to the States to fill teaching needs. These Republican initiatives will send more Dollars to the classroom, honor State and local authority, promote quality in our Nation's schools, and increase parental involvement and responsibility. These common-sense reforms will foster excellence in our Nation's schools while limiting Washington's control of the classroom.

Unfortunately, President Clinton, despite his rhetoric, has politicized and hampered our attempts to improve schools. The President has threatened to veto the Dollars to Classroom Act, which would send \$2.7 billion directly to public schools, prepaid college tuition plans,

and bilingual education reform. In addition, the President has already vetoed safe schools legislation, a teacher testing bill, and our A+ Education Savings Accounts proposal. These actions clearly demonstrate Clinton's desire to thwart real reform and local decision-making.

I will continue to fight the President and his administration in their plans to complicate and stifle our efforts to lead this country in a new direction for the 21st Century. Although much still remains to be done, I remain optimistic for the future. With persistence, focus, and input from the people of this great country, we will empower our Nation's children, parents, and teachers to achieve their greatest potential.

KAREN THORNDIKE—FIRST AMERICAN WOMAN TO SAIL SINGLE-HANDEDLY AROUND THE WORLD

HON. NORMAN D. DICKS

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I was home in my congressional district, I had the great pleasure of meeting a Washington State native who recently became the first American woman to sail singlehandedly around the world. In a heroic voyage that took her just over 2 years, Karen Thorndike fought off serious illness and the relentless elements of nature in circumnavigating the globe unassisted on her 33,000-mile journey. She set a remarkable example of perseverance and determination as she piloted her 36-foot yacht "Amelia" around the five great capes of the world: Cape Horn, Cape of Good Hope, Cape Leeuwin, South East Cape of Tasmania, and South West Cape of New Zealand. I was proud to be in Port Angeles, WA, yesterday as the Mayor and City Council proclaimed October 19, 1998, as Karen Thorndike Day in honor of this courageous woman. It was a great day for Port Angeles, and I wanted to share with my colleagues in the House of Representatives the text of the proclamation that Mayor Gary Braun presented on behalf of the City Council, so that Karen Thorndike can serve as an example of courage, determination, and perseverance.

PROCLAMATION IN RECOGNITION OF KAREN THORNDIKE DAY

Whereas, Karen Thorndike, the first American woman to solo circumnavigate the world, is a native of Washington State; and

Whereas, This American pioneer in her 36-foot yacht "Amelia", survived winds and waves of terror south of the five Great Capes of the world: Cape Horn, Cape of Good Hope, Cape Leeuwin, South East Cape of Tasmania, and South West Cape of New Zealand; and

Whereas, Karen Thorndike is only the seventh woman in the world to sail alone in open ocean around the globe; and

Whereas, Karen Thorndike overcame serious illness off the Falkland Islands, and completed her historic journey of more than 33,000 nautical miles by returning to San Diego, California on August 18, 1998, two years and two weeks after departing San Diego; and

Whereas, Karen Thorndike became a role model for youth and adults all over the world by her inspirational example of perseverance against the relentless elements of nature.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GARY BRAUN, Mayor, on behalf of the City Council of Port Angeles, do hereby proclaim October 19, 1998,

to be "Karen Thorndike Day" in Port Angeles in recognition of her extraordinary journey in which she became the first American woman to solo circumnavigate the globe.

GARY BRAUN,

October 19, 1998.

MINNESOTA'S FAIR FARM PRICES NOW PETITION

HON. DAVID MINGE

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Mr. MINGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to commend all the Minnesotans who have signed the "Fair Farm Prices Now" Petition. I have received petitions which were signed by thousands of farmers and citizens of rural Minnesota communities. These people have come to Congress with a simple request: that they be given a fair price for their hard work. They have asked that their elected representatives answer their petition by uncapping and raising the marketing loan rate, by extending the terms of the marketing loan, and by making crop insurance coverage more effective.

Unfortunately, this outpouring has not been adequately heard by Congress. Although the Omnibus Appropriations Conference Report, which will be voted on this evening, does provide a substantial agricultural disaster package, it does not make the changes which these farmers have requested. Uncapping the marketing loan rates would have given producers more flexibility in handling the fiscal roller-coaster that these families have faced and will continue to face in the coming years. Providing more effective crop insurance would give farmers another important tool in their tool box with which to combat the inherent and uncontrollable risk of their business. Regardless of the long-term benefits to farmers of these requests, the crop insurance program and the marketing loan program remain the same.

Again, I commend the citizens of rural Minnesota who have spoken out about their need to have fair prices for the commodities which they produce. I agree with their request and regret that our leaders in Congress have not heard their plea.

H.R. 4679: THE ANTIMICROBIAL REGULATION TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT OF 1998

HON. TOM BLILEY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide additional background information on Congress' intent and understanding regarding H.R. 4679, the "Antimicrobial Regulation Technical Corrections Act of 1998."

With the enactment of the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) of 1996, changes were made in the definition of "pesticide chemical" and "food additive" under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA). In addition, FQPA added a definition of "pesticide chemical residue." These new definitions had a significant and unintended impact on the regulatory responsibility for approving the use of