

the 2000 Caring Hands Gold Award as the National Big Brother of the year.

Mike has served our community and the Catholic Big Brothers for more than 17 years—providing leadership and mentoring services to dozens of youths in the greater Los Angeles area.

Mike is dedicated to community service. He is a high school teacher and full time volunteer at a variety of youth centers and detention facilities. His accessibility, guidance, and commitment have helped many at risk young people see that others do in fact care.

Mike has accomplished much in his career as a Big Brother. He did so despite being born with a severe hearing impairment which resulted in a childhood full of loneliness.

He is a great example for all of us—representing the best in overcoming personal challenges and in giving to others.

Please join me in recognizing America's Big Brother of the year Michael Joseph Bowler.

PUERTO RICO AND THE  
DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

HON. PATRICK J. KENNEDY

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 28, 2000*

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island. Mr. Speaker, today I speak about an important development that I strongly support to enable Puerto Rico to have the chance to choose their future status through a fully democratic process.

As we all know, Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States in 1898 as a consequence of the Spanish-American War. Since then, the Federal Government has never formally consulted the disenfranchised American citizens of Puerto Rico on the Island's political status. Over a hundred years have passed and Puerto Rico's permanent status has yet to be determined. In addition, the American citizens residing in Puerto Rico have no vote in the government that determines their national laws.

While almost all other American citizens are given a democratic means of expressing themselves through two Senators and representation in the House of Representatives, the American citizens residing in Puerto Rico lack voting congressional representation, and their voices are essentially left unheard.

Three local inconclusive referenda (1967, 1993 and 1998) have been held in Puerto Rico with regard to the Island's political status. However, the major flaw of these local processes was that local political parties were allowed to submit their own political status definitions, a situation not consistent with Federal law.

Mr. Speaker, one thing we did learn from the 1998 local referenda held in Puerto Rico was that over fifty percent of voters cast their ballot for an option that read "none of the above." This had the effect of providing, at best, an ambiguous result and no clear basis upon which to continue the process of ensuring that the governing arrangement enjoys consensus. But more tellingly, and more importantly, the vast majority of the voters, over 95 percent, did not support the status quo.

Much of Puerto Rico's status debate concerns what the Federal Government would implement. To that end, President Clinton invited the leaders of Puerto Rico's three major political parties, the Governor, our Colleague CARLOS ROMERO-BARCELO, and the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the House Resources Committee and the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, to an unprecedented summit at the White House on Wednesday, June 28, 2000.

The purpose of this summit is to further the work of the federal Executive and Legislative branches of government to begin a process. This process would clarify the options available regarding the governing arrangement that should apply to Puerto Rico, consistent with the Constitution and International law. This process will also define how federal economic and social policies should apply to the Island.

President Clinton has specified that he has no status preference, but that he is committed to agreeing on a process that will enable the American citizens of Puerto Rico to make an informed judgement.

Fellow Colleagues, the Congress has been committed to the Self-Determination process in Puerto Rico, as well as to providing a constructive response to the 1998 referenda held on the territory. We can all agree that the bipartisan nature of the White House meeting will provide a foundation upon which to consider a process to resolve fundamental questions regarding Puerto Rico's relationship with the Federal Government.

If it is appropriate for the President to help resolve disputes in the Middle East, Bosnia and Northern Ireland, is it not in the interest of our Nation to focus our efforts on the future of a territory of the United States and the four million Hispanic Americans that reside there?

Mr. Speaker, I urge you to support our fellow American citizens in Puerto Rico in order to enable them to choose a viable option. I urge you to support this effort and the decisions that may result from this summit.

CONGRATULATIONS TO C.W.  
"CHUCK" PLUNKETT FOR HIS  
OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO THE  
CITY OF LEBANON, MO, AND TO  
FORT LEONARD WOOD, MO

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 28, 2000*

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, let me take this means to honor Mr. Chuck Plunkett of Lebanon, MO, for his outstanding service to his community.

Mr. Plunkett has served the Lebanon community as the president of both the Lebanon Chamber of Commerce and the Fort Leonard Wood Committee of the Chamber. He has indeed been a community leader and an ambassador to Fort Leonard Wood. In fact, Chuck has spent nearly twenty years of his life working on behalf of better community relations between Lebanon and Fort Wood.

Throughout the years, Chuck, along with his wife Lil, have worked tirelessly on behalf of service members and their families who live

and work at Fort Leonard Wood, MO. They have organized tours of Lebanon and the surrounding area to showcase the people of Missouri and the scenic Ozark hills that surround the fort. They have regularly attended events at Fort Leonard Wood and passed out hundreds of buttons declaring "Lebanon Loves Fort Wood." In addition, when the U.S. Army was considering moving the Army Engineer School to Fort Leonard Wood, Lil and Chuck played an instrumental role in promoting the outstanding community relations that America's young soldiers would experience in Missouri. This good will gesture was important to the Army's decision to move the school to Missouri in 1989.

Chuck Plunkett has received many awards because of his dedication to Fort Leonard Wood. He has been given a certificate of appreciation while serving as the Chairman of the Fort Leonard Wood Committee, and he received the TRADOC Certificate of Appreciation for International Student Support. Additionally, Chuck and his wife, Lil, have been awarded a certificate of appreciation for their generous contribution and support to the soldiers of the 10th Infantry Regiment during the 1990 holiday season, and in 1991, Chuck was presented an award commending his public service during the gulf war. One accolade that Mr. Plunkett is especially proud of is from the families of the 55th Engineer Company, which included photographs of service members' families.

In addition to the various awards presented to Chuck Plunkett over the years, he has been named a Charter Member of the Engineer Regimental Association of the United States Army. He has also been officially designated as a member of the Army Engineer Association.

Chuck, who served his nation in the U.S. Air Force from 1943 to 1946 as a ball turret gunner on a B-17, came to the Lebanon community in 1972. He owned and operated Commercial Quality Feed Center, Inc., until 1983 where he engineered and constructed a feed mill and retail store.

Mr. Speaker, in a time when the gap between civilian America and military America is growing, Chuck Plunkett has worked long and hard to bridge that gap. A World War II veteran, a small business owner, and a community leader, it is right that the Members of the House of Representatives join me in honoring this role model for all Americans.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LUIS V. GUTIERREZ

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 28, 2000*

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent from this Chamber on Monday, June 26, when rollcall votes 322 through 330 were taken. I want the RECORD to show that had I been present in this Chamber at the time these votes were cast, I would have voted "no" on rollcall vote 322, "yes" on rollcall vote 323, "no" on rollcall vote 324, "yes" on rollcall vote 325, "no" on rollcall vote 326, "yes" on rollcall vote 327, "yes" on rollcall vote 328, "yes" on rollcall vote 329 and "yes" on rollcall vote 330.