

and Social Responsibility. He has been called "the conscience of the Legislature" and "the Johnny Appleseed of Self Esteem." He has made a commitment to recognizing California as the leader in the development of new technologies, the global economy, and to meeting the challenge of realizing the promise of our multicultural democracy, with every person being given the opportunity to fulfill her or his full potential his mantra.

Mr. Speaker, we're proud to call John Vasconcellos our friend and our colleague in public service. This pragmatic idealist and visionary is a source of great pride to the Democratic Party, to our mutual constituents, to all Californians and to our entire nation. We ask our colleagues to join us in honoring and thanking Senator Vasconcellos for his lifetime of extraordinary service to California and our country. Because of him and his distinguished service, we are unmistakably a stronger, better and more decent nation.

HONORING MR. GEORGE BOOMS

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 29, 2004

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to recognize the accomplishments of Mr. George Booms. He is a hardworking advocate for America's senior citizens. On Thursday, May 6, 2004, the Region VII Area Agency on Aging will show their appreciation to George during their annual meeting to be held at Buck's Run located in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

George was born October 9, 1938, in Bad Axe, Michigan. He is a longtime resident and dairy farmer of Sanilac County, Michigan. George has made it his life's work to defend and promote human dignity for all senior and disabled Americans. He joined the Region VII Area Agency on Aging Board of Directors in 1993. The Area Agency on Aging, which was created by the Older Americans Act, partners with county organizations to service the needs of the elderly. During his tenure, George served as board vice chairman in 1998 and 2000. He served as board chairman from 2001 to 2004. Under his steadfast leadership, George was able to successfully, along with the help of various committees, secure a new and more spacious facility for Region VII Area Agency on Aging. George was also instrumental in leading the search for a new executive director. He has also dedicated numerous hours to advocating the MiChoice Waiver program for the elderly and disabled. George was the lead in guiding the agency to conduct a study on wages and approve equitable wage steps for all employees of Region VII Area Agency on Aging. Prior to George's service on the board, he was the township clerk for Sanilac County for 12 years and a Sanilac County commissioner for 12 years. He was also a member of the Sanilac planning committee and public and safety committee. Aside from his work with the agency, George enjoys participating in various related church functions and woodworking.

I know that George would want me to point out that the love and support of his family have immensely contributed to his overall success. He is a devoted husband to his lovely wife, Arlene. They have three sons, two daughters, and six wonderful grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, many people have greatly benefited from George Booms's experience and dedication. He is a man of moral character committed to improving the welfare and dignity of those in need. I ask my colleagues in the 108th Congress to please join me in congratulating George Booms on a successful term and in wishing the very best in future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION OVERLORD

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 29, 2004

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to recognize and commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Allied landing at Normandy during World War II. I am pleased that the ranking member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Mr. EVANS, has joined me as an original cosponsor of this measure. I urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this resolution.

The well-known phrase "freedom is not free" perhaps never meant as much as it did on June 6, 1944. Over 6,500 American troops suffered casualties on that day. Our allies also suffered great numbers of killed and wounded. Many more observed horrible images that were burned into their memories for the rest of their lives. Sadly, this was the beginning of a campaign that would cost the lives of thousands of Americans in order to end the "Thousand Year Reich" hundreds of years prematurely. There are many concentration camp prisoners—and their descendants—alive today because of the price paid by thousands of young men.

One of the reasons I feel strongly that Congress should debate and pass legislation such as this is that there are fewer and fewer original participants in the event, and our collective societal memory can become skewed and distorted. As the interval of time lengthens between our current understanding of a historical event, and when the event originally took place, its significance can sometimes become blurred or almost lost.

Many of us look back upon the Normandy Invasion at D-Day, June 6, 1944, and think of it as the beginning of Europe's liberation from the clutches of one of the most evil systems of government ever devised by mankind. In many ways, this understanding is correct. But sometimes I feel as if too many historical observers minimize the fact that the Allied victory at Normandy, and the subsequent liberation of Europe from Nazi and Fascist tyranny, was not inevitable. Many historians today are so obsessed with finding and identifying "fundamental historical trends" and isolating various factors and causes that they often overlook that much of history occurs by chance and by the sheer human will of key individuals.

On June 6, 1944, failure was possible. In fact, when you pause and consider the magnitude and scale of such an enormously complicated military operation waged by multiple nations, it sometimes seems amazing that the operation ever succeeded.

After all, roughly two years earlier, several thousand Canadian and British troops

launched an amphibious raid near the town of Dieppe, and this operation proved to be a complete disaster. Some of the highest casualty rates of the entire war were suffered during the operation. As a result of this military debacle, there were over 1,000 allied soldiers killed, and 2,000 prisoners taken by the Germans. The Allied raid failed because troops were inadequately prepared and lacked experience in battle, the plan was poorly conceived, overly complex, and lacked sufficient fire support from aircraft and artillery.

As planning for Operation Overlord was underway, Winston Churchill injected much needed caution and urged careful planning. Stalin was putting heavy pressure on Roosevelt and Churchill to move quickly and launch an invasion in 1943 to relieve the enormous pressure on the Soviets along the Eastern Front. Churchill worried that a 1943 invasion would fail, and feared that the beaches of France could end up "choked with the bodies of the flower of American and British manhood."

Fortunately, the Allies learned the bitter lessons of the 1942 Dieppe landing, and put these hard-won lessons to good use during the Normandy invasion. But there was nothing historically inevitable about the success of Operation Overlord.

The famed historian Stephen Ambrose put the significance of this operation in perspective:

You can't exaggerate it. You can't overstate it. [D-Day] was the pivot point of the 20th century. It was the day on which the decision was made as to who was going to rule in this world in the second half of the 20th century. Is it going to be Nazism, is it going to be communism, or are the democracies going to prevail? If we would have failed on Omaha Beach and on the other beaches on the 6th of June in 1944, the struggle for Europe would have been a struggle between Hitler and Stalin, and we would have been out of it.

It is also worth noting that General Dwight D. Eisenhower himself was not completely confident of victory. Prior to the launch of the great amphibious assault, he scribbled a brief note about what he would say to the press in the event that the invasion failed, and put it in his wallet. He later added it to his diary. The note read as follows:

"Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based upon the best information available. The troops, the air and the Navy did all that Bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone.

When the words of this note were first revealed to the American public, I thought how wise President Franklin Roosevelt was to pick a man of such character and humility as Dwight Eisenhower to lead the single most important military operation in American history.

Here was a man who was asked to oversee and execute the most complicated military plan ever devised, one in which so many things could have gone wrong that you could have blamed hundreds of different variables had it not succeeded.

A great invasion force stood off the Normandy coast of France as dawn broke on June 6, 1944: in all, there were 9 battleships,