

Rule of Law Center at the University of Richmond as a program that will be actively considered by the U.S. Agency for International Development. This is an important step forward in our effort to enhance fair and judicial systems internationally.

Today, one of the most pressing needs in emerging democracies is to educate leaders who administer justice in the traditions of due process, transparency, accountability, consistency, and judicial independence. Only with an understanding of such values can leaders within a society go forward to create stable and sustainable justice systems that are critical to democracy.

With the aim of international stability in mind, it is in our national interest to foster a crosscultural exchange and understanding of the importance of law. The International Rule of Law Center at the University of Richmond will play a constructive role in accomplishing this goal by supporting the education of future judges in emerging democracies.

The International Rule of Law Center will educate approximately 20 foreign students in a 1-year program that culminates with the students earning a master of laws degree. The program will include many practical field experiences and trips, in addition to a curriculum that focuses on judicial administration, constitutional law, the theory of a sound and fair system of justice, and elements of international law.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud Chairman BILL YOUNG and Chairman JIM KOLBE for their efforts, and I look forward to working with them in the future.

URGING GOVERNMENT OF
BELARUS TO ENSURE DEMO-
CRATIC, TRANSPARENT, AND
FAIR ELECTION PROCESS

SPEECH OF

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 2004

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member rises in support of H. Res. 652, which calls on the government of Belarus to ensure that Parliamentary elections which will take place in Belarus in October of this year are democratic, transparent and fair.

Thirteen years after the fall of communism, Belarus remains one of the few nations in Europe where the transition to democracy has not taken sufficient root.

The current political leadership continues to rule in an authoritarian manner and its government continues to crack down on those individuals and organizations who are trying to help build support for democracy and democratic institutions.

Unlike the situation in Ukraine, the government in Belarus has thus far not given any clear indication that it is committed to free and fair elections. However, in a recent meeting with the Ambassador from Belarus, this Member was led to believe that the government's position on the elections could be positive. The Ambassador gave assurances that the government would enforce the election codes and would allow all political parties to have representatives on the electoral commissions which oversee the implementation of the elec-

tions. He also indicated that Belarus would cooperate with the OSCE and would allow international observers.

At a hearing the Europe Subcommittee held in March on Belarus, this Member mentioned that Speaker DENNIS HASTERT and this Member met with the leaders of the Belarus opposition, collectively known as the Coalition Five-Plus, to discuss the elections and their vision for a democratic future for Belarus. This group of political parties has united in a common platform in an attempt to bring democracy and respectability back to the Belarus Parliament. Unfortunately, members of the opposition political parties and participants in political demonstrations continue to be subjected to increased harassment, surveillance by government agents, arrests, and physical abuse.

For these reasons, it is important that the United States Government, including this Congress, continue to emphatically express our strong support for free, fair and transparent elections and more definitive progress toward establishing a functioning democracy in Belarus.

In Europe, the situation in Belarus understandably seems to be of equal concern. The OSCE, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe have all expressed deep concerns over Belarus and its forthcoming elections. In fact, this Member is informed that the Chair of the Belarus Working Group of the OSCE PA recently visited Minsk for additional discussions on the elections.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 652 emphasizes that if Belarus is ever to become more integrated into the community of democratic nations, it must work toward the establishment of a genuinely democratic political system in which the freedom of association and assembly are guaranteed. It also must be a fact that political candidates from the opposition will be free from political harassment and intimidation as they campaign for office and in which the media is free to act independently, free from government control or intimidation. Finally there must be a system in which elections and the electoral process are open, transparent and fair if Belarus wishes to be included in the community of democratic nations.

The parliamentary elections this fall will be a litmus test for President Lukashenko's commitment to democracy and the direction he intends to take Belarus in the future.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 652 rather precisely explains the concerns and recommendations of the United States House of Representatives.

I urge the adoption of the resolution.

REMEMBERING H.J. "BUBBA"
SHANDS, JR.

HON. JIM TURNER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. TURNER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on June 19, 2004, the City of Lufkin and the state of Texas lost a friend with the passing of "Bubba" Shands, Jr. Bubba was an invaluable member of the community in Lufkin for many years, and he will be sorely missed.

The Lufkin Daily News recently called Bubba a "a Lufkin icon" and "East Texas' fa-

vorite son." I think those are two fitting names for Bubba, but I also think there are many more that we could add to that list: husband, father, grandfather, brother, athlete, patriot, leader, believer, and always, great friend to all.

Hilliard Judge "Bubba" Shands was born on November 18, 1926 in Lufkin, Texas. He grew up as a highly accomplished student-athlete, first at Lufkin High School and then at the University of Texas.

Bubba began working in the banking industry in 1958, and continued working in that industry until 1991. He was a bank executive for First Bank & Trust (formerly Republic Bank) for many years, and he also served on the boards of several other financial institutions, such as First Bank of Conroe, Angelina Savings Bank, and Balcones Resources in Austin.

Bubba always realized the importance of community service and was involved with many volunteer and civic organizations throughout his life. He worked diligently towards the creation of Angelina County Airport and the Salvation Army's Adult Day Center in Lufkin, and he was also deeply active in the movement to fund and create Angelina College. He served on the board of the United Way of Angelina County, the Angelina College Board of Trustees, the Lufkin Rotary Club, and he was an active member of the First United Methodist Church in Lufkin.

We pray for God's comforting spirit to be with his wife, Ann; his sister, Mary; his daughter Becky; his son, Jay; and his five grandchildren, Matt, Hill, Rob, Richie, Annie and Hunter.

Today, we honor the memory of a great East Texan, Hilliard Judge "Bubba" Shands, and we ask that we may all celebrate and enjoy life the same way Bubba did for each of his 77 years on this Earth.

THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF
COPPER CREEK RECORDS

HON. BOB GOODLATTE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I recognize the 25th Anniversary of Copper Creek Records. Copper Creek Records was formed in October of 1978 when recordings were made to introduce an up-and-coming bluegrass band known as the Johnson Mountain Boys, a group that went on to become festival and concert headliners as well as pioneers in the resurgence of traditional forms of bluegrass music.

Early in the label's career, documenting the history of bluegrass and old-time music was of paramount importance. The company documented such events as live concerts, field recordings, and vintage radio shows by legendary artists such as the Stanley Brothers and the Carter Family, as well as Reno & Smiley. A number of these releases were cited by the Library of Congress for their packaging, content, and historical value.

Coupled with historic preservation, Copper Creek has been active in developing new, up-and-coming talent as well as providing an outlet to musically deserving artists who fly just under the "mainstream radar." Most recently, the label has been active in licensing vintage

country, old-time, and bluegrass recordings for the major labels.

Over the years, the label has released nearly 200 different recorded projects. In addition to producing CDs for release on Copper Creek, the label has been active in producing historical reissues for other groups and labels that have ties to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

By sharing the history of bluegrass and vintage music and remaining active in current musical styles, Copper Creek Records has enriched our nation's cultural and historic understanding. Again, congratulations to Copper Creek Records on their 25th year.

ANTONIO CHAVEZ HONORED FOR
30 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE
COMMUNITY

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the achievements of Antonio Chavez and would like to recognize his extraordinary and tireless service to our community.

His first job with the County was in the Public Guardian's Office in 1974. Later, he was hired by Tom Guerin to work in Personnel's Affirmative Action Unit, and then worked in the Recruitment and Examining Unit as an Analyst. Antonio moved on in 1978 when he heard his true calling—job placement at Social Services. During his 15 years with JTPA, he focused on job development. In 1993 a new adventure began with the Gain Program, which later became CalWORKs. Later, at 1888 Senter Road Employment Connection, he earned the title, "Mr. Job Placement."

Throughout much of the time when he worked with GAIN/CalWORKs, he also held another position in the community for which he selflessly devoted long hours for many years: President of the Personnel Management Association of Aztlan (PMMA, now known as CHISPPA). This non-profit organization was truly a benefit to the Latino community, providing many professional development workshops for job seekers and scholarships for college students.

That organization also developed a mentorship/internship program that helped many college students and graduates gain valuable experience and employment. Under Antonio's leadership, PMMA also played a major role in the planning and implementation of many of Jobs America's Diversity Job Fairs.

Antonio Chavez has devoted his life to enrich and advance his community, and his contribution deserves to be honored to serve as an inspiration a new generation of San Jose residents.

I want to thank Antonio Chavez for his many years of service to our community and wish him nothing but the best in this next phase of his life.

TRIBUTE TO GORDON AND MARY
ELWELL

HON. KEN CALVERT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate a recent achievement of two people who, in celebrating their 50th year of marriage, have provided an inspiring example to all Americans. On June 5, 1954 at Holy Family Church, South Buffalo, New York sweethearts Gordon Elwell married Mary Mattimore. With not much more at the beginning to call their own except their marriage, their faith and vast opportunities afforded by this great country, Gordon and Mary have come a long way in the 50 years of marriage.

Gordon became a respected house builder in the Buffalo, New York area. Mary ran the household and tirelessly provided a loving and nurturing home environment for her husband and eight children. Throughout their incredible life together, Gordon and Mary have dedicated their lives to each other, their and children and grandchildren. To date they have been blessed with twelve grandchildren to spoil as only grandparents can.

In a society with one of the highest divorce rates in the world, Gordon and Mary have provided their children and grandchildren with a shining example of a successful marriage. It is all about hard work, a sense of humor and yes, a love that will not quit. Gordon and Mary have been truly blessed by the first 50 years of this magical marriage, and here's hoping that the best is yet to come. On behalf of my colleagues, let me join the many friends and admirers in wishing Gordon and Mary, and their family, all good fortune during the next 50 years.

WHEN "UP TO CODE" JUST ISN'T
ENOUGH

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, last year we saw an alarming increase in the number of fire related deaths in nursing homes. Fires at nursing homes in Hartford, CT and Nashville, TN claimed the lives of 31 residents, many of whom were elderly or bedridden.

In both cases, these buildings were considered "up to code," in that they met all fire codes and regulations applicable to their age and construction. These codes exempted both buildings from laws requiring them to be equipped with sprinklers because they were considered too old, and too costly, to retrofit. Most in the nursing home industry say this is an economic decision, that homes simply cannot afford the cost of retrofitting their facilities with sprinkler systems. The people of Hartford and Nashville, however, would say that this gap in fire protection is too high a cost where the safety of their loved ones is concerned.

With reduced mobility and health related impairments, the nursing home population is significantly more vulnerable in fire related emergencies. Although it has been repeatedly prov-

en that the presence of fire sprinklers significantly improves the chances of survival for older adults during a fire, the GAO reports that 20 to 30 percent of the approximately 17,000 nursing homes nationwide do not have an automatic fire sprinkler system. While some states have already taken action to ensure that their nursing homes are equipped with sprinklers, far too many lack such life saving and common sense requirements.

Today, even after last year's fires, there is no comprehensive federal standard for the inclusion of sprinklers in the nation's nursing homes. While the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services last year adopted the 2000 edition National Fire Protection Association's Life Safety Code, which required that new and renovated nursing homes be equipped with sprinklers, this new policy did not address the lack of sprinklers in already existing older homes. As a result, thousands of homes are allowed to operate "up to code," yet lacking a life saving sprinkler system.

Last week the GAO released a study on nursing home fire safety which concluded that "the substantial loss of life in the Hartford and Nashville fires could have been reduced or eliminated by the presence of properly functioning automatic sprinkler systems." The report also found that "federal oversight of nursing home compliance with fire safety standards is inadequate," and has led to inconsistent monitoring of fire safety standards, incomplete data on sprinkler coverage, and an alarming gap in nursing home fire protection. Above all, the report underscored the need for immediate action.

To this end, I have introduced the Nursing Home Fire Safety Act to eliminate the threat of fire for the 1.6 million elderly and disabled Americans living in nursing homes. Under this bill, all nursing homes participating in Medicare and Medicaid would be required to be fully equipped with automatic fire sprinklers within 5 years. With 97 percent of all nursing homes participating in these programs, this bill would protect the greatest number of Americans possible.

This bill also addresses what is generally seen as the biggest hurdle to installing sprinklers—the cost. Under my bill, any nursing home that has to pay to install sprinklers to meet this new requirement would be fully reimbursed through either Medicare or Medicaid. These reimbursements would be for the total cost of installing a sprinkler system, and would in no way impact any payment, service or program already offered through either program.

Although the 108th Congress is winding to a close, I feel it is important to introduce this bill now and take this crucial first step to begin a long delayed dialogue on nursing home fire safety. Many groups have been looking at this problem for over a year now, and will all undoubtedly have different ideas on an ideal solution. In light of the new information put forward in the GAO report, I look forward to working with them to improve this legislation and to find the best way to ensure that our nursing homes have the safety equipment they need to keep their residents safe from fire.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has turned a blind eye to this problem for far too long. "Up to code" is simply not enough when it comes to protecting the lives of our nation's nursing home population. The fires in Hartford and Nashville demonstrate the terrible and unacceptable consequences of allowing nursing