

National League of Cities; and the Georgia Municipal Association/Association County Commissioners of Georgia.

Today, as Jack Rodgers moves into retirement from government service, we honor him and thank him for all he has done for the benefit of Columbus, GA—as an elected official and as a private citizen dedicated to the good of others. His exemplary service to his community has set a standard of dedication and leadership that has inspired many and will inspire many others.

TRIBUTE TO MR. KEVORK S.
HOVNIANIAN

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a most deserving business and community leader, Mr. Kevork S. Hovnianian. On Saturday, November 18, 2006, Kevork was honored as the Honorary Life Chairman and founder of the Fund for Armenian Relief at the New York Public Library.

Kevork has been a benefactor in his community for decades. His business successes have always been interposed by examples of community leadership in both the United States and Armenia. He has exemplified the pursuit of business consciousness and never compromised his commitment to providing “homes” and not just housing.

Kevork will leave a personal legacy marked by numerous accomplishments. In the 1980s, he partnered with the city of Newark to rejuvenate the areas impacted by the riots some thirteen years before. In 1996, the New Jersey Institute of Technology awarded him a President’s Medal for “Distinguished Achievement to an Outstanding Entrepreneur.” Not three years later, his carer ethic earned him a place among other greats like Thomas Edison and George Gallup on the list of “Twenty Five Top New Jersey Business Leaders of the Century.”

The achievements he has earned since his immigration to the United States have not made him forget his roots. Kevork has loyally contributed to the Armenian people in times of celebration and need. The Diocese of the Armenia Church and the New Jersey Council of Christians and Jews both named him Man of the Year in recognition of his aid to earthquake victims in Armenia.

He currently serves as the chairman of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund and Fund for Armenian Relief, which works for international development. This organization pledges to provide short and long-term plans for the economic and social development in Armenia. It is responsible for a variety of programs, ranging from soup kitchens to educational scholarships and implementing agricultural technology. There is a special focus on preparing Armenian youth as the future of their nation.

As much as he is an active part of the Armenian community, Kevork remains vigilant in providing available health services to children and families in the local community. In 2002, Mr. Hovnianian helped establish the K. Hovnianian Pavilion and the Alton A. Hovnianian Emergency Care Center at River-

view Medical Center. The expansion of River-view provided the facility with a new pavilion and emergency care center, which now houses the most advanced emergency and critical care centers in the area. Earlier this year, he funded the first state-designated children’s hospital in New Jersey’s Monmouth and Ocean counties, named The K. Hovnianian Children’s Hospital in his honor. Here, families can find dedicated and personal health professionals who treat their patients as if they were their own children.

Mr. Speaker, Kevork embodies the American dream. He came to America to escape political turmoil in Iraq, and through hard work and unwavering motivation, he is now able to realize that dream in others through his service to the community. His dedication and passion deserves the utmost recognition.

SIKHS CELEBRATE BIRTHDAY OF
GURU NANAK, FIRST SIKH GURU

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because earlier this month, about 15,000 Sikhs from all over the world celebrated the birth of the first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak, in his birthplace, Nankana Sahib, which is now in Pakistan. The Sikhs in attendance chanted slogans of “Khalistan Zindabad” calling for the liberation of the Sikh homeland, Khalistan. Over 3,000 Sikhs from Punjab were in attendance and many of them commented on how much better they were treated in Pakistan than in their own country.

A delegation of Sikhs met with Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. He pledged to build a road from Kartarpur, where Guru Nanak died and where there is a shrine to him, to the Indian border if India would build a road to the border also and repair a bridge at the border. This would enable Sikhs to go to Kartarpur and honor Guru Nanak whenever they choose to do so. I call on the governments of Punjab and India to build this road and fix the bridge.

The Pakistani government also issued an open invitation to Sikhs to come and visit Nankana Sahib whenever they wish with no restrictions, although they did express concern that agents of India’s Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) would use this to come in and try to undermine Pakistan. That is a very real and legitimate concern.

It is tragic and offensive that the Sikhs who went to Nankana Sahib felt that they were better treated in Pakistan than in their own country. That just shows why the Sikhs in Punjab need to be free of Indian rule. The sovereignty of the Sikhs, recognized in the Indian constitution, was used in cancelling Punjab’s water deals with India. It should be used by the Legislative Assembly to declare Punjab’s independence, as the Sikhs did on October 7, 1987. Such a declaration from the legislature would carry a lot of weight.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come for the beacon of freedom, America, to take a stand. We can help to stop the tyranny and the repression by stopping our aid and trade to India until full human rights are restored to all people there. And it is time for a free and fair

plebiscite in Punjab, Khalistan on the question of independence, as well as Kashmir, Nagalim, and wherever people seek their freedom. India promised Kashmir a plebiscite in 1948 and it has not yet delivered on the promise. When will “the world’s largest democracy” decide that it is time for the people to enjoy the most basic of democratic rights, the right to self-determination? If India is the democratic country it says it is, what could be wrong with a simple vote?

I request the permission of the House to insert the Council of Khalistan’s press release on the events in Nankana Sahib into the RECORD at this time.

SIKHS CELEBRATE GURU NANAK’S BIRTHDAY
WITH REVERENCE—AIR FILLED WITH
KHALISTAN ZINDABAD SLOGANS

WASHINGTON, DC, November 16, 2006.—More than 15,000 Sikhs came from the United States, Punjab, Thailand, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, and around the world to Nankana Sahib celebrate the 537th anniversary of the birth of their first Guru, Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh religion. Guru Nanak was born in 1469. This is the highest number of Sikhs who have attended the event since the partition of India. Over 3,000 Sikhs came from Punjab. At the celebration, the air was filled with slogans of “Khalistan Zindabad.”

The delegation met with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in Islamabad on November 4. He welcomed the Sikhs with open arms and offered a road link between Kartarpur and the Indian border if India agrees to build a road on its side and repair the bridge. He said Sikhs were free to visit Kartarpur whenever they want without a visa. The Pakistani government has issued an open invitation to Sikhs from around the world to come and visit Nankana Sahib with no restrictions. Any genuine Sikh who wants to come and visit may do so. There was some concern about agents of India’s Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) coming to destabilize Pakistan, however.

The government and people of Pakistan welcomed the Sikhs and treated them so well that Sikhs from Punjab asked why they were treated so well in Pakistan, which is not our country, but in the Sikh homeland, Punjab, Khalistan, the Indian government does not treat them fairly. India attacked the Golden Temple, the center and seat of Sikhism, in June 1984. Since then, the Indian government has murdered over 250,000 Sikhs and another 52,268 are being held as political prisoners, according to a report by the Movement Against State Repression (MASR.) India has killed over 90,000 Muslims in Kashmir as well as 2,000 to 5,000 Muslims in Gujarat, over 300,000 Christians in Nagaland, and tens of thousands of Assamese, Bodos, Dalits (the dark-skinned, aboriginal “Untouchables”), Manipuris, Tamils, and other minorities. In 1994, the U.S. State Department reported that the Indian government had paid over 41,000 cash bounties for killing Sikhs. A MASR report quotes the Punjab Civil Magistracy as writing “if we add up the figures of the last few years the number of innocent persons killed would run into lakhs [hundreds of thousands.]” The Indian Supreme Court called the Indian government’s murders of Sikhs “worse than a genocide.”

Last year, 35 Sikhs were charged and arrested in Punjab for making speeches in support of Khalistan and raising the Khalistani flag. “How can making speeches and raising a flag be considered crimes in a democratic society?” asked Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh. President of the Council of Khalistan, which leads the peaceful, democratic, nonviolent struggle to liberate the Sikh homeland from

Indian occupation. The Gujarat massacre was pre-planned, according to a police officer who spoke to Indian newspapers. Nuns have been raped, priests have been murdered, churches have been burned, Christian prayer halls and schools have been attacked, and police broke up a Christian religious festival with gunfire.

India is also destroying Sikhs economically. The Indian government fixes the price for fertilizer very high and the price for produce very low so Sikh farmers can't even get the cost of production for their crops. This year it fixed the wheat price at Rs 750 per quintal. Even Badal demanded Rs 1000 per quintal. If Punjab farmers could sell their produce across the border in Pakistan and the Middle East, they could easily get close to Rs 1,500 per quintal and would be able to make a living. India seeks to destroy the Sikh Nation religiously, economically, and politically.

"Freedom is the God-given right of every nation and every human being," said Dr. Aulakh. Sikhs must be allowed to have a free and fair plebiscite on the issue of Khalistan. In a democracy, you cannot continue to rule against the wishes of the people. As former Senator George Mitchell said about the Palestinians, "the essence of democracy is the right to self-determination." "We must reclaim the sovereignty of the Sikh Nation," Dr. Aulakh said. Dr. Aulakh appealed to the Akali Dal and other Sikh parties in the Punjab Legislative Assembly to pass a resolution documenting all the mistreatment and economic exploitation of the Sikhs by the Indian government since independence. India diverts Punjab's river water, its natural resource, to neighboring Haryana and Rajasthan without any compensation despite Chief Minister Amarinder Singh cancelling Punjab's water agreements with India. We salute Captain Amarinder Singh for this legislation. In the legislation, the Legislative Assembly explicitly affirmed the sovereignty of Punjab as described in the Indian constitution. This same sovereignty can be used by the Assembly to declare independence. India will be helpless and the Sikh diaspora will help to free Khalistan.

India is on the verge of disintegration. Kashmir is about to separate from India. As L.K. Advani said, "if Kashmir goes, India goes." History shows that multinational states such as India are doomed to failure. Countries like Austria-Hungary, India's longtime friend the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and others prove this point. India is not one country; it is a polyglot like those countries, thrown together for the convenience of the British colonialists. It is doomed to break up as they did. Currently, there are 17 freedom movements within India's borders. It has 18 official languages. "We hope that India's breakup will be peaceful like Czechoslovakia's, not violent like Yugoslavia's," Dr. Aulakh said. "Montenegro, which has less than a million people, has become a sovereign country and a member of the United Nations," he said. "Now it is the time for the Sikh Nation of Punjab, Khalistan to become independent. The sooner the better."

"The only way that the Sikh nation can flourish and progress is in a sovereign, independent Khalistan," said Dr. Aulakh. "As Professor Darshan Singh, former Jathedar of the Akal Takht, said, 'If a Sikh is not a Khalistani, he is not a Sikh.'" Dr. Aulakh said. "We must free Khalistan now."

TRIBUTE TO JOHN A. NEJEDLY

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, with a heavy heart, I rise to pay tribute to the life of former California State Senator John A. Nejedly who died on September 19, 2006. For more than 35 years, Senator Nejedly dedicated his life to serving the people of California and his Contra Costa County community. As a California State Senator, Mr. Nejedly was a brilliant leader in environmental policy and following his career in the senate, he was a relentless advocate for disadvantaged youths in Contra Costa County and throughout California.

John A. Nejedly was born on October 22, 1914, in Oakland, California, and had been a resident of Walnut Creek since 1938. He graduated from the University of California with a Bachelor of Science degree and in 1941 earned his law degree from Boalt School of Law. His ties to the University were especially strong and the gold sweater he wore as a symbol of his devotion to Cal soon became his trademark.

In 1942, with World War II at hand, John Nejedly became an intelligence officer in the Army Air Force and served as a Japanese language officer until his honorable discharge in 1946. Shortly after the war, John opened his law firm and was soon after appointed to the position of City Attorney for the city of Walnut Creek and Deputy District Attorney for Contra Costa County. He worked diligently in this capacity for 12 years before being elected Contra Costa County District Attorney.

In 1969, District Attorney Nejedly was elected to the California State Senate. John served the people of the 7th Senate District with distinction for 11 years. As a State senator, he wrote some of California's most important environmental laws and in the process became one of our State's principal water policy experts. He also helped create one of California's greatest urban park institutions for Contra Costa County. Renowned for his art of persuasion, John was instrumental in securing our precious resources for generations to come and, as a result, in 1966 he was named one of ten "Outstanding Americans in the Field of Conservation".

Senator Nejedly retired from public office in 1980 and followed his passion of helping disadvantaged youth full time. He donated 80 acres of landing California's Sierra Mountains to provide a camp for the Boy Scouts and created the Contra Costa Youth Council to assist disabled, and underprivileged youth take pleasure in the outdoors. In addition, he funded a generous scholarship to help minority adults today who will never forget the generosity and compassion John Nejedly showed them in their youth.

Throughout his life, John was magnificent leader. Whether it was water, open space or parks he was a pioneer. He was a true public servant.

To John's children, Mary Piepho, his sons, Jim and John, his stepson, Greg, and his grandchildren I extend my heartfelt condolences. Their loss is shared not only by those who knew John personally but also by all those who have been touched by the work he has done. We will be forever grateful for the integrity, compassion and generosity with which he sought to make our community, the State of California, and our country, a better place for all of us. We are extremely grateful to John's family for sharing him with us for so many years.

CONGRATULATING ERIELE
JOHNSON

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Erielle Johnson for earning a spot on the Texas Girls Coaches Association's All-State Volleyball Team. This honor is awarded to top female athletes for their superior performance on the court.

The Texas Girls Coaches Association is the largest group of girls' athletic coaches in the nation, and serves the coaches and administrators at every level of education. The elite All-State Volleyball Team is selected by a committee panel of coaches and administrators, and is comprised of the most competitive female athletes in the state.

As a senior at Pilot Point High School in the 26th District of Texas, Erielle manages to give her absolute best efforts when the team requires it most. As a 4-year starter, she has led the LadyCats to regional quarter and semifinal games. Ms. Johnson was named the District 9-3A Most Valuable Hitter.

I extend my most sincere congratulations to Erielle Johnson, and I wish her the best of luck in her academic and athletic career.

IN HONOR OF THE FIRST ANNI-
VERSARY OF THE SAIGON
PLAZA COMMUNITY CENTER

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in celebration of the first anniversary of the Saigon Plaza Community Center, sponsored by the Friendship Foundation of American Vietnamese. Saigon Plaza has excelled in its first year, having established valuable links and bridges of friendship between the people of America and the people of Asia, especially Indochina.

The Saigon Plaza has been a beacon within the community promoting peace, progress, justice, and friendship. The Saigon Plaza