

many wonderful qualities of aging. As a prime representation of senior activism in America, the Ms. Senior America Pageant's philosophy is based upon the belief that seniors are the foundation of America, and that it is upon their knowledge, experience and resources that the younger generation has the opportunity to build a better society. As a representative of one of the largest senior communities in America, I share this philosophy and acknowledge the importance of seniors in the development of our youth and our communities as a whole.

Joanie Helgesen moved to Florida 4 years ago, and in that short time has been very active in the community. She is a tap dancer, showgirl and harpist with the Original Florida Follies, a non-profit organization of 50 performers, ages 60 to 90, who present spectacular stage extravaganzas each winter season with proceeds going to children in need and at risk in south Florida. She also does commercial modeling and is an animal lover who rescues homeless and neglected animals. A mother of two daughters and five grandchildren, Joanie believes life begins at 60, and she is making the most of her golden years.

I am proud to recognize Joanie Helgesen for being named Ms. Florida Senior America 2007; she is well deserving of this title and is a great representative of the senior community in south Florida.

#### TRIBUTE TO CHARLES E. HAAS

### HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 22, 2008*

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor a patriot and public servant, Charles E. Haas of Hurricane, WV for 39 outstanding years of service.

Charles retired this month from the Office of Personnel Management Federal Investigative Services Division. His span of 39 years includes working for the United States Air Force with the Office of Special Investigations, the Defense Investigative Services, and finally the Federal Investigative Services in Charleston, WV.

Charles is a true patriot who served with the West Virginia National Guard for 20 years, where he retired as Chief Master Sergeant in 2001. His commitment to serve our Nation and the personnel security mission as well as his high standards of character and professionalism are to be commended.

I wish Charles E. Haas congratulations on his retirement and thank him for his service to our country and all his contributions to our great State.

#### TRIBUTE TO KELVA NELSON

### HON. GEOFF DAVIS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 22, 2008*

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to honor 27-year teaching veteran Kelva Nelson, who is a second grade teacher at Crabbe Elementary School in Ashland, KY.

Kelva was chosen by the U.S. Department of Education to receive the prestigious 2007 American Star of Teaching Award from Kentucky. Across the Nation, one teacher was chosen from each State to receive the American Star of Teaching Award, which recognizes dedication and innovation in the classroom.

As a teacher at Crabbe Elementary, Kelva believes that all of her students can achieve. Each day, she enters the classroom with enthusiasm to teach. Her innovative teaching style and imagination have brought learning to life for the many students that have entered her classroom. I applaud her commitment to educating the next generation of Kentuckians. I am extremely proud of Kelva and her tremendous professional accomplishments.

#### RECOGNIZING DAN BEARD, "GREENING OF THE CAPITOL"

### HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 22, 2008*

Mr. FARR. Madam Speaker, Members of the House, I rise today to recognize the great efforts by House Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard to make the Capitol a more environmentally sustainable workplace. Mr. Beard has spearheaded the "Greening of the Capitol" initiative, a mission to make the millions of square feet of Capitol infrastructure a model of sustainability.

From recyclable paper and energy-efficient light bulbs to cafeteria composting and sustainable seafood, Mr. Beard has re-imagined the Capitol complex as a new, greener place to work. I would like to convey my gratitude for his hard work and dedication and vow to continue as a partner toward this very worthwhile goal.

I would like to submit for the RECORD an article appearing in the Washington Post on January 16, 2008. The article, written by Jane Black, reviews many of the excellent improvements Mr. Beard has brought about in our cafeterias.

#### ON CAPITOL HILL, A VOTE FOR EDIBILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Congress is back in session this week, soon to tackle such solemn matters as the destruction of CIA videotapes and the credit crunch. But in the halls of the Longworth House Office Building, much of the chatter is about another weighty matter: the new cafeteria food.

As staffers briskly walk the long corridors, they stop to poke into Goodies, the renamed and renovated Longworth Convenience Store, which now features organic chocolate along with the old Cup O' Noodles. Or they peep into the rehabbed Creamery, formerly Scoops ice cream parlor. The whole place has an aura of curious excitement, like a college during orientation week. (Then again, that may be because many of the staffers look as if they could still be in school themselves.)

Since members departed for the winter recess, the House cafeterias, which turn out 2.5 million meals a year, have undergone extreme makeovers. Longworth Cafe, the largest in the complex, was transformed first. Over the weekend of Dec. 15, the old salad bar was swapped for one made of sustainable materials, "green" signs were installed and entrees such as mystery meatloaf and mashed potatoes disappeared, replaced by

crispy chicken with goat cheese and spinach and a "panzanella" station, where staffers can build a salad of marinated figs, prosciutto and feta cheese.

As of Monday, Restaurant Associates—the new contractor, which also supplies food to the Kennedy Center and the National Gallery—had also reopened the cafeterias in the Rayburn and Cannon buildings and the Members' Dining Room.

If only more congressional work were done as swiftly. The changes are part of the larger Green the Capitol project, an initiative of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) that aims to make the House carbon neutral by the end of the session. The dining service was a prime target, and not only because of the 1950s-era food. Cafeteria waste accounted for half of the estimated 250 metric tons of trash the House sends to landfills annually. Now the plates, cutlery, cups—everything except the soup and coffee lids—is compostable and turned to pulp on-site. In addition, the cafeteria offers fair-trade coffee, certified sustainable seafood and as much organic, locally grown food as it can deliver.

"I don't know much about the greening, but the food is a lot better," said Caitlin Lenihan, press secretary for Rep. Brian Higgins (D-N.Y.), standing in line at the panzanella station. "I'd stopped coming a while back, but I've already had the pizza and the barbecue. It's all improved."

Other staffers agreed, giving high marks to the quality and variety of food. (And this reporter can vouch for their good taste. The panzanella salad, while a far cry from the Italian bread salad for which it is named, was fresh, and the Asian shrimp wrap was nicely balanced by crunchy Napa cabbage and carrot slaw in ginger dressing.)

But the embrace of change, so touted on the campaign trail, clearly has not quite filtered down to the aides who keep the Capitol wheels in motion. Along with the praise came the inevitable griping—off the record, of course.

The No. 1 topic of complaint: that biodegradable cutlery. "Funky," "wacky" and "weird texture" were common descriptions. Put too much pressure on the fork, several staffers noted, and it snaps in half. "I even hear the spoons melt in hot drinks because they're made of cornstarch," said one staffer. (A test of that claim proved it was untrue: the first cafeteria urban legend.)

Complaint No. 2: the prices. Under particular scrutiny by caffeine-fueled aides were the bottles of Starbucks Frappuccino. One staffer was so incensed that he e-mailed his friends a chart illustrating how the new \$3.30 price is 47 percent higher than the \$2.25 the bottles sold for in the old cafeteria and 4.8 percent higher than the approximately \$3.15 they sell for in Starbucks stores. "The wraps are more expensive," said a Republican aide. "The main entrees are a little more. I'm not sure about the pizza, because I never would have eaten the pizza before."

A reasonable complaint—if it were true. With the exception of those Frappuccinos, the price hike is in their heads, says Aidan Murphy, Restaurant Associates' vice president of operations. All like items cost the same, he said; only new dishes, such as those from the twice-weekly sushi station, are more expensive than items on the old menus.

And predictably, there was a resistance to change itself. "This is an improvement, but there are little quirks you have to get used to," said one senior Democratic staffer who visits the cafeteria every day. "I used to get this yogurt in the morning. They don't have it anymore. They have organic yogurt, which I don't want."

The green efforts are "generally a good thing, and we support it," the aide said. "But

I'm still a little focused on what happened to my Dannon."

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 22, 2008*

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and missed Rollcall vote 18. Had been present, I would have voted "aye" on rollcall No. 18.

#### "RETRO PAY" FOR DISABLED RETIREE VETERANS

### HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 22, 2008*

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I wish to submit to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD an article dated December 19, 2007 summarizing the plight of many of our Nation's veterans as they wait for their benefits.

[From the Plain Dealer, Dec. 19, 2007]

DFAS SAYS HIRING TO CLEAR BACKLOG OF DISABLED VETS' BENEFITS CLAIMS

(By Sabrina Eaton)

WASHINGTON.—The federal agency that processes pay for military retirees pledged Tuesday that its contractor will hire an extra 61 workers in Cleveland to clear a backlog of more than 48,000 benefit claims from veterans who are disabled by combat injuries.

The director of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service promised Cleveland Democratic Rep. Dennis Kucinich that the backlog of claims—some of which date to 2003—will be eliminated by April with the extra push from contractor Lockheed Martin.

"Federal benefits are meaningless if the intended beneficiaries do not receive them," said Kucinich, who called it a "tragedy" that so many veterans have waited for years to get money they're entitled to under a pair of programs for disabled veterans.

The payments stem from a law enacted in 2003 that ended a ban on veterans simultaneously receiving military retirement pay and disability compensation for health problems traceable to military service. Before 2003, veterans had to choose.

Disabled veterans have to apply for the simultaneous payments under the "Combat-Related Special Compensation" and "Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay" programs. After they are approved, veterans can get back pay to the date their eligibility began.

DFAS and the Department of Veterans Affairs have already processed more than 130,000 of the cases and paid out more than \$220 million, says DFAS spokesman Thomas LaRock. Average payments to veterans under the program have been \$1,700, he said.

LaRock said the easiest claims were handled first. The more-complex cases were delayed because they require manual computations. He said many of them are affected by special circumstances, like changes in the veterans' disability level.

"These are complicated cases that are left, and we are processing them as soon as we can," agreed Lockheed Martin spokeswoman Emily Simone.

One of the many veterans who has been lobbying DFAS, retired Army pilot Wavie Sharp of San Antonio, Texas, says payments have been handled in a "painfully slow manner," and he noted that some older veterans have died waiting for their money. He blames the problems on DFAS for failing to demand progress from Lockheed Martin until Kucinich intervened.

"I'm angry," said Sharp, who figures he is personally owed between \$10,000 and \$31,000. "They've been dragging their feet for four years. This is a long time to ask for patience. Thank God for Mr. Kucinich. Everyone else gave us lip service."

#### NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

### HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 22, 2008*

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, the critical national security challenges the U.S. faces throughout the Western Hemisphere demand our support of strong allies, like Colombia, in the region. The historic ties between the U.S. and Colombia have only deepened in recent years as our cooperative efforts to surmount security, economic and social concerns have intensified.

With this in mind, I would like to offer my warmest congratulations to Captain Hernando Wills on the occasion of his promotion to Rear Admiral of the Colombian National Navy.

The following excerpts from Colombian Ambassador Carolina Barco's remarks highlight the significance that Rear Admiral Wills' promotion holds for the U.S.-Colombia relationship.

The relations between the United States and Colombia are not only their oldest in this continent, they also reflect a great understanding between our nations. Our relations encompass important historical events, such as the deployment in 1951 of the frigate *Almirante Padilla* and the Batallón Colombia to fight for democracy in Korea alongside U.S. Forces. Colombia was the only Latin American country to deploy troops in that multinational force, which cost the lives of 146 countrymen, with 69 missing and 448 wounded in combat. The participation of our soldiers in the peace keeping forces at the Suez Canal in 1956, the deployment of the Batallón Colombia since 1982 with the peace forces in the Sinai Peninsula, and innumerable episodes, give faith to the integration of our peoples under the flags of democracy and respect for human dignity.

I want to highlight this year as particularly fruitful for the joint work of the Navies of Colombia and the United States: their participation in important exercises such as UNITAS and PANAMAX, the first focused on standardizing procedures among the navies of the hemisphere and to maintain a level of training that will permit a joint defense of this continent, and the second with the purpose of organizing a defense of the Panama Canal.

Because of the nature of our peoples, military action goes beyond defense, successfully engaging in humanitarian endeavors, such as the deployment of the U.S. Navy's hospital

ship *Comfort* to the Colombian coast providing medical attention to thousands of beneficiaries, and the joint participation of Colombia in the Joint Inter-Agency Task Force South in Key West, and the engagement of Colombian river operations' experts training U.S. Navy personnel for their future responsibilities in Afghanistan.

For all the aforementioned, the decision of the Colombian Government to promote Captain Hernando Wills to the rank of Rear Admiral is not an isolated event: it compliments the experiences of an inured sailor with the doctrine of National Defense University to defeat narco-terrorism, strengthen democracy, and return to Colombians the possibilities of development in peace, under the mandate of profound respect for human dignity clearly stated in the National Constitution.

#### CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY MODERNIZATION ACT

### HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 22, 2008*

Mr. GONZALEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend the chairman and ranking member and my colleagues for their efforts on behalf of H.R. 4040. This hard work and dedicated service has produced a strong, bipartisan Consumer Product Safety Modernization Act. Congress and the American people can be proud of this significant and needed accomplishment.

While this legislation includes many important reforms of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and I strongly support its passage, the bill does not address one important issue that I think deserves further attention in any House-Senate Conference Committee deliberations. That issue involved the labeling or packaging of a product which may reference a product safety standard. It is important we address this issue for the well-being and safety of our citizens.

In some cases a product may bear a label or packaging material referencing a safety standard, when the product was not tested or certified to meet the standard listed on the label or packaging. This deceptive labeling can be a grave threat to the safety of many consumer products on the market, and must be addressed as part of this comprehensive legislation.

I hope that as this important piece of legislation moves its way through the Conference Committee process we will further examine and address this labeling and packaging issue.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 22, 2008*

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Madam Speaker, on January 16, 2008, on Rollcall vote No. 8, during consideration of H.R. 2768, Supplemental Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act of 2007, I incorrectly voted "aye," when I intended to vote "no."