and pose a significant threat to the full participation of all Americans in our democratic society. In the wake of the November Presidential election, the Southern Poverty Law Center has detailed hundreds of hate crime incidents, vandalism and threats, including the election-night assault of Alie Kamara on Staten Island by two teenagers who shouted racial epithets and ''Obama!'' as they beat him. Moreover, statistics have shown hate crimes against Latinos and Asian Americans rising steadily over the past four years as the immigration has grown more intense. In the last eight months, there have three brutal hate-related murders of Latinos in New York and Pennsylvania. While intolerance may be in retreat, its presence is still felt in many minority communities.

The FBI has the best national data on reported hate crime, though the program is voluntary. Since 1991, the FBI has documented over 118,000 hate crimes. For the year 2007, the most current data available, the FBI compiled reports from law enforcement agencies across the country identifying 7,624 bias-motivated criminal incidents that were directed against an individual because of their personal characteristics. Law enforcement agencies identified 9,535 victims arising from 9,006 separate criminal offenses. As in the past, racially motivated bias accounted for approximately half (50.8 %) of all incidents. Religious bias accounted for 1,400 incidents (18.4 %) and sexual orientation bias accounted for 1,265 incidents—(16.6 %), followed by ethnicity/national origin bias with 1,007 incidents—(13.2%). While these numbers are disturbing, it is important to note that, for a variety of reasons, hate crimes are seriously under-reported.

Despite the deep impact of hate violence on communities, current law limits federal jurisdiction over hate crimes to incidents directed against individuals on the basis of race, religion, color or national origin—but only when the victim is targeted because he/she is engaged in a federally protected activity, such as voting. Further, the statutes do not permit federal involvement in a range of cases where crimes are motivated by bias against the victim's perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability. The federal government must have authority to be involved in investigating and prosecuting these crimes when state authorities cannot or will not do so.

This legislation, which is identical to the version approved in the 110th Congress, will strengthen existing federal law in the same way that the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996 helped federal prosecutors combat church arson: by addressing the unduly rigid jurisdictional requirements under federal law. The bill only applies to bias-motivated violent crimes and does not impinge public speech or writing in any way. In fact, the measure includes an explicit First Amendment free speech protection for the accused modeled on the existing Washington state hate crimes statute. This bill will only apply to criminal conduct that is already being prosecuted.

State and local authorities currently prosecute the overwhelming majority of hate crimes and will continue to do so under this legislation. The federal government will continue to defer to state and local authorities in the vast majority of cases; the Attorney General or other high ranking Justice Department official must approve any prosecutions undertaken pursuant to this law, ensuring federal restraint. However, in appropriate circumstances, the federal government will be able to provide support for local prosecutions—an intergovernmental grant program created by this legislation will make Justice Department technical, forensic or prosecutorial assistance available. The legislation also authorizes the Attorney General to make grants to state and local law enforcement agencies that have incurred extraordinary expenses associated with the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes.

Hate crime statistics do not speak for themselves. Behind each of the statistics is an individual or community targeted for violence for no other reason than race, religion, color, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability. Law enforcement authorities and civic leaders have learned that a failure to address the problem of bias crime can cause a seemingly isolated incident to fester into widespread tension that can damage the social fabric of the wider community. The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 is a constructive and measured response to a problem that continues to plague our nation. These are crimes that shock and shame our national conscience. They should be subject to comprehensive federal law enforcement assistance and prosecution.

CONGRATULATING DR. VIC MORGAN

HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Madam Speaker, I wish to congratulate my friend, Dr. Vic Morgan, as he formally retires after 18 years of serving as President of Sul Ross State University.

Throughout his tenure as President, Dr. Morgan has demonstrated strong leadership and a commitment to providing a valuable academic experience for the students of Sul Ross State University. Having begun his career at SRSU as an Associate Professor of Mathematics, Dr. Morgan is the first faculty member to be promoted from within the University to its highest position.

In addition to having fulfilled his responsibilities as President, Dr. Morgan remained extremely active in professional organizations in mathematics, student affairs, and educational administration. He has exemplified community service through his selfless work with the Church of Christ, the Lions Club, the Chamber of Commerce, and numerous youth related activities and organizations.

After a decorated career at Sul Ross State University, Dr. Vic Morgan will retire having left a lasting impact on so many students and teachers whose lives he's touched. As a former educator myself, I am especially thankful for his steadfast commitment to students and educators in Texas' 23rd Congressional District. I wish to extend my sincerest wishes to Dr. Vic Morgan and his family for a healthy and much deserved retirement.

HONORING THE DOGWOOD TRAIL MAIDS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE NATIONAL CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Dogwood Trail Maids for being selected to participate in this year's National Cherry Blossom Festival.

Held annually, the Cherry Blossom festival commemorates the 1912 gift of 3,000 cherry trees from the mayor of Tokyo to the city of Washington and honors the lasting friendship between the United States and Japan.

Today, more than a million people travel to Washington each year to see the blossoming cherry trees and attend events that signal the beginning of spring in our Nation's capital.

For 49 years, the Dogwood Trail Pageant and Scholarship Program—comprised of six high school girls from Baldwin County—complete nearly 200 hours of community service and make more than 50 appearances, including festivals, charity runs and ceremonies. The trail maids were even invited to both of Governor Bob Riley's Inaugural parades.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Dogwood Trail Maids for their participation in the 2009 National Cherry Blossom Festival. I know Baldwin County and indeed, the State of Alabama are so proud for these young ladies to travel to Washington and participate in the organization's first Cherry Blossom parade.

HONORING GARY CHASEY FOR ''CITIZEN OF THE YEAR'' AWARD

HON. JEB HENSARLING

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. HENSARLING. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the exceptional service and leadership of Mr. Gary Chasey of Athens, Texas. Mr. Chasey has served his community for years in many capacities and was recently recognized as the ''Citizen of the Year'' by the Athens Chamber of Commerce.

Gary, along with his wife, Sharon, volunteers with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). Through this very special and important capacity, Gary has changed the lives of dozens of children in his community. As a CASA volunteer, he looks after the interest of children who are in the court system. He has spent countless hours advocating and watching over abused and neglected children.

For several years, Gary has served as President and Vice-President for Labor of Love of Henderson County. Labor of Love is an organization that repairs homes for those in the community who cannot afford to make repairs or complete maintenance tasks. As a leader in Labor of Love, Gary has helped increase completed projects by over 90%. His financial expertise, leadership and tireless work ethic have undoubtedly benefited countless citizens.

In addition, Gary is a member of the First Presbyterian Church and is active with the

Methodist Men at First United Methodist Church.

As the Congressman for the Fifth District of Texas, I am pleased today to recognize Gary Chasey for his many years of public service and countless contributions he has made to make his community and his country a better place. Gary, on behalf of all the constituents of the Fifth District, especially those in Henderson County, I would like to extend our most sincere thanks.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBER MANUEL BENAVIDEZ, JR.

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. CUELLAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the late Manuel Benavidez, Jr. for his service to the people of Starr County, the State of Texas, and the education community across the country. His life was a symbol of what hard work and desire can achieve. He was a respected member of his community and of the State of Texas and we will all miss him dearly.

Mr. Benavidez was born in La Grulla, Texas in 1952. A former migrant farm worker, he graduated from Rio Grande City High School and later attended Pan American University where he received a bachelor's degree in bilingual education. Education has been a focal point in Mr. Benavidez's life, where he has not just worked to educate himself but has dedicated himself to helping others enhance their lives through study.

In 1993, he was appointed to the South Texas College Board of Trustees as the representative for Starr County. He worked tirelessly to bring the first community college to the area and through the years he has been instrumental in bringing millions of dollars to the county for STC campuses. His testimony in support of the dual enrollment program was key to getting legislation passed that has helped families across Texas save millions of dollars on the cost of college tuition. His life has revolved around the idea of bettering his community by giving the residents of Starr County an equal opportunity to accessing higher education.

Madam Speaker, please join me in honoring Manuel Benavidez, Jr. for his lifetime of dedicated service to Starr County and to the education community across the country. He was a husband, a father, and an inspiration for all of us. He will be greatly missed.

HONORING VANESSA SCOTT

HON. C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Madam Speaker, I rise before you today to honor Mrs. Vanessa Scott, recently awarded the 2008 Congressional Volunteer Recognition Award by the 2nd Congressional District of Maryland's Veterans Advisory Council. Vanessa has been selected to receive this award because of her volunteer service at the VA, based on her outstanding dedication to serving the needs of veterans within her community.

Veterans of the United States Armed Forces have dedicated themselves to protecting the lives of every American. Their service to our Nation deserves the highest level of gratitude. It is important that we take the time to recognize the individuals who give of their time and talents to support veterans and ensure their comfort, care, and well-being.

Mrs. Scott has been an advocate for veterans for the past 15 years. She has worked at both Fort Howard and the Baltimore VA Rehabilitation and Extended Care Center. While raising a family, Vanessa has given of her time to the sick and lonesome men and women in those VA facilities, such as spending her evenings playing Bingo with patients. Her unwavering dedication has inspired those who serve with her to provide exceptional service and care.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you join with me today to honor Mrs. Vanessa Scott. Her compassion and commitment to veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces has become an inspiration to us all, and is deserving of the utmost gratitude. It is with great pride that I congratulate Mrs. Scott on her exemplary service as an advocate and a volunteer.

TRIBAL LAW AND ORDER ACT OF 2009

HON. STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN

OF SOUTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Madam Speaker, today, I am pleased to reintroduce the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2009, critical legislation to address needs of law enforcement and justice services in Indian Country. I want to thank Senator DORGAN and his colleagues and staff on the Senate Indian Affairs Committee for their tireless dedication to these issues.

The Tribal Law & Order Act would establish accountability measures for the Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice with regard to tribal law enforcement. This bill also seeks to increase local control to tribal law enforcement agencies and to authorize additional resources for tribes to address the safety and security needs of their communities.

In June 2007, the House Committee on Natural Resources held a hearing on the Lower Brule Reservation in South Dakota. Entitled, The Needs and Challenges of Tribal Law Enforcement in Indian Reservations, tribal leaders and law enforcement officials from eight tribes testified for the need to improve government-to-government consultations between tribes and the federal agencies charged with supporting their law enforcement goals. Witnesses explained the need for more resources for officers, equipment, jails, and tribal courts.

For example, the Law Enforcement Department of Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of South Dakota serves a population spread across 19 communities with a land base of approximately 2.8 million acres. Some of these communities are located as far as 90 miles away from department headquarters. With approximately 4,500 miles of roadways on the reservation, it often takes officers a considerable amount of time to address calls, including emergencies.

At current funding levels, the Cheyenne Rivers Sioux Tribe Law Enforcement Department is unable to provide adequate police protection to all of these communities. In FY08, the tribal police force was reduced by 10 patrol officers due to budget constraints. Now, officers are logging over 4000 hours of overtime each quarter, which leads to stress and strain on the officers and their families, and ultimately, undermines retention efforts and leads to communities that are not as safe as they should be.

From my work with tribal communities in South Dakota and as a Member of the Committee on Natural Resources, I know that Cheyenne River is not an extreme case. In fact, across all Indian Country, there are less than 3,000 tribal law enforcement officers to patrol over 56 million acres of land. This figure represents less than one-half of the law enforcement presence in comparable rural communities. This disparity is unacceptable and shameful.

The Tribal Law and Order Act is an important step to addressing the complex and broken system of law and order in Indian Country. This bill would clarify the responsibilities of Federal, State, tribal, and local governments with respect to crimes committed in tribal communities; increase coordination and communication among Federal, State, tribal, and local law enforcement agencies; empower tribal governments with the authority, resources, and information necessary to effectively provide for the public's safety in tribal communities; reduce the prevalence of violent crime in tribal communities and combat violence against Indian and Alaska Native women; address and prevent drug trafficking and reduce rates of alcohol and drug addiction in Indian country; and increase and standardize the collection of criminal data and the sharing of criminal history information among Federal, State, and tribal officials responsible for responding to and investigating crimes in tribal communities.

The Senate Indian Affairs Committee has held numerous hearings and has reached out to tribes across the United States while crafting this bill, and I appreciate their efforts to address the concerns raised by tribal members and leaders. I recognize that this bill alone will not solve the problems raised by tribes in these consultations and hearings. As such, I will continue to work for increased funding for law enforcement personnel, detention facilities, equipment and training, tribal courts, and other components required for a successful justice system. I will continue to hold the Bureau of Indian Affairs accountable for upholding the trust responsibility within the realm of law enforcement. Ultimately, I believe that this bill offers important and necessary tools in our shared goal of making Indian Country a safer place to be.

Madam Speak, I urge my colleagues to join with me to pass the Tribal Law and Order Act into law.