

BELLFLOWER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND THE CITY OF BELLFLOWER

HON. STEPHEN HORN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 13, 1996

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute an institution and a community in California's 38th Congressional District whose history is a model of how the citizens of America's small towns—through their values, their hard work, and, in particular, their strong civic spirit—have made America strong. This year, the Bellflower Chamber of Commerce celebrates its 75th year of leadership. It is fitting that on this occasion, its history and the history of the city it has so diligently served be celebrated for what they have accomplished—and for what they can teach the world.

Bellflower was built by people of many backgrounds. Its early history began in 1784, as one of the first Spanish land grants conferred in California. Governor Pedro Fages rewarded Spanish leathercoat soldier Manuel Nieto with the largest of these grants. After the Spanish were ousted in the Mexican Revolution, Nieto's land grant was divided into five small ranchos which were distributed among his heirs. Bellflower would later be founded where the boundaries of three of these ranchos—Santa Gertrudes, Los Coyotes, and Los Cerritos—met.

The three ranchos prospered through California's Golden Age of the Ranchos, from the gold rush of the 1840's into the 1860's, when a terrible drought brought the rancho way of life to an end.

The ranchos were sold at auction to purchasers who, in addition to ranching, subdivided parts of them for small farming operations. The section that was to become Bellflower was subjected annually to terrible flooding from the San Gabriel River. If also had dense growth—willow, black berries, and bamboo—which meant that only the hardiest of farmers could settle here. And they did. Within a few years, the area was renowned for its large-sized crops. Fueled by the hard work and commitment of the early settlers, Bellflower's poultry, dairy, horticultural, and farming industries steadily grew. Hispanic and American farmers were soon joined by Dutch, Swiss, Belgian, Japanese, and Portuguese families.

With the establishment by the Pacific Electric Railway of the Somerset Station in 1902, Bellflower farmers were able to get their crops to markets and visitors were able to come to the Bellflower area via the "Big Red Cars." Soon after, land developers began laying out streets and selling parcels of land near the Somerset Station. Soon a town grew up. Though the area was still unnamed—some called it the New River Colony, others Somerset Acres—the residents were determined to build a town.

Following California's tradition of strong support for education, the first thing these residents did was to petition for a school district. That was in 1908. In the next year, they asked for a post office. They quickly received both.

The residents first asked for a post office under the name of Somerset. But postal authorities, wishing to prevent confusion, rejected the name because there already was a

Somerset in Colorado. Another subdivision in the area was known as Bellflower Acres, and its proponents championed that name for the new community. Although it is not known precisely how the selection was made by the area's residents, it was the one registered by postal officials.

It is not certain how the name Bellflower came into the picture in the first place. The most common explanation links the name with the orchard of Bellefleure apples grown by pioneer settler William Gregory.

By 1910, the business district began to develop. In 1913, Southern California Edison installed electric lines. In 1914, gas lines were brought into Bellflower. Up to 50 trains ran through the area each day to and from Los Angeles. The town was on its way. The only thing Bellflower lacked was a government.

In 1912, Los Angeles County had adopted a charter covering the government of the unincorporated towns. Bellflower—with its unincorporated status—lived under county government for the next 45 years.

But the civic pride of Bellflower's citizens was too strong to rely solely on Los Angeles County. Unable to form their own government, they organized the Bellflower Improvement Association in 1921 to serve as a representative body for all of the town's organizations and interests. The improvement association has 12 members. The following year—indicating the enthusiasm and civic spirit that has always been the hallmark of Bellflower—the association's membership had swelled to 80. That year—1922—it became known as the Bellflower Chamber of Commerce with R.J. Parsonson as president and a board consisting of Vice President Bruce Guernsey, Secretary J.C. Hertel, Treasurer C.A. Conrad, and Sergeant at Arms George McCormick.

Under the county's governing of unincorporated communities, there was no local body officially charged with looking after the affairs of the town. The chamber quickly filled his vacuum, "governing" for over 30 years through an unofficial town hall.

Since the Chamber had no legislative authority to make its decision binding, its effectiveness depended upon how well it served the community. Those early chamber members worked hard to gain the trust and respect of the residents. This tradition continues today.

It was during the years of unincorporation—1921 to 1957, when Bellflower became California's 348th city—that the area experienced impressive growth. Through the guidance of the chamber, Bellflower quickly became a highly respected and admired community.

One example of the chamber's determination to keep Bellflower strong and vital was the erection of the "52 Day Miracle Building" in 1938. At that time, the Los Angeles County Building Department offices were located in Bellflower. However, the administrators were considering a move to Downey where rent was cheaper. The Bellflower chamber spearheaded a drive to keep the county's offices in their town. With the chamber in the lead, local merchants provided funded to erect a new building. Incredibly, the project was completed—from idea to opening ceremonies—in just 52 days.

By the 1950's, the population of Bellflower became so large and varied that it could no longer be adequately governed under the old county charter system. With the chamber leading the way, Bellflower received its certification of incorporation on September 3, 1957.

Today, the Bellflower Chamber of Commerce remains a vital, contributing member of our area. Its history reminds us that a city is not built with bricks, mortar, and asphalt alone. It comes to life and remains vibrant and healthy through the commitment, dedication, hard work, and strong values of its residents. The history of the Bellflower community and the leadership provided by the Bellflower Chamber of Commerce are models of these values. California and the United States are indeed fortunate to have Bellflower and the commitment of its citizens.

HONORING SILVESTRE S.
HERRERA

HON. ED PASTOR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 13, 1996

Mr. PASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute Silvestre S. Herrera, of Phoenix, AZ, who earned the Congressional Medal of Honor 51 years ago by assaulting a German gun position on March 15, 1945.

On that day, Pfc. Silvestre Herrera, an acting squad leader/automatic rifleman, and Company E, 142d Infantry of the 36th (Texas) Infantry Division, was the lead element as it moved into German-held territory somewhere near Merrwiller, France.

Private First Class Herrera and other soldiers were moving along a wooded road when they were stopped by heavy enemy machinegun fire. As the rest of the platoon took cover from incoming fire, Private First Class Herrera moved forward and shot three German soldiers. Eight others surrendered.

As the platoon continued forward, they were stopped by more machinegun fire. Herrera ran toward some large rocks, intending to take cover. Instead, he stepped on a landmine and it blew him into the air. When he came down, he hit another land mine. He had lost both legs just below the knee.

Private First Class Herrera somehow managed to hold onto his M-1 rifle. He applied a bandage to his leg and dragged himself to the rocks. He braced himself and began firing at the enemy. He hit at least one of the Germans and forced the others to stop shooting and take cover.

Under Herrera's covering fire, his platoon moved in and killed the German machinegun crew. The platoon found a path through the minefield and located a bleeding and injured Herrera. They rushed him back to an aid station. Later, Herrera was sent to France and remained in a hospital until the war ended.

Herrera was decorated by President Truman on August 23, 1945, at the White House and in March 1946, he was discharged from the Army as a sergeant.

Although no books or films have been written about his heroics, Herrera's deeds are heralded. In 1956, the Phoenix Elementary School District named an elementary school after him. Herrera's own elementary school district, the Pendergast School District, also erected a bust to honor the Congressional Medal winner. The bust was unveiled at Pendergast School in Phoenix during a February reception. The bust, created by Zarco Guerrero, is part of the World War II Commemorative Community Program sponsored by the Department of Defense.

Fundraising for the bust was organized and initiated by the Pendergast family, who have known Herrera since childhood.

The American G.I. Forum also formed a Silvestre Herrera Chapter on June 23, 1995. On March 15 of this year, the G.I. Forum will salute Herrera on the 51st anniversary of that fateful day in 1945.

I urge my colleagues to join me in saluting and thanking Mr. Herrera for his service to the country and his heroism under fire.

HONORING ROBERT LEENEY ON
HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 13, 1996

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, on May 10, 1996, Mr. Robert Leeney will celebrate his 80th birthday. He is being honored by the board of Albertus Magnus College on March 14, 1996. It is with great pleasure that I rise today to salute this incredible individual, who has contributed so much to the city of New Haven.

Bob retired in 1981 as editor of the New Haven Register after a 50-year career with the paper including 11 years as executive editor and 9 years as editor. He had been awarded the New England Associated Press News Editor Yankee Quill Award for excellence in writing. His long tenure at the paper is distinguished by extensive community involvement. Bob grew up in the Fair Haven area and remained devoted to the improvement of the New Haven area throughout his career. In September 1994, Bob was awarded the New Haven Colony Historical Society Seal of the City Award. The seal is awarded to those whose ideas or activities contributed to the quality of life, prosperity, or improvement of the New Haven region. He has also received the Trinity Council Knights of Columbus Community Service Award and the Chamber of Commerce Community Service Award, which is their highest honor.

Bob's early career in newspaper began as a theatre critic and he frequently reviewed plays at the Shubert Theatre. He was a member of the Drama Critics Outer Circle. He maintained his interest in theatre throughout his life and served on the board of Long Wharf Theatre. His service on the boards of local hospitals and colleges serves as a testament to his interest in and concern for all aspects of New Haven life. After his retirement, Bob served on the State Freedom of Information Commission.

Finally, Bob continues to write for the New Haven Register with a weekly column entitled "Editor's Note." It is here that he continues to contribute his ideas and thoughts on a range of issues from his boyhood memories of New Haven to recent world events. He remains one of the most prominent representatives of the New Haven Register and an important link between the city's past and present. I wish Bob a very happy 80th birthday and it is my deepest hope that we will have the benefit of his wisdom and kindness for many more years to come.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL R.
MULDERIG

HON. JACK QUINN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 13, 1996

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the distinguished community service of Michael R. Mulderig, a distinguished civil servant and Democratic Party leader, on the occasion of being named the First Ward and South Buffalo Democratic Association 1996 Irishman of the Year.

Mr. Mulderig has served the city of Buffalo in several capacities under former mayor, the Honorable James D. Griffin. To that end, Mr. Mulderig served as the confidential aide to the mayor, license director for the city of Buffalo, and assistant director of stadium operations at the city's ballpark.

In addition to these remarkable duties, Mike Mulderig has served western New York as a former president of the South Buffalo Democratic Association. Currently, Mr. Mulderig is the chairman of the second zone for the Democratic Party.

As a fellow American of Irish descent, I truly appreciate the contributions Mike Mulderig has made on behalf of the city of Buffalo, and offer my thanks and commendation to both he and the association for recognizing the efforts of Irish-Americans in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, today I join with the Mulderig family, his colleagues, friends, the First Ward and South Buffalo Democratic Association, and indeed, the entire western New York community to honor Mr. Michael R. Mulderig for his dedication, hard work, and commitment to western New York, the city of Buffalo, and the Irish-American community on his being named the 1996 Irishman of the Year.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1561,
FOREIGN RELATIONS AUTHORIZATION ACT, FISCAL YEARS 1996
AND 1997

SPEECH OF

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 12, 1996

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 1561, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act of 1996. I oppose this conference report because it is an unwarranted usurpation of the President's constitutionally mandated foreign policy authority. It requires a sweeping reorganization of U.S. foreign policy agencies, but fails to provide the President the flexibility to undertake this reorganization in a manner which he believes is consistent with the national security interests of this Nation.

This bill also continues the extreme Republican opposition to voluntary international family planning programs, slashing them by a devastating 87 percent, and which could lead to tens of thousands of unwanted pregnancies and abortions.

I oppose this bill with some reluctance because it contains some provisions which I strongly support, including authorization for the International Fund for Ireland, support for the MacBride Principles, and a provision based on the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act.

I have long supported the International Fund for Ireland and enactment of the MacBride Principles on a Federal level. While a member of the New York City Council, I authored one of the first MacBride bills in this Nation and I continue to strongly believe that this Nation should not do business with any company which practices religious discrimination. Likewise, I support strongly the International Fund for Ireland. Continued economic investment in Northern Ireland and the border countries is absolutely imperative. Enhancing the standard of living in Ireland is critical to improving the prospects for peace in that troubled part of the world.

The Humanitarian Aid Corridor was enacted for 1 year as part of the fiscal year 1996 foreign operations appropriations bill. Nevertheless, it is important that this provision become permanent law. Nations which restrict the flow of U.S. humanitarian aid to third countries should be barred unequivocally from receiving the benefit of our economic aid. This situation has been most blatant in the case of Turkey, which has blocked United States humanitarian aid to the newly independent nation of Armenia. This blatant contempt for United States policy objectives should deprive Turkey from receiving assistance from our country.

I would vote for the International Fund for Ireland, the MacBride Principles, and the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act if they were included in another measure. Unfortunately, this bill, with its partisan and shortsighted attack on the foreign policy powers of the President, is not one for which I can vote.

DRUGS AND GUNS: A LETHAL
COMBINATION

HON. WILLIAM F. GOODLING

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 13, 1996

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation which would ensure that drug abusers who break the law do not have access to firearms. My legislation, which was part of the 103d Congress' Republican crime bill, would impose strict penalties and fines for misdemeanor during crimes such as use or possession of an illegal substance when a firearm is present. Similar to legislation I have introduced in past years, my bill has had the endorsement of the Pennsylvania State Chiefs of Police and the National Association of Chiefs of Police.

Under current Federal law, a person convicted of a felony crime involving drugs and firearms faces increased criminal penalties and is also prohibited from legally owning a firearm. This is not the case, however for individuals convicted of less serious drug offenses.

My legislation is simple: It expands current law to treat individuals who commit less-serious drug offenses in the same manner as people involved in other drug crimes, such as drug-trafficking. Any person found guilty of a drug crime not currently classified as a felony, including simple possession of a controlled substance, and who possesses a firearm at the time of the offense, will face mandatory jail time and/or substantial fines in addition to any penalty imposed for the drug offense. For second or subsequent offenses, jail time and fines are mandated.