

Slovak heritage as it enriches our American way of life. In keeping with its interest in promoting greater awareness of Slovak culture, it provides regular opportunity for its youth to participate in cultural festivals in Slovakia.

Since 1905, the Sokol has maintained its national headquarters in downtown Passaic. Since 1911 it has published a weekly publication, the Slovak Catholic Falcon. This tabloid, 16-page, bi-lingual publication is mailed to more than 11,000 households throughout the United States, Canada and other nations. This means of communication among the membership provides an excellent opportunity for the members to keep abreast of activities sponsored by the Sokol and to gain a better knowledge of the rich cultural heritage the membership shares.

At the present time, the Sokol has 155 local lodges in 14 states and the province of Ontario in Canada. The Sokol actively promotes various volunteer efforts. It gives strong support to the work of Habitat for Humanity and encourages its members to participate actively in various local community projects including blood drives, tutorial programs for youth, supporting food banks and service to home bound and institution-bound individuals.

Current national officers include the Rev. Msgr. Francis J. Beeda, Supreme Chaplain, Sue Ann M. Seich, Supreme President, Steven M. Pogorelec, Supreme Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, John D. Pogorelec, General Council, Daniel F. Tanzone, Editor, George We. Hizny, Supreme Treasurer, Michael J. Pjontek, Jr., Supreme First Vice President, Albert J. Suess, Supreme Second Vice President, Larry M. Glugosh, Supreme Director of Sports and Athletics, and Carol Ann Wallace, Chairperson on Supreme Officers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join our colleagues and me in recognizing the outstanding and invaluable service to the community of the Slovak Catholic Sokol. In addition, congratulations are due to the entire membership of the Slovak Catholic Sokol as it observes its nine and a half decades of service in the best traditions of the fraternal benefit system. This special organization will be celebrating its centennial and beyond. In the words of the Sokol, Zdar Boh!

CLOSING THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR REACTOR

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 15, 2000

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, today Ukraine took a historic step—closing the Chernobyl nuclear reactor for all time. I welcome this critical step, writing a final chapter to one of mankind's most ominous events. The explosion of the flawed, Soviet-designed nuclear power station in 1986 was a dramatic warning to all of us of the frightening potential for disaster in this nuclear age. It served to underline the cold reality that precise design, continuous careful maintenance and a dedication to safety are essential if we are to avoid nuclear catastrophe.

Ukraine's President, Leonid Kuchma, incurred a substantial political risk with his own people when he negotiated with the European

Union and the United States to close the station in exchange for financial pledges to assist in completing two modern nuclear power plants designed to Western standards to replace the lost power production. Even in its damaged condition, Chernobyl is believed to provide approximately 5% of Ukraine's total power production. One of Chernobyl's four graphite reactors was undamaged and has continued to produce power for Ukraine's consumers.

Mr. Speaker, not only is the Chernobyl power source lost—it will be at least a year before either of the two new reactors now under construction comes on line. In the meantime, 16,000 jobs at the Chernobyl station will be lost, although a few hundred workers will remain in order to deal with the high-risk construction of a permanent housing for the damaged, highly radioactive unit. The new city of Slavutich, built with considerable U.S. assistance to provide safe housing for Chernobyl's work force, will be heavily impacted by the shutdown.

In Ukraine there has been criticism of President Kuchma for “knuckling under to the West” and for the hardships the Ukraine people will have to shoulder as the energy supply is reduced and jobs are lost. The obvious benefit to Ukraine and all of mankind by placing their very dangerous reactor in “deep-freeze” seems abstract and distant to the Ukrainian people.

Mr. Speaker, today's decision to close Chernobyl is but the latest courageous action by the government of Ukraine in facing up to the nuclear dangers to civilization. Rarely acknowledged publicly, the newly independent Ukraine joined with the United States and Russia in a dramatic partnership to reduce the danger and threat of nuclear warheads to all of us. Ukraine, in cooperation with the United States, has completely rid its soil of the nuclear warhead inventory from Soviet days—decommissioning weapons on its soil and shipping them to Russia to joint U.S.-Russian controlled facilities for destruction under strict controls.

Mr. Speaker, the world today is safer from nuclear accidents because of Ukraine's leadership, cooperation and sacrifices. I invite my colleagues to join me in saluting President Kuchma for this latest important step.

A TRIBUTE TO JUNE L. HARRIS

HON. WILLIAM (BILL) CLAY

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 15, 2000

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the service that June L. Harris has provided the House for the past 21 years. June, like myself, is retiring at the end of this Congress, and I want to thank her for her many years of service to me and our institution.

June came to work for me in 1979. She has spent nearly her entire career here in Congress working on educational issues, specifically ensuring that educational opportunity exists for the most vulnerable in our society. June has worked in both my personal office and on my Education and the Workforce Committee staff, where she presently serves as Education Coordinator. Prior to her Capitol Hill career, June was a teacher in the Baltimore

public schools and the head of a department in a junior high school. June has also earned a Ph.D from the University of Maryland, showing evidence of her own personal pursuit of excellence.

June has always fought to make sure all Americans have the opportunity to succeed. She has represented me well by helping open the doors of educational and economic opportunity for our most disadvantaged citizens. June has always stood for what was right and never compromised her principles. She has provided me with 21 years of invaluable service that has improved the education of the children of St. Louis and the nation. Today, I want to say thank you for all that she has done and wish her well in her retirement.

EXPRESSING CONCERN ABOUT THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN LAOS AND COMMENDING SENATOR BOB SMITH AND THE U.S. CONGRES- SIONAL FORUM ON LAOS

HON. MARK GREEN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 15, 2000

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, as this Congress comes to a close, I want to state for the record that I continue to be very troubled about the dreadful situation in Laos and the U.S. Department of State's behavior toward this one-party, Communist regime.

Wisconsin is home to the third largest Hmong and Laotian community in the United States. I am very proud to represent so many of these Americans. Their families and relatives, however, continue to suffer terribly under the current Stalinist regime in Laos.

On October 19, I was pleased to speak once again before the U.S. Congressional Forum on Laos, an excellent forum series organized by the Center for Public Policy Analysis. At this forum, I again stressed my concerns about the disappearance of Messrs. Houa Ly and Michael Vang—two Americans who disappeared in Laos last year—and the ineffective handling of the case by our State Department.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to thank Senator BOB SMITH for placing a hold on the Administration's nominee for a new ambassador to Laos. I strongly supported Senator SMITH's hold as an important tool in the effort to force significant changes in U.S. policy toward Laos—changes I hope will occur under the next Administration.

I would like to submit this recent Washington Times article about our mutual efforts to enhance understanding about the situation in Laos and work for a positive change in U.S. policy.

[From the Washington Times, Oct. 6, 2000]

NEW LAOS POLICY URGED

Philip Smith has been trying to press the Clinton administration into adopting a tougher policy against Laos and is hopeful that a senator blocking the appointment of a new U.S. ambassador to the isolated communist nation will help the cause.

Mr. Smith, executive director of the Center for Public Policy Analysis, said he has no personal objections to the nominee, Douglas Alan Hartwick, a career Foreign Service officer.

“But we support the holding up of the nomination in the hope this will produce the