

Commissioner Fonteno is committed to his constituents. Not only does he touch the lives of many underprivileged boys and girls, he has an unwavering commitment to our senior citizens.

He is the founder and developer of various outstanding senior citizen programs in Harris County's Precinct Two, including East Harris County Senior Citizens, a non-profit corporation. The East Harris County Senior Citizens sponsors various activities throughout the year, including, trips to sporting events and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Another popular activity is the Senior Citizen Olympics, which is held annually. These fun-filled events have provided both social and physical interaction among senior citizens. In addition, 280 food baskets are provided to senior citizens during the holiday.

Commissioner Jim Fonteno also spent much time in developing the the well-being of our youth. The East Harris County Youth Program, which he founded, is dedicated to serving, the needs of Harris County Precinct Two youth. The program originated as a pilot program comprised of a summer camp at J.D. Walker Community Center and an after-school program at Cloverleaf Elementary School.

The single most important role of the East Harris County Youth Program is to serve as a vehicle that makes learning fun. Designed to be a resource, not a substitute for school systems, the program is a strong proponent of students staying in school. Although academic achievements receive top priority, the East Harris County Youth Program also puts an emphasis on physical activity.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that we will have a tremendous void as the result of Commissioner Fonteno's retirement. I am sure that I speak for many when I say that his tireless work will not soon be forgotten, and we are all thankful to him. I would like to personally wish him and his wife JoAnn well in this new stage of their lives, and hope that he continues to be a strong presence in Harris County.

U.S.-MEXICO POULTRY TRADE

HON. RICHARD W. POMBO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2001

Mr. POMBO. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call the House's attention to one of the agricultural success stories of the last decade. I refer to this nation's poultry trade with Mexico, a trade that has benefited both nations tremendously and that today finds itself charting new paths for the future.

Mexico in the late 1980s emerged as an important new market for U.S. poultry products. Mexican meat processors began buying large quantities of turkey and chicken cuts, including mechanically de-boned meat, from the United States. Much of this poultry meat was used to make the sausage, hot dogs, bologna and turkey ham products demanded by Mexican consumers.

There was for a time a concern that NAFTA might slow this progress. The agreement was written in the infancy of the U.S.-Mexican poultry trade, and NAFTA's authors did not foresee the explosion in Mexican demand for U.S. poultry. The agreement set a quota for duty-free poultry exports to Mexico that was

far too small and set the over-quota tariff at a staggering initial rate of 269 percent. In fact, that over-quota tariff does not drop below 49.4 percent until it ultimately is removed in 2002.

Fortunately, the fears raised by NAFTA were not realized. The Mexican government has recognized the demand for poultry and has allowed a much higher level of duty free poultry imports than NAFTA requires. The results of this policy have been spectacular—and the primary beneficiary has been the Mexican economy and the Mexican people.

Mexico's processed meat industry has doubled during the last five years and now creates jobs—directly or indirectly—for 290,000 people. Annual sales of processed meat, including processed poultry products, have reached \$1.3 billion annually and are climbing. The consumption of meat protein products in Mexico has increased significantly, and the cost to Mexican consumers has been kept low.

Obviously, this has made the Mexican market a critical one for the U.S. poultry industry. Mexico now purchases about 10 percent of all U.S. poultry, and is the third largest export market for American poultry. For the turkey industry, the market is even more significant. Mexico is by far the biggest purchaser of U.S. turkey, consuming almost 10 percent of all the turkey produced in the United States and accounting for 55 percent of all our turkey exports.

Mr. Speaker, this success story needs to be continued. Mexico is undergoing historic political changes, and indications so far are that the Fox administration is continuing to maintain a positive policy toward poultry imports. However, there is certain to be continued pressure on the new government from some who want to eliminate competition in the market for processed meat.

Mexico's meat processors cannot meet their consumers' needs or price expectations without continuing waivers on the NAFTA quotas for U.S. poultry products. The Mexican government has understood this for the last seven years, and they are to be commended for putting the broader needs of their nation's consumers and the entire economy ahead of parochial political considerations. Also, our Agriculture Department and the Office of the Trade Representative are to be congratulated for the time and attention they devote to ensuring fair and open trade between our two countries.

The U.S. and Mexican poultry and meat processing industries recognize the importance of continuing this trade relationship. The two industries are signing an agreement pledging to work with their respective governments for a policy of open and unrestricted trade of poultry products.

As we wait for that goal to become a reality, we want to express our appreciation for the hard work of the Mexican government and our own trade officials for the accomplishments to this point in promoting prosperous poultry trade between our two countries.

HONORING VINCENT COSMANO,
BAND DIRECTOR OF O'FALLON
TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

HON. JERRY F. COSTELLO

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2001

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Vince Cosmano on his retirement and the 30 years of service he has given to O'Fallon Township High School in O'Fallon, Illinois.

The second of five children, born to James and Jean Cosmano of Chicago, Vince came from a family proud of their Italian heritage. As a youth, Vince was an achiever, performing in the high school band and attaining the rank of Eagle Scout. His passion for teamwork was shaped during his high school years where he excelled in football and swimming. Learning and an education were highly valued traits in the Cosmano household, Vince's brothers Don and Bill chose careers in education and his sister Jean Marie and youngest brother Richard succeeded in their respective fields of work.

In college, Vince followed his passion, studying history at Illinois State University and playing the french horn. Fortunately, for the future high school band students at OTHS, Vince's love for music became his calling. He graduated from ISU with a B.S. in Education in 1965, followed by a Masters in Music Education in 1971. From 1965 to 1971, Vince taught school, first in Wyoming, then Piper City and later Chillocothe. O'Fallon, Illinois would soon welcome and embrace the dynamic Vince Cosmano to their music department.

In August of 1976, the music department at OTHS was poised for change. The newly established Panther football program was open for competition and Edward A. Fulton was moving from the High School music program to his roots in the junior high music program. The Marching Panthers Band of OTHS was just 10 years old. The Panthers first were served by John Albert, then Ed Fulton and then it came to Vince Cosmano. At that time, the band consisted of 130 members with a total of 4 buses and no equipment trucks. Vince debuted with the Panthers at the 1977 U of I field show competition, winning second place in field, third in parade and a drum major caption award.

The OTHS Marching Panthers have since garnered grand championships, national parades (including appearances at the Macy's and the Tournament of Roses parades), television appearances and hundreds of other awards. Through all of the trophies, awards and citations, the OTHS Marching Panthers have gained national renown and an even stronger program under Vince's direction. Currently, the music program is comprised of 250 students, six buses, three equipment trucks, legions of OTHS alumni with support from parents, colleagues, fans and friends.

Vince always credited the students of the Marching Panthers for their diligence and hard work—only with great reluctance did he ever accept individual recognition. He was previously named "O'Fallon's Man of the Year" and served as the President of the Illinois Music Educators Association, District 6. In