

I hope that the longstanding friendship between our two democracies continues to blossom and strengthen in the years ahead. Congratulations to the people of Taiwan and President Chen.

TRIBUTE TO PEGGY FOUKE WORTZ
ATHENA OF THE INLAND VAL-
LEYS AWARD

HON. KEN CALVERT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 20, 2003

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to an individual whose dedication and contributions to the community of Riverside, California are exceptional. Riverside has been fortunate to have dynamic and dedicated community leaders who willingly and unselfishly give their time and talent and make their communities a better place to live and work. Peggy Fouke Wortz is one of these individuals. On Wednesday, May 21, 2003 Peggy will be awarded the ATHENA of the Inland Valleys at a lunch in her honor.

Peggy learned from a very early age the value of community service and volunteerism. She was born in Michigan and is the granddaughter of Mr. R.E. Olds, the inventor and founder of Oldsmobile cars. Throughout her childhood, her grandparents and parents demonstrated the same openhearted generosity that she would embrace in her adult life.

In 1940, Peggy married Mr. Philip B. Fouke and six years later they moved to Riverside, California where they raised three children. After the death of Mr. Fouke, Peggy married Mr. James M. Wortz in 1975 and dedicated herself to her family and community. Her involvement in the community includes service on various boards and committees as well as personal financial donations.

A few of the organizations that Peggy has been active in include: Charter Member, California Baptist University; Board of Governors, California Community Foundation; Past President, The Junior League; Founder/President The Living Desert Reserve; Board of Directors, The Mission Inn Foundation; President, Riverside Community Film; Board of Directors, Riverside Community Hospital Foundation; Founder and Board of Trustees, UCR Foundation; Founder, The Volunteer Center; Board Member, Riverside YMCA; and Founder, The Frank Millen Club.

Peggy's tireless passion for community service has contributed immensely to the betterment of the community of Riverside, California. Peggy has been the heart and soul of many community organizations and events and I am proud to call her a fellow community member, American and friend. I know that many community members are grateful for her service and salute her as she receives the ATHENA of the Inland Valleys Award.

THE NEED FOR UNITED STATES
BANKRUPTCY COURT PRO-
CEEDINGS TO OCCUR ON A
DAILY BASIS IN BAKERSFIELD,
CALIFORNIA

HON. WILLIAM M. THOMAS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 20, 2003

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation that would authorize the creation of an additional bankruptcy court for the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California. The legislation would also express that it is the sense of Congress that bankruptcy proceedings should be conducted in Bakersfield in Kern County, California on a daily basis.

Very simply, I am introducing this legislation because my constituents have informed me that neither they, nor justice, is well-served by the status quo, under which Bakersfield is designated as a location where court is conducted once a month, with other matters disposed of through the use of video/teleconferencing.

According to constituent attorneys familiar with both the creditor and petitioner perspectives, one particularly significant problem is the distance that parties must travel in order to personally appear in the Fresno Division of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of California. Kern County encompasses a vast area, and those persons involved in contested proceedings who wish to be heard in Fresno must travel 110 miles from Bakersfield. Moreover, 429,310 of Kern County's 676,367 residents live in outlying communities and areas, and must travel much further to be heard in Fresno.

For example, those persons living in the communities of Boron, Frazier Park, or Rosamond with business before the Bankruptcy Court have to travel 172, 143, and 160 miles respectively to appear in Fresno. If those persons could appear in Bakersfield, they would only have to travel less than half as far—80, 37, and 57 miles respectively—and would be relieved of some of the hardships and costs inherent in traveling such distances. This travel is especially difficult for those parties who are sick, elderly, or have small children.

While a video/teleconferencing system is in place, I am told the system works well only approximately 70 percent of the time and that on occasion the video goes out, leaving only teleconferencing. My constituent attorneys firmly believe that appearances through the use of the video/teleconferencing system, not only decrease the decorum of the proceedings, but also decrease the parties' ability to effectively communicate, resulting in proceedings that are less efficient and fair than proceedings conducted in person before a live court and witnesses. In addition, Kern County attorneys inform me that because practitioners cannot file documents in Bakersfield, Kern County parties incur increased costs in the form of overnight or courier charges and face de facto shortened deadlines. Finally, the status quo also results in the almost automatic conduct of short proceedings via video/teleconferencing as well as the conduct of proceedings through a mixture of live and video/teleconferencing appearances, a practice which Kern County practitioners advise me

places the parties they represent at a distinct disadvantage.

A strong case exists for the daily conduct of bankruptcy proceedings in Bakersfield when one considers the number of filings submitted by Kern County parties and general demographic data. In 2002, Kern County parties made 4,168 total bankruptcy filings, and through March 31, 2003, have made 1,042 total filings. During those time periods, total filings in the entire four-county Modesto Division were 5,045 and 1,324 respectively. Moreover, Kern County's 4,168 total filings in 2002 were greater than the 3,696 total filings in Fresno County and constituted over one-third of the 11,912 total filings in the entire eight-county Fresno Division. Finally, nationwide there are approximately 700,000 people per bankruptcy court, and Kern County, one of the fastest growing areas in the nation, has a population in excess of 676,000. By comparison, Stanislaus County, where the Modesto Division is located, has a population of 468,566.

I trust that my colleagues and the appropriate United States Judicial Conference officials will recognize the need to have bankruptcy proceedings conducted in Bakersfield on a daily basis and will work with me to ensure that our legal system is structured in a manner that allows for the effective and fair administration of our bankruptcy laws.

CELEBRATING THE 100TH BIRTH-
DAY OF MARY LOUISE AKERS

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 20, 2003

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I honor a very great lady today upon reaching her 100th birthday. Mary Louis Akers, a resident of Santa Fe, New Mexico, is commemorating, with a host of family and friends, a century of life upon this earth. I salute and applaud her on this remarkable event.

Mrs. Akers was born on May 20, 1903, in Sherman, Texas, to Margaret Crumley Melton and James Henderson Melton. Growing up during the first part of the 20th century was quite different than it is today. Mary Louise Melton's father delivered mail on horseback, and the family traveled by horse and buggy most everywhere they went, not owning a car until Mary Louise was a teenager. The train was used for long trips. The family always had an "icebox," the forerunner of the refrigerator, and ice was delivered to their home every few days. Laundry was always done by hand.

Entertainment was very different when Mary Louise was young. Her primary entertainment was reading. The family did not own a radio until Mary Louise was a teenager, and the first "silent" movie she saw was a series that only ran on Saturday afternoons. Many years later, in the 1950's and after she was married, a television was purchased.

Mary Louise suffered infantile paralysis, now known as polio, when she was nine months old. The disease paralyzed her left side. Remarkably, however, she recovered from the disease and, fortunately, was left with little residual, and unnoticed, effects.

Mary Louise attended Kidd Key College in Sherman, where she studied voice. Her first