HONORING PALMYRA MACEDON BOYS' BASKETBALL CLASS B STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

HON. JAMES T. WALSH
OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, April 5, 2005

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in tribute to the Palmyra Macedon Red Raiders, the varsity boys' basketball team that won their first Class B State Title. The 57–47 victory was well earned after trailing to the Carle Place Frogs for the majority of the game.

Junior shooting guard Anthony Hall scored a game-high 26 points, and helped the Red Raiders get back into the lead in the final quarter. Coach Chip Tatro and the rest of this outstanding team deserve congratulations after their third attempt, and consequent victory, in winning the championship.

Coach Chip Tatro, Christopher Milke, Jared Piccola, Dan Gorman, Tim Patchett, Jonathon Jacques, who stepped down as HRC president, is yet another reminder of all of the good work he has accomplished. As such, he is more than worthy of receiving our recognition today. Thus, I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring this truly remarkable person.

HONORING THE VAN VANDALS

HON. JEB HENSARLING
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, April 5, 2005

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to honor the 'Van Vandalos' boys' basketball team who won the Texas 3A championship on March 11, 2005. In their first trip to the state finals in sixty-three years, the Vandals beat Graham High School to return home with the state championship trophy. This is an accomplishment that the young men on the team will remember for the rest of their lives.

As the co-captain, representative of the members, coaches, and supporters of the Van Vandalos, it is my pleasure to recognize their outstanding accomplishment today on the floor of the United States House of Representatives.

SUN CHRONICLE HAILS APPOINTMENT OF ATTLEBORO NATIVE

HON. BARNEY FRANK
OF MASSACHUSETTS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, April 5, 2005

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, since 1982, my congressional activities have been covered by the Sun Chronicle, which provides news for the Greater Attleboro, Massachusetts area. It is a newspaper which understands the importance of solid and thoughtful coverage of events that happen within its area. At the same time, it pays due attention to national issues, and it has also been an important advocate for fair treatment for that part of Massachusetts in which it circulates.

Its interest in all three of these elements came together on March 18 when the Sun Chronicle published a gracious and thoughtful editorial about the appointment of an Attleboro native, Joe Solmonese, to be the head of the Human Rights Campaign. The Human Rights Campaign is for fair treatment for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people, and I am among those who was very pleased that Mr. Solmonese was selected, given the combination of skill and talent that he brings to the job.

As the Sun Chronicle noted, "Attleboro is honored by the appointment of a city native to head the Human Rights Campaign" and it is also honored and fortunate to have a newspaper with the generosity of spirit to editorialize as well as it did on this subject. I ask that this editorial be printed here.

[From the Sun Chronicle, March 18, 2005]

ACTIVIST EYES TOUGH FIGHT

BY DAVID CRARY

NEW YORK.—After 12 years advocating for abortion rights, Attleboro native Joe Solmonese might have opted for a less divisive field of work. Instead, he is taking over leadership of the largest national gay-rights group at a time when the same-sex marriage debate rages over volatility and virulence.

"My challenge is to talk about why the equality we seek is not just important to our community, but should be important to everyone," Solmonese said. "I have to believe in the optimism and fair-mindedness of the American people.

Solmonese was named last week as the new president of the Washington-based Human Rights Campaign and will formally assume the post April 11.

He plans to start his tenure by traveling around the country, meeting with state and local activists.

Since 1983, Solmonese has been a strategist for EMILY's List, the political action committee supporting state and federal candidates of Democratic women who favor abortion rights. He was its chief executive for the past 2 1/2 years, helping build fund-raising records but also seeing candidates his group endorsed lose 2004 Senate races in Florida, South Carolina and Missouri.

Solmonese graduated from Boston University with a degree in communications after growing up in Attleboro. One of his role models was the local congressman, Barney Frank—"My father, Joseph Frank, who values family more than anyone I know."

Solmonese came out as gay in his early 20s; he recalls attending a Human Rights Campaign dinner where he was 22. Before joining EMILY's List, he was an aide to former Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis and a fund-raiser for Frank.

He credits his parents, both schoolteachers, with instilling in him a career of political activism. Solmonese Elementary School in Norton is named after his father, Joseph.

"After a decade in the reproductive rights movement, I see myself having been in the fight for a progressive America," he said. "Groups like the HRC are very much at the forefront of that fight."

Another common denominator for the abortion-rights and gay rights movements is their determined and politically well-connected constituency, who focus on those two issues have claimed credit for the Republicans' strong showing in the 2004 election.

"The American people fear a whole range of things right now, from terrorism to their economic future," Solmonese said. "Our opposition has been pretty crafty at capitalizing on that fear, using whatever means necessary to make political gains."

Many conservative groups are now waging a two-pronged fight against gay marriage. They are lobbying Congress to approve a federal constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman; they also hope many more states will join the 17 that already have amended their constitutions to ban gay marriage.

The Human Rights Campaign was among numerous gay-rights organizations participating earlier this month in a strategy session aimed at competing effectively in upcoming state ballot campaigns regarding gay marriage.

Solmonese says he hopes Massachusetts will be one of the states in 2006 that its pioneering legalization of same-sex marriage has positive, not negative, results. "Massachusetts is still there, with loving, committed families," he said. "We want to shine a light on what happened in Massachusetts, and tell the American people who we truly are.

He replaces another Massachusetts political activist, former state Sen. Cheryl Jacques, who stepped down as HRC president last year, citing differences with its board.

Her departure coincided with speculation in the gay media, and elsewhere, about discord among the HRC and some other major gay-rights groups. Solmonese said he has detected no serious rifts since his hiring was announced.

[From the Sun Chronicle, Mar. 18, 2005]

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