BASKETBALL CATAMOUNTS—STANDOUTS ON THE COURT AND IN THE CLASSROOM

HON. BERNARD SANDERS OF VERMONT IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Tuesday, April 5, 2005

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, like all of us who live in Vermont, and many millions across the nation, I was thrilled when the underdog Catamounts of the University of Vermont defeated Syracuse in the opening round of the 2005 NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament. Syracuse was a national power; the nucleus of its team won the national championship two years earlier. Its players were accomplished, well-coached and a credit to college basketball.

But the University of Vermont team rose to the challenge, coming from behind in the final minutes of both regulation play and overtime. Led by the greatest basketball player to come out of Vermont, Taylor Coppenrath of West Barnet, Vermont the Catamounts showed how teamwork and a tenacious defense could elevate a team to national prominence. During the regular season Coppenrath was the second leading Division I scorer in the nation with 25.7 points per game, and for the third straight year he was the player of the year in the America East conference. He was joined on the team by T. J. Sorrentine, a sharp-shooting point guard (fifth in the nation with 3.6 three-point field goals per game) whose passion and precision shooting defined the Catamounts. He too had an arm for America East player of the year and has three first-team selections to his credit. The international contingent made up of Germain Mopa Njila of Cameroon, whose career scoring high of 20 points on 9 of 10 shooting was the mainstay of the Catamount offense against Syracuse; Martin Klimes of the Czech Republic, whose smothering defense held All-American Hakim Warrick in check, and Canadian David Henn, who selflessly threw himself into the Cats’ tight defense and patient and exceptionally effective passing game.

It was talent and tenacity. All five Vermont starters played at least 40 minutes, and Klimes and Coppenrath never had a rest on the bench at all. The Catamounts stuck with a game plan devised by Coach Tom Brennan and Associate Head Coach Jesse Agel, which called for ball control, constant passing and careful work against Syracuse’s famed 2–3 zone until a shot opened up. No one should be surprised that they showed poised intelligence on the hardwood. The UVM basketball team had a 3.09 grade point average (GPA) for the fall semester. The starting five has a cumulative GPA, including all the courses the players have taken in their time at UVM, above 3.0. This is an exceptionally high and rare statistic for basketball teams that play at the highest level, some of which graduate less than half their teams members. Martin Klimes, majoring in business, has a 3.82 GPA, one of the highest averages in his entire college. Germain Mopa Njila, a computer science and information systems major, has a GPA of 3.21. Sociology major T. J. Sorrentine averages 2.75, while David Henn has a stellar 3.57 GPA in business. Wooden Award finalist Taylor Coppenrath averaged 2.80 in secondary education and competed at the elite level in basketball, while student teaching in the math department at Colchester High School.

Their academic performance is exceptional for UVM athletes. The state university is as dedicated to graduating student athletes as it is to fielding fine teams (its men’s hockey team recently played in the ECAC Final Four, and its ski team was second in the nation at the NCAA national championships). The overall GPA for student athletes is 3.08, which is higher than the GPA for the student body as a whole.

The Catamounts captured the attention and the heart of the entire nation. To the wonderful, inspired members of that team, and their dedicated coaches, the state of Vermont extends its salutations. I rejoice that we can say it better than their retiring coach, Tom Brennan, who said these words after losing to Michigan State in the second round. “We can’t thank everyone enough on what the support has meant to us. We gave more back than what we took and what we did this weekend was as the thrill of a lifetime. It was the greatest ride that I could ever, ever have had. You know you’re in a very special place when your realities outweigh your dreams. And that’s where I am.” For all of us in Vermont, for one special night, reality did outweigh dreams. Thanks, Catamounts.

CONGRATULATING RABBI MERLE E. SINGER ON HIS RETIREMENT

HON. ROBERT WEXLER OF FLORIDA IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Tuesday, April 5, 2005

Mr. WEXLER. Mr. Speaker, I am both honored and privileged to congratulate Rabbi Merle E. Singer on the occasion of his retirement.

Rabbi Singer has been at Temple Beth El of Boca Raton for 26 years. Before that, he served at Beth Or in Philadelphia and Temple Sinai in Washington, D.C. He has a Bachelors of Arts in Sociology from the University of Cincinnati, and a Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Rabbi Singer was ordained as a Reform Rabbi in June 1966. Rabbi Singer is one of the warmest, most charitable and caring people I know. I have personally seen the extraordinary kindness, determination and virtue that Rabbi Singer demonstrates everyday in all aspects of his life. As those of us privileged to know him can attest, Rabbi Singer is deeply devoted to his family, congregants and community. For the past 26 years he has been a religious guide and educator to his congregants serving them in every aspect of synagogue life. Under his leadership, Temple Beth El has grown to be one of the largest Reform synagogues, where the congregation maintains an unwavering commitment to Jewish values and the importance of a Jewish identity.

Beyond the synagogue, Rabbi Singer is one of the most respected people in the community, promoting the highest form of tzedakah by bringing people of different faiths together to help those who need it most. He has started programs like Shared Care, which connects impaired seniors with members in the community—and in the process has become a true community leader. His civic involvement in everything from the United Way to the Boca Raton Community Hospital, exemplifies the principle of tikkun olam. Rabbi Singer’s legacy in South Florida already extends far beyond Temple Beth El and will endure for many years.

I wish Rabbi Singer much continued success and good health.

HONORING JANICE GRUENDEL AS SHE IS RECOGNIZED BY THE ACES EDUCATION FOUNDATION

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO OF CONNECTICUT IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Tuesday, April 5, 2005

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to join the ACES Education Foundation as they recognize the outstanding contributions of a dedicated member of our community and my good friend, Dr. Janice Gruendel. Janice has spent a lifetime working with children, focusing much of her time and effort on early childhood education.

A psychologist by training, Janice has dedicated her professional career to improving the environment in which our children learn and grow. After receiving her Ph.D. from Yale University, Janice served as Deputy Commissioner with the Connecticut Department of Children and Youth Services, the Department of Mental Retardation, and the Department of Public Health. She moved on to become the Vice President of Education and Technology at Rabbit Ears Productions, Inc. and was co-executive producer of the Emmy-nominated public broadcast documentary, “Mommy, Who’ll Take Care of You?”

In 1995, Janice, along with Shelly Geballe, Judy Solomon, and Nancy Lustman, embarked on a very special project founding...