HONORING THE 2005 GOLDMAN ENVIRONMENTAL PRIZE RECIPIENTS

HON. RAÚL M. GRIJALVA
OF ARIZONA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, June 23, 2005

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the winners of the 2005 Goldman Environmental Prize, the world’s most prestigious prize honoring grassroots environmentalists.

Now in its 16th year, the Goldman Prize is annually awarded to environmental leaders from six geographic regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Islands & Island Nations, North America, and South & Central America. The recipients are engaged in important efforts to preserve the natural environment, including protecting endangered ecosystems and species, combating destructive development projects, promoting sustainability, influencing environmental policies and striving for environmental justice. Goldman Prize winners often are figurative and literal heroes, driven by deep convictions and personal sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend all the winners for their incredible commitment to a better world for their communities. I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring them today.

THE NEW G.I. BILL: PAYING A DEBT TO TODAY’S VETERANS

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL
OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, June 23, 2005

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the G.I. Bill of Rights for the 21st Century.

This week, we commemorate the 61st anniversary of the G.I. Bill. The bill was enacted in 1944 to support our troops returning from World War II with educational benefits, home loans and medical assistance. This legislation greatly impacted my life. I was a high school dropout when I first enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1948. After serving in Korea, where I was awarded a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star, I came back home in 1952 with no idea of what to do next. I had achieved the rank of Sergeant, but now I found myself stranded, pushing hand trucks in New York’s garment district, just as I had before I was deployed to Korea. Desperate for help, I went to the Veterans Administration where I learned the government would pay for my education under the G.I. Bill. I decided to finish high school and to pursue a higher education and a law degree. The rest is history. Almost 8 million veterans went to college as a result of the original G.I. Bill and we owe today’s veterans that same opportunity tailored to today’s needs. Today, there are CHARLES RANGELS from all over the country who don’t know what they will be doing when they return from serving. They enlisted with the hope of a better way of life by getting an education through the G.I. Bill. More than one million men and women have served so far in Iraq and Afghanistan. These troops have put their lives on the line for our country, and we owe them nothing less than a new and improved G.I. Bill.

The new G.I. Bill recently introduced by Democrats in Congress, if passed, would improve benefits for our men and women serving today and meet the needs of veterans and military retirees.

To help our soldiers take part in our economy and help recruit new service members, the new G.I. Bill would provide the full cost for college or job training for those who serve four or more years of active duty. It would also provide $1,000 bonuses to the nearly 1 million troops who have been placed in harm’s way in Iraq and Afghanistan. The new G.I. Bill also honors our National Guard and Reserve by expanding military benefits to cover all reservists, making sure they do not suffer a pay cut while deployed and improving incentives for recruitment and retention.

For military retirees and the families of those who died in the line of duty, the package would eliminate the Disabled Veteran’s Tax, allowing disabled veterans to receive disability compensation along with their retirement pension. It would also do away with the Military Families Tax which penalizes survivors, mostly widows, of those killed as a result of combat from injuries sustained in service. These widows lose their survivor benefits if they receive compensation because their spouse has died of a service-connected injury. If passed, the bill would also improve veterans’ health care.

Like me, most of today’s volunteers are from economically depressed urban and rural areas with high rates of unemployment. Enlisted by enlistment bonuses up to $20,000, they look at the military as an economic opportunity. In effect, they are subject to an economic draft. This is why I appealed to President Bush to call on all Americans to share the burden of war.

I oppose the war in Iraq, whose justifications have all been proven false. I strongly support the troops, whose job is not to question the legitimacy of the war, but to follow the orders they are given. We must see to it that we show them how much we appreciate their sacrifice.
of celebrating this historic agreement with the Tribes at the Warm Springs Reservation. This historic agreement has been the guiding document between the Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation and the United States government for 150 years. The Wasco, Tah, Wyam, Teneho, Doox-Spuh Bands of the Wasco and The Dalles Ke-Gal-Twah-Lah and the Dog River Bands of Wasco have called the Middle Columbia River home since time immemorial.

As we near the anniversary of this Treaty, I would like to share with you some highlights of this rich history of the Treaty. On June 25th, 1855 near what is now The Dalles, Oregon, these bands and tribes finalized negotiations with Superintendent for Indian Affairs of Oregon Territory Joel Palmer and agreed to cede over 4 million acres of land that became most of Central Oregon from the east side of the Cascade Mountains up to the middle of the Columbia River and over to the Blue Mountains.

For the past 150 years, the Tribes of Warm Springs Territory have had a strong government that has been successful in preserving their traditional cultural ways and providing for the well-being of their members, homeland, and future generations. Today, The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs have over 4,000 enrolled members, operate all their own programs and services including their tribal public safety department which includes tribal court, police, and justice, as well as medical and fire response, utilities, infrastructure, social services, housing, and education programs.

In addition, the Tribes lead the way nationally and within Indian Country for managing their vast reservation lands and resources. The Tribes co-operate a large hydroelectric project with The Dalles Dam that they operate their own sawmill and is pursuing innovative endeavors in creating energy from biomass production of wood products. In addition, they help manage their Treaty-entrusted fishing resources.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs in the United States Congress and have enjoyed working on many projects important to the Tribes and the people of eastern Oregon. Whether it has been working with the Tribes on legislation such as those agreements over the 409-megawatt Pelton Round Butte hydroelectric project near Madras or partnering with them to help site their future casino in Cascade Locks, I have been pleased to work with the honorable people of The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs.

As Chairman of the House Resources Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health and co-author of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, I have also had the good fortune to work on issues that will assist the Tribes in managing their own lands. In June of this year I was pleased to announce that Warm Springs Forest Products Industries received a $250,000 grant through the U.S. Forest Service’s Woody Biomass Utilization Grant Program which was authorized in the Healthy Forests legislation. This grant program creates markets for small-diameter material and low-value trees removed from hazardous fuel reduction activities and helps organizations and businesses turn hazardous fuel reduction material into marketable forest products and energy resources.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to share with you and my colleagues the rich history of The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs and look forward to continuing our productive working relationship in the years ahead.

TRIBUTE TO COMPUTER CORE OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

HON. JAMES P. MORAN
OF VIRGINIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2005

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to congratulate the Computer Community Outreach and Education program, or Computer CORE, of Alexandria, Virginia, for celebrating its fifth anniversary. This wonderful non-profit program promotes the realization of better job opportunities through basic computer skills training. It is offered to unemployed and under-employed adults in Northern Virginia, who may have little or no experience with computers, but have something much more important to each of them: an insatiable desire to learn, achieve, and contribute to our society.

These students come from a wide array of families and backgrounds, but all of them leave with the proficiency necessary to enter the workforce and contribute to the economic development of our country. They leave Computer CORE not only with competence in keyboarding, word processing, and spreadsheets, but also with the ability to identify their own strengths and interests, set goals, develop resumes and cover letters, and pursue their goals with enthusiasm.

In addition, they leave with a free refurbished computer of their own, allowing them to continue to develop their skills at home, as well as teach their families the valuable skills they have learned.

None of this would be possible without the hard work of Debra Roepke, the executive director and founder of the program, as well as the staff of instructors who generously volunteer their time and energy to help these students acquire the skills they need to achieve the American Dream. Through hard work and education, the students of the Computer CORE classes are grasping their future and entering a new stage of life. After graduation, these students will find new job opportunities they never had before. Some will continue at institutions of higher education. Some will teach their families they skills they have learned. But all of them will have truly experienced the American dream.

BRAC REGIONAL FIELD HEARING IN RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

HON. STEPHANIE HERSETH
OF SOUTH DAKOTA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2005

Ms. HERSETH. Mr. Speaker, on June 20–23, 2005, I attended the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Regional Field Hearing in Rapid City, South Dakota in an effort to convince BRAC commissioners to remove Ellsworth Air Force Base—South Dakota’s second largest employer—from the Department of Defense’s list of military bases recommended for closure. Therefore, I was unavoidably absent from the House of Representatives on these days and was unable to support important legislation brought before the full House.

I would like to record to show that had I been present I would have voted in support of H.R. 2863, the Fiscal Year 2006 Department of Defense Appropriations Act; H.R. 2475, the Fiscal 2006 Intelligence Authorization Act; and H.J. Res. 110, the Flag Desecration Amendment to the United States Constitution.

The Fiscal Year 2006 Defense Appropriations Act funds the activities of the Department of Defense including the funds needed to outfit and train our servicemen and women and important benefits and services for members of our military and their families. The bill also includes funding for three partnership programs between the Departments of Defense and the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. These important programs will help bring together a unique array of capabilities offered by the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology to help our Nation’s military meet the challenge of transformation and modernization.

I will continue to work with my colleagues in the House of Representatives to improve our Nation’s commitment to the men and women who serve in the military. There is no question that there are those brave enough to serve in our Nation’s military.

I also would like to express my support for the Fiscal Year 2006 Intelligence Authorization Act. This bill provides funding for 15 U.S. intelligence agencies and intelligence-related activities of the U.S. government—including the CIA and the National Security Agency, as well as foreign intelligence activities of the Defense Department, FBI, State Department, Homeland Security Department, and other agencies. I will continue working with Federal law enforcement and intelligence and security agencies receive the resources and funding needed to protect the United States from external and internal threats.

Finally, I would like to express my support for the flag desecration amendment to the United States Constitution. This resolution authorizes Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States. Our Nation’s flag is a symbol of freedom and a source of pride for all of us fortunate enough to live in America. It always encouraged free discussion and reasonable disagreement, but the physical desecration of an American flag goes beyond the pale. Such actions are insulting to those who have fought, and died, under the American flag, and I am proud to support efforts to ban flag desecration.

In 1989, the Supreme Court held that no laws could prohibit political protesters from burning the American flag and declared unconstitutional the flag burning portions of 48 states and of the United States. In that case, Texas v. Johnson, Justice Stevens wrote a powerful dissenting opinion that has guided my reasoning on the Amendment for some time.

Justice Stevens pointed out the importance of distinguishing between disagreeable ideas and disagreeable conduct. In a particularly apt analogy, Justice Stevens noted that if Johnson had spray painted his message on the Lincoln Memorial, the government could prohibit his "expression." I have always found myself in agreement with the idea that there should be a legitimate interest in preserving the quality of an important national asset.