Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Caribbean leaders for their achievement of the Caribbean Single Market Economy and to enter into the RECORD a Caribnews editorial celebrating this milestone. The CSME—the initial phase of a historic regional economic integration project uniting 13 countries within the Caribbean—culminates a movement that was years in the making.

With the creation of this newest trade bloc that includes Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, the countries have agreed to lift tariffs and allow all citizens to open businesses. In conjunction with Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the countries will also be able to provide services and move capital throughout the region. The implications of the CSME are sweeping, with plans advancing to replace national travel documents with a regional passport and the possibility of a common currency to be used by participating countries and a consolidation of economic policies.

The CSME is a fitting and progressive response to the evolving global environment characterized by disappearing borders. I have full faith that CSME will create a larger spectrum of opportunities for employment, investment, production and trade for the people of the Caribbean islands. The coming together of regional economies into one bloc will undeniably give the countries strength in facing other trade blocs and superpowers across the negotiating tables.

Mr. Speaker, please join me again in congratulating the leaders of the participating bean nations for forging ahead with the CSME and wishing them well in their next steps.

CARIBBEAN SINGLE MARKET: SEALED, SHONED AND DELIVERED

"Sealed," stated the front-page newspaper headline on Tuesday morning.

"Caribbean leaders sign on formal document," hailed another paper.

And a third publication completed the process when it made it clear that the pact had been "delivered".

In effect, the Caribbean Single Market, the long awaited important step towards deep economic and social integration had moved into its functional phase. CARICOM leaders signed on the dotted line on Monday, committing their countries to be bound by and live up to the provisions of the treaty establishing the CSME.

The signing took place, quite appropriately, on the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies, this essential Caribbean educational institution, and the occasion wasn’t simply historic but vital if the countries of the region are to realize their full potential.

Admittedly, there were some unfortunate aspects of the ceremony. One of them was a hard fact of Caribbean life: at least one nation, the Bahamas, opted out all together while Haiti, a country in chaos with a dysfunctional interim government wasn’t invited to the party. Another setback, of sorts, was the decision of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States to push back the deadline for their implementation of the CSME. Originally, the deadline was January 1, then it was moved to March and now we are being told that it would be the end of June. Don’t be surprised if the OECS countries demand another extension.

The countries are moving ahead with the CSME, are Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the OECS nations are coming on board during the second half of the year.

The pact, a work in progress, calls for the removal of all duties and taxes on goods and services, limited freedom of movement by a handful of skilled people, such as UWI graduates, sports figures and journalists, the setting of a regional standard for goods being produced in or entering the region from other countries and recognition of Caribbean Court of Justice. Eventually, it could result in a common currency and the harmonization of economic policies.

What it wouldn’t involve is a political union.

These desirable and important objectives should become a reality by 2008, the year when the CSME should become fully implemented. It is my hope that we may estimate the complexity and the challenges the region faces as it moves forward.

Jamaica’s Prime Minister, P.J. Patterson, underscored that point when he cautioned the leaders and others at the signing ceremony “formidable challenges still exist as we move boldly forward in the pursuit of a closer regional collaboration within a global economy that is admittedly hostile to the interest of small island developing nations.”

The problem for small states is that global competitiveness is economically finicky and difficult to achieve. As if those weren’t bad enough, the mountains of red tape and the foot-dragging by some countries can reduce the CSME’s effectiveness and appeal.

But there is little reason to despair.

When Caribbean Court of Justice, CARICJA, the forerunner of CARICOM and CSME, it started with three countries—Antigua, Barbados and Guyana. The list grew in later years. That’s likely to happen with the CSME.

Secondly, the Caribbean Court of Justice is now a functioning judicial body. Yes, it’s true that only the beans and Guyana have so far accepted the CCJ as their court of last resort, relinquishing the necessity to turn to the Privy Council in London as the final arbiter. Again, foot-dragging is standing in the way of a broader court. Political considerations in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have proved too great to be overcome.

A word about the OECS and its reasons for not signing the final acceptance on Monday. The members are pushing for the creation of a Caribbean Development Fund, which would help bridge the gap in finance, which the elimination of tariffs by the members of the OECS will eventually achieve.

That’s a realistic situation, one that the larger economies have recognized and are trying to solve. The Fund must be established, no ifs, and buts.

Interestingly, Edwin Carrington, CARICOM’s long-serving Secretary-General, in his speech on Monday borrowed from the lyrics of one of Bob Marley’s most popular songs, “One Love,” and invoked the memory of that great Caribbean icon when he insisted “Let’s get together and feel alright, I say let’s stay together and be all right.”

We may be some distance away from achieving that libraries with replacement projects, retrospective collection development projects that advance the mission, priority areas, and goals of the selected library.

The purpose of the award is to help provide materials that libraries need to complete replacement projects, retrospective collection development projects, or routine collection building needs.

The library tied for first place with the College State School Library in Anchorage, Alaska. Both schools were presented this award on January 22, 2006.

The library will be contributing the prize money to the—“Still Stayin’ READING Program.” This program is designed to help kids with reading disabilities. Working in conjunction with Delta Society trained dogs, the program pairs children with a pet, which helps the children relax and improve their confidence. This creates a non-judgmental audience and thus a lighter stress load on the children allowing them to truly embrace and improve their skills.

I extend my sincere congratulations to the Flower Mound Public Library for their contributions to the community and youth education as well as their dedication to excellence. This truly original program deserves much applause.

SUPPORT FOR ANIMAL FIGHTING PROHIBITION ENFORCEMENT ACT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 16, 2006

Mr. GALLEGY. Mr Speaker, I rise to express my support for H.R. 817, the Animal
Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act. More than 150 local police and sheriff’s departments have requested this legislation and I am pleased that the committee is considering it.

A few years ago, Congress enacted legislation to tighten federal law and close some loopholes in the 1988 sighting. Additional provisions of the 1998 legislation have earmarked $500 million for research and $100 million for a new federal program to combat animal cruelty.

But Congress did not finish the job. We left in place weak penalties that have proven ineffective. Misdeemeanor penalties simply don’t provide a meaningful deterrent. Those involved in animal fighting ventures—where thousands of dollars typically change hands in the associated betting activity—consider misdemeanor penalties a “slap on the wrist” or merely a “cost of doing business.” Moreover, we’ve heard from U.S. Attorneys that they are reluctant to pursue animal fighting cases with just a misdemeanor penalty.

In recent years, we have seen a marked rise in the frequency of animal fighting arrests in communities across the country. Local police and sheriffs are increasingly concerned about animal fighting ventures, not only because of the animal cruelty involved, but also because of the other crimes that often go hand-in-hand, including illegal gambling, drug traffic, and acts of human violence.

In addition, there are concerns cockfighters spread diseases that jeopardize poultry flocks and even public health. We in California experienced this first-hand, when cockfighting spread exotic Newcastle disease, which was so devastating to many of our poultry producers in 2002 and 2003. That outbreak cost U.S. taxpayers “nearly $200 million to eradi-cate,” and cost the U.S. poultry industry many millions more in lost export markets,” according to Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman.

It is time Congress finishes the job and helps State and local law enforcement officials who have requested stronger Federal laws to rid animal fighting from communities that do not want it.

TRIBUTE TO THE PAISANO 25TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, February 16, 2006
Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 25th anniversary of the Paisano, the student newspaper at the University of Texas at San Antonio, UTSA. The Paisano is the oldest independent student newspaper in the State of Texas. In January 1981, the first issues of the Paisano were distributed to the UTSA community. A quarter of a century later, the Paisano often publishes 7,000 to 10,000 issues a week for the downtown and 1604 campuses.

The Paisano is a young school, student enterprises like the Paisano were important in creating a sense of community. Other schools have longer histories but few have more school pride. Students know that the Paisano is their forum to celebrate their college years and express their community and world.

Put simply, student-run the paper. They write the stories, sell the advertising, and create budgets for the paper. But they receive neither college credit nor compensation from the university for their efforts. Yet, the invaluable experience of running a business has compensated them far more than a paycheck ever could.

Through the Paisano Educational Trust, dedicated students, faculty, and staff publish and examine their community and world.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to represent Mr. Beatty in Congress and I am very grateful for his unfailing and prolific service to his community. I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing the many contributions and achievements of Mr. Jim Beatty.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF MAEDGEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HON. RANDY NEUGEBAUER
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, February 16, 2006

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to bring an important anniversary to my colleagues’ attention. My elementary school, Maedgen Elementary School, in Lubbock, TX, is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the contributions and life-time achievements of Mr. Jim Beatty. He is an outstanding member of his community who has shown dedication through his endless service to the Fort Collins community.

Soon after receiving his law degree, Mr. Beatty became senior partner at the Fisher & Beatty law office. Mr. Beatty also became very involved in the Fort Collins community. He was a member of the Fort Collins Junior Chamber of Commerce and, at age 35, was youngest president of the Rotary Club. He was also actively involved in the Fort Collins PTA and coached Little League.

Mr. Beatty frequently volunteered his legal services to local service clubs and organizations. Mr. Beatty has been actively involved in State and local politics. In the 1960’s and 1970’s, he served as a precinct committeeman and supported every Republican in his precinct to vote.

In 1980, Mr. Beatty was elected to the Colorado State Senate, where he served until 1988. During his time in the State Senate, Mr. Beatty proved himself to be an intelligent and effective legislator; he served as chair of eight legislative committees, including the Judiciary, Finance, Legal Affairs, Appropriations, and Joint Budget committees.

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, February 16, 2006

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute James P. Hoffa, president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

HON. LORI SANCHEZ
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, February 16, 2006

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute James P. Hoffa, president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

Mr. Hoffa has spent the past 47 years in diligent and loyal service to the Teamsters Union and workers across the country.

Sworn in at the age of 18 by his father, James has been a member of the Teamsters Union since 1959. He learned to live in his life the importance of workers’ rights and joined his father on picket lines as a young boy.

Since taking office in March of 1999, Mr. Hoffa has been rebuilding the International