

North Star bore the motto, "Right is of no sex—Truth is of no color—God is the Father of us all, and we are all Brethren." I hope that motto will guide my colleagues as we consider legislation to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. Our democracy relies upon the ideal that everyone has an equal voice in each election, and the Voting Rights Act has been a vital component in ensuring that this ideal is enforced. Our Nation has come a long way in protecting the voting rights of minorities, but we still have a long way to go.

To weaken the Voting Rights Act would weaken our democracy itself, and everything we stand for as Americans.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. STEVEN R. ROTHMAN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 19, 2006

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, on July 18, 2006, due to illness, I missed 3 recorded votes. I take my voting responsibility very seriously, and had I been present, I would have voted "yes" on recorded vote No. 379; "no" on recorded vote No. 380; "yes" on recorded vote No. 381.

TRIBUTE TO JIM BURKE

HON. WILLIAM M. THOMAS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 19, 2006

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my colleague Mr. Costa to honor the life of our friend, Jim Burke, a Bakersfield community leader, philanthropist, and businessman, who passed away on Monday, July 17, 2006. In Bakersfield, the name Jim Burke is synonymous with generosity.

Jim was born on August 1, 1925, in Bakersfield, California, to Mr. and Mrs. James Joseph Burke, a family with Kern County pioneer roots. His great grandfather, Daniel Burke, came to Kern County in 1864 from Ireland. Jim graduated from Kern County Union High School in 1943 with accolades as a scholar, athlete, and president of the student body. He attended Stanford University for a year before joining the Navy and serving on the USS *Midway* and the USS *New Mexico*. After two and a half years of service in the Navy, Jim returned to Stanford and graduated in 1948 as an Industrial Engineer. In 1950, Jim married Bebe Rinker and they subsequently had a daughter, Michele (Mikie).

Jim began his career in the parts department of Haberfelde Ford in 1949, became a partner in the Haberfelde family business in 1964, and purchased the remaining business interest in 1972. In 1977, he renamed it Jim Burke Ford and it has since become one of the largest Ford dealerships in the country, with over 370 employees. Jim cared deeply for his employees and customers and was known to buy back a vehicle if a customer had an unresolved vehicle problem with Ford in order to address the issue with Ford himself.

Throughout his life, Jim's passion was in the areas of education and health care. He worked with educators to create "The Ford Di-

mension," which is a program that for 32 years has taught high school students about the private enterprise system and the practical problems of the business world.

In 1994, over 200 Ford Dimension alumni from across the nation founded the Jim Burke Education Foundation in his honor. Later in 2003, Ford Dimension alumni and the Jim Burke Education Foundation created a leadership program, Dream Builders, to develop leadership and life skills in high school seniors and share with them the value of civic responsibility as a lifetime commitment.

Jim also actively worked to address the hospital and healthcare needs in Bakersfield. He was a founding director of the Friends of Mercy Foundation, which assists in the healthcare needs of the local community, and he served as Chairman of the Mercy Hospital Board of Trustees as well as a director of Bakersfield Memorial Hospital.

Jim was also involved with numerous organizations in the community such as the Campfire Girls, Better Business Bureau, the Trade Club of Greater Bakersfield, Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce, the California State University Bakersfield Foundation, and served as chairman of the Kern County Business Outlook Conference. Jim was also very active in the Catholic community. Jim's fundraising efforts and work with the Sisters of Mercy addressed the special needs of others, such as construction of the Madison Place, a model low-income housing project.

Over the course of his life, Jim received numerous awards and honors for his service to the community and business achievements. In fact, in 1976, he was recognized with the Time Magazine Quality Dealership Award for his outstanding business performance and involvement in the community. In 1995, Jim was inducted into the Automotive Hall of Fame and he received a Honorary Doctorate from California State University, Bakersfield in 1997.

Yet no award will ever capture the true humanity, strength, and leadership that Jim achieved. Throughout his life, Jim and his family continuously strived to better our community and help others, with humility and true compassion. Jim was immensely successful in his efforts and we will never know the full extent of the impact Jim's kindness and compassion had. On this day, we rise, on behalf of a community in mourning, to remember with great appreciation Jim Burke, a man who embodied the civic generosity and leadership that is uniquely American and that has made Kern County such a great place to live. Accordingly, we offer our deep condolences to Bebe and his family.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO REE WENGERT

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 19, 2006

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ree Wengert, a prominent Las Vegas singer and activist, who passed away on Sunday, July 2, 2006, at the age of 78.

Ree was born on December 14, 1927 in Charleston, WV, and was the youngest of an amazing 12 children. Ree chose to complete her undergraduate studies at Marymount Col-

lege in Tarrytown, NY. She was soon awarded a full scholarship to the Julliard School of Music.

In 1952, Ree moved to Las Vegas, NV, and joined the Las Vegas Service League, which is now known as the Junior League of Las Vegas. She also began performing charity work for the Catholic Church. In the 1980s and '90s, she donated her services to Southern Nevada in many ways, including singing in charity events and advocating for AIDS victims' rights. She often visited and spoke with the most critically ill patients in the University Medical Center's AIDS ward.

Ree was most prominently known as the wonderful wife of Ward Wengert, a banker and civic leader in Las Vegas who passed in 1996, and mother to Rhett Storebo, Rene McCown, Ward Jr., and Cyril, who passed in 1997. She also enjoyed four grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize Ree Wengert and her amazing family for their contributions to the Southern Nevada community. She will be dearly missed.

TRIBUTE TO THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIG THOMPSON FLOOD

HON. MARILYN N. MUSGRAVE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 19, 2006

Mrs. MUSGRAVE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Colorado's Big Thompson Flood.

On July 31, 1976, residents and visitors in the Big Thompson Canyon suffered the unspeakable horror of one of the worst natural disasters in Colorado history.

I will never forget when the news started to break and the tragedy started to unfold.

In just a few hours, more than a foot of rain fell in the area surrounding the Big Thompson River, causing a wall of water over 20 feet tall to sweep through the canyon. In its wake, the flood claimed the lives of 144 people and left many others homeless. In all, over 400 homes and dozens of businesses were destroyed.

As we pause to commemorate the tragic events of 30 years ago, we remember the many lives that were taken from us by the waters of the Big Thompson and offer our thoughts and prayers for those they left behind.

It is often said that the worst of circumstances bring forth the best in people. In the hours and weeks following the disaster, the community surrounding Big Thompson Canyon displayed unparalleled graciousness and compassion. From the heroic rescuers who plucked survivors from the craggy canyon walls, to the countless others who gave their time, talents and resources, we saw the best of the American spirit in the wake of disaster.

Mr. Speaker, today Big Thompson Canyon and, more significantly, the lives of those touched by the flood still bear the scars from that terrible July night. As we mark the 30th anniversary of one of the worst natural disasters in Colorado history, I urge my colleagues to join me in remembering those who lost their lives and the countless others whose lives have been forever changed by the Big Thompson Flood.