

Chamblee Charter High School from Atlanta at this prestigious national event. These outstanding students, through their knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, won their statewide competition and earned the chance to come to our Nation's Capital and compete at the national level.

While in Washington, the students will participate in a 3-day academic competition that simulates a congressional hearing in which they "testify" before a panel of judges. Students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of constitutional principles as they evaluate, take, and defend positions on relevant historical and contemporary issues. It is important to note that results of independent studies of this nationally acclaimed program reveal that We the People . . . students have knowledge gains that are superior to comparison students. Students also display a greater political tolerance and commitment to the principles and values of the Constitution and Bill of Rights than do students using traditional textbooks and approaches. With many reports and surveys indicating the lack of civic knowledge and civic participation, I am pleased to support such a superb program that is producing an enlightened and engaged citizenry.

Mr. President, the names of these outstanding students from Chamblee Charter High School are: Sara Arment, Teresa Bardagiy, Ameer Chowdhury, Carol Coleman, Carson Dance, Petra Ehlert, Savannah Fox, Samuel Franklin, Elizabeth Hogan, Joseph Hutton, Martin Hwang, Jasmine Johnson, Jason King, Duncan Lien, Sang Oh, Laura Ownbey, Sally Phipps, Daniel Sok, Alexander Vidor, Kayla Vinson, and Xi Wang.

I also wish to commend the teacher of the class, Stephen J. Rubino, who is responsible for preparing these young constitutional experts for the national finals. Also worthy of special recognition is John D. Hoge, the State coordinator, and John Carr, the district coordinator, who are among those responsible for implementing the We the People program in my State.

I wish these students much success as they prepare to compete at the We the People national finals and applaud their exceptional achievement.

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A TRIBUTE TO THE USS "JOHN F. KENNEDY"

**HON. ANDER CRENSHAW**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, March 23, 2007*

Mr. CRENSHAW. Madam Speaker, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the outstanding leadership Captain Zecchin and the past commanding officers of the USS *Kennedy*, including Captain Dennis Fitzpatrick and Captain Harv Henderson, have provided to the sailors and this great Nation.

Naval leadership depends on two core military values—cohesiveness and mission. Or-

chestrating 3,500 sailors to pull together to accomplish a mission, whether that mission is war, training, repair or preparing to decommissioning, is a monumental task. The *Kennedy's* 39 years of outstanding service is due to the series of leaders who stood at her helm and kept her ready at a moment's notice. I wish Captain Zecchin well on his next tour as the Commanding Officer of the USS *Kitty Hawk*; we will miss him here in Mayport.

The *Kennedy* has seen many farewells—from the spouses and family of its crew and from Navy servicemen seeing her off on various deployments. Just think, how many loved ones have proudly watched their son or daughter sail off to gloriously defend our freedom and preserve our way of life. But at the end of each deployment there has always been a welcome home. Today, we say goodbye for the last time.

We are here today to say farewell to a ship that has symbolized so much to so many.

To the sailor, the *Kennedy* has been a home away from home on many deployments. She represents small town America, where many of her sailors are from. Her population is a little over 5,000 and she boasts a post office, doctors' offices, a place of worship, restaurants that serve over 15,000 meals a day and employment opportunities for all. She has elevators, runways, and a busy airport.

This "carrier" town represents the best of America. All the sailors work together toward a common goal, never separated by race or class or gender. Ships are steel, they are not alive. It is the crew who bring a ship to life. The stories that emerge from her sailors will keep her spirit alive. The *Kennedy* will continue to live in the lives of the thousands of sailors who manned her rail, flight crews who donned a rainbow of colored shirts and made her flight deck roar to life, and aviators who were catapulted into the sky and prayed to catch her hook on their return.

To the Jacksonville community, the *Kennedy* will always be a symbol of our great city. She has meant so much to this community and this community has meant so much to her. Here on this pier where you sit today, the sailors of the *Kennedy* and the men and women of our local ship-repair companies worked long hours on grueling jobs to complete the largest pier-side availability ever accomplished in the Navy. The skills of the artisans from these Jacksonville companies have kept the boilers and propulsion plant working during the *Kennedy's* time in Mayport.

Big John's connection to our community is more than just the economic base she provides. We will miss her sailors and their wives and husbands. We will miss the children in our local schools and athletic clubs. We will miss their involvement in the Mayport community.

To our country, the *Kennedy* has been part of our history for 39 years. She is one of the finest ships in the world's finest Navy. As our country continues to fight the war on terror, we must remember the role the *Kennedy* played in the earliest counter-terrorist actions.

Even though she entered active duty during the height of the Vietnam War, she soon

found herself in a role more familiar to today—spending the first of several deployments in the Mediterranean to help deal with a deteriorating situation in the Middle East. In the 1980's, she responded to the growing crisis in Lebanon, and in 1988 F-14 Tomcats launched from the *Kennedy* intercepted and downed two hostile Libyan MiGs in response to Libya's terrorist activities. On the *Kennedy's* most recent deployment, the air wing dropped more than 64,000 pounds of ordnance on Taliban and al Qaeda targets.

To me personally, I share many of the same memories as the Jacksonville community, but the *Kennedy* also provided me with the great honor of joining the national debate on how the Navy is going to meet the threats of tomorrow while fighting the budget pressures of today. The discussion that followed the announcement that the *Kennedy* would be decommissioned was good for our Navy, good for our Congress and good for our Nation.

We must be keenly aware of how important our aircraft carrier fleet is to this Nation's ability to counter current threats and deter future aggression. Carriers are mammoth cities, and are not constructed in a single day. We cannot take lightly the decision to take an aircraft carrier out of service; that decision cannot be reversed. The discussion will continue well past the final days of the *John F. Kennedy*, and I will remain an active member of any debate on the size and shape of our Navy fleet, and for this I thank the *John F. Kennedy*.

To Mayport, the *Kennedy* has been the symbol of this national treasure. This Naval Station is defined not only by the ships that are home ported here, but also by its strategic location to counter the ever growing threats in South America and the Caribbean. If we do not deter the aggression and narco-terrorist threats today, South America could very well become the next Afghanistan. Terrorist training camps would be dangerously close to our own shores.

I will continue to work with our Navy leadership to make sure that we have the right ships in the right places for the right missions. The Navy needs Mayport even more now than it did when the *Kennedy* battle group called her home.

The *Kennedy* is a great and noble ship and when this day is done, she will cease to be four and a half acres of sovereign U.S. territory that can launch an array of fighter aircraft and precision weapons which strike terror in the hearts of America's enemies. She will be stripped, docked and viewed by most as just a great mass of steel. Her dedicated crew will be dispersed to other carriers and they will continue to perform their duties. And as those who served aboard her and as those in our community who loved her, remember the glory of the USS *John F. Kennedy*—then our ship, the sacrifices of her crew and the freedom she fought to defend will continue to live on and on.