Ajrawat with the cooperation of the local Sikh Gurdwaras. Later in April, the annual Sikh Day Parade in New York will be held.

Guru Gobind baptized the first five baptized Sikhs, known as the Panj Piaras, on Vaisakhi Day in 1699, then asked them to baptize him. He declared, ''In grieb Sikhin ko deon Patshahi (''I give sovereignty to the humble Sikhs'') Just two years after his departure from this earthly plane in 1708, the Sikhs established their own independent state in Punjab.

At the time that America became independent, Punjab was an independent country already. It was independent from 1710 to 1716 and again from 1765 to 1849, when the British conquered South Asia. Today Sikhs struggle to regain the sovereignty that Guru Gobind Singh bestowed upon them over 300 years ago.

Vaisakhi Day is the anniversary of the founding of the Khalsa. On Vaisakhi Day in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh baptized the Sikhs and required them to keep the five Ks. He made the Sikhs into saints and soldiers. That memory is celebrated on Vaisakhi Day each year.

''I send Vaisakhi Day greetings to all Sikhs and I urge all Sikhs to take this occasion to fulfill Guru Gobind Singh's vision by working to liberate our homeland, Khalistan, from Indian oppression,'' said Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, which leads the struggle to achieve independence for Khalistan. Khalistan declared itself independent on October 7, 1987. Over 250,000 Sikhs have been killed since the Indian government attacked the Golden Temple in Amritsar in June 1984. More than 52,000 are being held as political prisoners, some for over 20 years.

''Vaisakhi Day should be a time to renew our commitment to freedom for our Sikh brothers and sisters in Punjab, Khalistan so they can live in prosperity, dignity, and security. Only a free Khalistan can end the repression of the Sikh Nation,'' Dr. Aulakh said. ''Always remember our heritage: Raj Kare Ga Khalsa; Khalsa Bagi Van Badshah. Freedom for Khalistan is closer than ever. Now is the time to claim it''

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH

SPEECH OF

HON. SILVESTRE REYES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 16, 2007

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 273, a resolution supporting the goals and ideals of Financial Literacy Month.

According to the JumpStart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy, the average high school graduate does not possess basic personal financial management skills. These young people are unable to balance a checkbook, and most have little knowledge of basic practices such as earning, spending, saving and investing.

This lack of awareness has serious consequences for young people. Without a fundamental understanding of finance charges and accumulating interest, young people become prone to credit card abuse, which often results in overspending and long-term debt. As they take on greater and greater financial responsibilities, these men and women are similarly unprepared to finance higher education, handle a mortgage, and save for retirement. The implications of this behavior extend beyond personal welfare. Consumer debt in the U.S. reached $2.4 trillion in 2006, $825 billion of which comes from credit card debts.

Financial literacy should be a fundamental part of every young American's education. The ability to manage one's finances is essential to building wealth and leading a prosperous economic life. On the other hand, those who lack the ability to manage money face lifelong obstacles to fulfilling their human potential and creating a solid economic foundation for their families.

I thank my distinguished colleagues, Congressman HINOJOSA and Congresswoman BIGGERT, for their work leading the House Financial Literacy Caucus, and I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

HONORING CHRISTELLA GRESS ON RECEIVING THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY COMMODORE GREANOFF INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

HON. LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 17, 2007

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to honor Ms. Christella (Chris) Gress from Grand Island, New York, who today received the first annual Commodore Greanoff Inspirational Leadership Award from the United States Coast Guard.

The Commodore Greanoff Inspirational Leadership Award recognizes the most distinguished United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla Commander, and parallels existing Coast Guard leadership awards for officers, chief petty officers, and civilians. The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, established by Congress in 1939, has more than 27,000 members who are engaged in missions that involve boat safety education, search and rescue, and homeland security operations.

Ms. Gress is the Immediate Past Flotilla Commander of Flotilla 35, District 9 Eastern Auxiliary Region. As Commander of her Flotilla, Ms. Gress dedicated over 800 hours of her time to advance the mission and goals of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary. Her commitment to the Auxiliary becomes even more impressive when one learns that she is holding multiple college teaching-jobs and working on a doctoral dissertation.

Ms. Gress is described as tireless and a natural motivator, and is credited with developing a strong sense of collective identity within her Flotilla. Ms. Gress hosted team exercises and fellowship events that welcomed new members and increased activity among experienced members. Under her leadership, Flotilla membership participation expanded in programs including vessel examinations, operations, and public education. In addition, Ms. Gress was the driving force behind an award-winning Flotilla newsletter.

Madam Speaker, Ms. Gress has earned the respect and high admiration of her community and the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary. I am proud to recognize her as the first recipient of the Commodore Greanoff Inspirational Leadership Award.

TRIBUTE TO THE LAWRENCE, KANSAS, COMMUNITY NURSERY SCHOOL

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 17, 2007

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Madam Speaker, the Lawrence, Kansas, Community Nursery School [LCNS] was founded in 1948 after a group of mothers attended a conference on preschool play offered by the University of Kansas Extension School and sponsored by the Lawrence League for the Practice of Democracy. They founded the school on three main principles—that the school must be: a parent cooperative; integrated, both racially and religiously; and low-cost. Today LCNS is the second oldest operating parent cooperative preschool in the Nation, and those principles remain at the corner of the school.

On April 17, 1948 the school opened with its first class of 10 mothers and 14 children. Financial support for the school came from the Lawrence League for the Practice of Democracy and the Oread Meeting of Friends. The tuition was set at $1.00 per week. In 1951 the Kansas State Board of Health licensed the school, and in July of 1952 the school was incorporated under Kansas State Law as the Lawrence Community Nursery School. The school received its permanent license to operate in 1961.

The school was housed in various churches and schools for its first 6 years. After at least eight different locations, in the spring of 1955 the members of the advisory board, the board, and the general membership voted to start a 3-year building fund campaign chaired by Dr. Helen Gilles, a well known local pediatrician, to raise money to buy a permanent home for the nursery school.

The campaign was a huge success. With support of local businesses, members of the cooperative, and the community at large, they were able to raise over $2,000 in their building fund by May 1956, more than 2 years ahead of schedule. In March 1956, Dr. Gilles presented the idea of buying the Wesleyan Methodist Church at the comer of 7th and Alabama Streets. In August 1956, they put a down payment on the church. In September 1956, the board voted to paint the school ''barn red with white trim.'' This is how the building remains today, and it has become a permanent fixture in the Old West Lawrence neighborhood and the greater community as a whole.

Several months of renovations and sharing the school with the church followed. Although the site was used by the school in the fall of 1956, the church remained. In the summer of 1957 the church moved out, and the Little Red Schoolhouse was the home of the Lawrence Community Nursery School. Madam Speaker, I join with the LCNS community and with all Lawrencians in celebrating the completion of the 50th school year at their permanent home at 645 Alabama Street.