

Address of Requesting Entity: 312 Court-house Square, Suite 12, Bay Minette, AL 36507

Description of Request: Provide an earmark of \$275,000 to provide additional buses and security fencing for the Baldwin Rural Area Transportation System (BRATS). Two additional buses will help meet the growing demand of BRATS that currently provides public transit services in Alabama's largest county covering 1,500 square miles. The high cost of living in Baldwin County has also increased the demand for BRATS as area workforce is moving further away from tourist attracting coastal areas. Baldwin County is currently the 65th fastest growing county in the country (U.S. Census Bureau). Approximately, \$200,000 [or 73%] will be used to acquire two new buses; \$50,000 [or 18%] will be used for security fencing; and \$25,000 [or 9%] will be used to provide bike racks for buses. The Baldwin County Commission will provide the required matching funds.

RECOGNIZING THE EXTRAORDINARY PUBLIC SERVICE OF VICKIE WALLING

HON. JOHN S. TANNER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 14, 2009

Mr. TANNER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask you and our colleagues to join me in recognizing and thanking Vickie Walling for her years of distinguished work on Capitol Hill. Vickie is retiring at the end of this year after 35 years of public service to the 8th District of Tennessee and to our country.

Vickie and I are from the same hometown, Union City, though she is fortunate to be a number of years younger. She attended Union City High School and the University of Tennessee-Martin, where, incidentally, she was roommates with another woman many of us greatly respect, UT Lady Vols Head Coach Pat Summitt.

Vickie came to work in the House of Representatives in 1974 and soon after joined the staff of Congressman Ed Jones, my predecessor in representing the 8th District in this chamber. She immediately began to distinguish herself as a dedicated staff member and a leader among her peers on Capitol Hill.

Fortunately, Vickie and other members of Mr. Jones' superb staff agreed to continue their service to the 8th District when Betty Ann and I were honored to come to DC in 1989 following Mr. Jones' retirement. In fact, many of Mr. Jones' former staff members—Kathy Becker, Margaret Black, Betty Hardin, Doug Thompson and Vickie—still serve alongside us to assist and represent West and Middle Tennesseans.

Over the years, Vickie has become a true leader not just within our office but across Capitol Hill. Her dedication, tireless work ethic and keen understanding of legislative issues such as health care, bipartisan welfare reform and strategic demobilization have put her in a class all her own. Vickie has also been instrumental in helping us form and develop the Blue Dog Coalition, having been there when we first began meeting almost 15 years ago. Since then, with Vickie's help, we have been able to grow the Coalition to more than 50

Members, and the Coalition has become an important voice in representing millions of Americans.

Many of us in this chamber and others have sought Vickie's guidance and counsel over the years. Her insight and honesty are invaluable.

I often tell our constituents that serving in elected office is similar to a turtle finding itself on top of a fence post; one simply cannot get there alone. Vickie and the others serving in the 8th District offices are dedicated public servants whose work is crucial to ensuring our constituents are well-represented. Though they may not know her as well as we do, Tennesseans have been very well served by Vickie's many efforts on their behalf.

Madam Speaker, please join Betty Ann, our staff, our colleagues and me in expressing gratitude to Vickie Walling for her commitment to service and helping enact effective public policy. We wish Vickie all the best in her retirement and know her daily presence here will be greatly missed.

STATEMENT ON IRANIAN DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT ACT

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 14, 2009

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Iranian Digital Empowerment Act.

In the aftermath of Iran's disputed 2009 presidential elections, millions of Iranians flooded the streets to stand-up to their government and make their voices heard. Empowered by communication services like Twitter and Facebook, Iranians were able to organize and communicate freely outside of the watchful eye of their government in what has become the first popular democratic uprising of the social media age.

The Iranian people are among the most pro-Western people in the Middle East, and despite suffering under a totalitarian regime, their struggle to create a freer and democratic Iran continues to this day. This weekend marked the 6-month anniversary of fraudulent presidential elections. Once again, the Iranian people took to the streets in non-violent protest. The government of Iran has sought to counter the peaceful efforts of the Iranian people, launching unprecedented efforts to block access to Internet technology, infiltrate electronic social networks, and restrict Iranians from communicating freely. Unfortunately, due to outdated language in provisions regarding information services, U.S. sanctions have had the unintended consequence of denying the Iranian people the tools necessary to communicate freely and circumvent government monitors online.

In an effort to assist the Iranian people fighting for a change in leadership, I am introducing the Iranian Digital Empowerment Act. This legislation will clarify that U.S. laws are not intended to prohibit the export of software that would enable the Iranian people to communicate freely by circumventing their government's censorship efforts. U.S. sanctions intended to change the behavior of the Iranian government must not have the effect of stamping out the voice of the Iranian people.

TRIBUTE TO MARTHA TWARKINS

HON. JOHN T. SALAZAR

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 14, 2009

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Martha Twarkins, a Legis Congressional Fellow from the Brookings Institute, a specialist with the United States Forest Service and, for the past year, a dedicated and invaluable member of my staff.

Throughout the year, Ms. Twarkins has contributed her considerable expertise and ability to legislative responsibilities in my office, and I could not be more grateful for or appreciative of her hard work.

Throughout her tenure in my office, Ms. Twarkins has worked diligently to mitigate the effects of the bark beetle epidemic on communities in Colorado and across the western United States. She has also provided oversight and direction to many of my legislative priorities concerning the Forest Service, including securing an additional \$40 million to help with the emergency bark beetle crisis.

She was an important resource on grazing and water rights, and a key advisor in the consideration and proposal of many new wilderness designations to forever protect our most beautiful public lands.

Additionally, Ms. Twarkins was my key liaison to the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming. Ms. Twarkins advised me on the committee's work on issues from fighting climate change in developing countries to creating a roadmap to Copenhagen. I truly appreciate her guidance on this committee.

Ms. Twarkins will always have a special place in my heart. My entire staff joins me in wishing her the best of luck as she resumes her position with the Forest Service, and with all her future endeavors.

BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

HON. JOHN S. TANNER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 14, 2009

Mr. TANNER. Madam Speaker, during the period November 8–16, 2009, I led a bipartisan House delegation to NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) meetings in Edinburgh, Scotland, and to additional bilateral meetings in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The delegation also conducted bilateral meetings in Edinburgh. Joining me as Ranking Member of the NATO PA delegation was the Hon. JOHN SHIMKUS. The delegation included Representatives JOHN BOOZMAN, JO ANN EMERSON, BARON HILL, CAROLYN MCCARTHY, JEFF MILLER, DENNIS MOORE, MIKE ROSS, DAVID SCOTT, ALBIO SIRE, MIKE TURNER and staff. The NATO PA delegation had a highly successful trip that examined a wide range of political, economic and security issues on NATO's agenda, as well as issues involving U.S. relations with Northern Ireland and Scotland.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly consists of parliamentarians from all 28 NATO member states. The NATO PA meets twice yearly in