

Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey. Turkey also celebrates May 19th as the birthday of Atatürk.

During his lifetime Atatürk was able to lift a country from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire and build a secular democratic nation located at the crossroads of Europe and the Middle East. His reforms were widespread including political, social, legal, educational, and economic. Some were monumental such as abolishing the caliphate and the sultan, recognizing equal rights for men and women, adopting a new alphabet and adopting secular law. Atatürk had a vision for the country, one of a pro-western secular and democratic state in which the rule of law would prevail. He swiftly but steadily advanced toward that goal with the confidence of a born leader and the support of the Turkish nation.

Atatürk championed women's rights, and believed that education and scientific training was the key to advancement not only for the individual, but also for the country. During his tenure, women were encouraged to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, scientists, and enter into politics.

The legacy of Atatürk is even more evident today, as the Arab Spring leads to dramatic changes in the Middle East and North Africa. There are lessons in Turkey's history which can be applied to the current situation around the world. With the right leadership and determination, democracy can take root and lay the foundations for a prosperous future in the region.

HONORING MAYOR JOHN
DESTEFANO, JR., 2011 RECIPIENT
OF THE TORCH OF LIBERTY
AWARD

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 23, 2011

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to join the Anti-Defamation League and the New Haven community in paying tribute to the outstanding work of this year's Torch of Liberty Award recipient, the Honorable John DeStefano, Jr., Mayor of New Haven, Connecticut. In the seventeen years since he was first sworn into office, Mayor DeStefano has worked tirelessly to improve our community and the quality of life for residents. It is that extraordinary spirit of public service that is honored with this prestigious tribute.

Our communities would not be the same without the efforts of individuals whose work truly benefits our families and neighborhoods. Each year, the Connecticut Anti-Defamation League presents the Torch of Liberty Award to an outstanding leader in the community, recognizing their unique commitment and dedication. Mayor DeStefano and his efforts to enrich the city of New Haven are a remarkable reflection of the true spirit of community service.

When Mayor DeStefano took office in 1994, the city of New Haven was facing challenges on multiple fronts. The crime rate had risen, the downtown business district was being eclipsed by the modern conveniences of mall shopping, the schools were in desperate need of modernization, and the individual neighborhoods had suffered the consequences of sub-

urban expansion. It was no small task to turn the city's reputation around and regain the promise and prosperity it had once held. Mayor DeStefano approached all of these issues with both enthusiasm and purpose.

During the Mayor's tenure, virtually every public school has been rebuilt under the City-wide School Construction Plan. Some of the key features of this program have supported universal pre-kindergarten, the largest inter-district enrollment and magnet school program in Connecticut, and college level lab and technology features. Mayor DeStefano brought the New Haven public school system into the modern era and has gone a long way in providing New Haven teachers and students with the technology and tools that they need to achieve academic success.

The Mayor focused his attention on rebuilding the relationships between the city and Yale University as well as the hospital and medical communities. By strengthening these partnerships and building on its successes, New Haven has emerged as a national center of life and bio science businesses and the city center has undergone a dramatic transformation into a mixed use community. The Mayor also worked to strengthen neighborhoods through managing housing stock to mixed income and use models, promoting commercial corridors as well as implementing street smart infrastructure and public improvements. In addition, the Mayor worked with local law enforcement on a new model of community policing which decentralized police management districts which has effectively transformed public safety in the community. With all of these efforts, it is no wonder that under Mayor DeStefano's tenure, New Haven has been recognized by the National Civic League as an "All America City" three times.

A lifelong resident of the city of New Haven, Mayor John DeStefano, Jr. has dedicated innumerable hours to finding solutions to our city's challenges and to improving the quality of life for all New Haven residents. His work and public service is a reflection of what the Torch of Liberty Award stands for and I am proud to join all of those gathered this evening in congratulating him on this very special honor. I am pleased to have this opportunity to wish him, his wife Kathy, and their two sons, Dan and Jim, all the best for many more years of health, happiness and success.

COMMENDING STAFF SERGEANT
DEANTE BROOKS AND HIS WORK
IN AFGHANISTAN

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 23, 2011

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend the courageous work of Air Force Staff Sergeant Deante Brooks in defending the Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. Sergeant Brooks deployed to Afghanistan in 2010 as part of the 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron. On May 19, 2010, Sergeant Brooks was performing a security sweep of the airfield's perimeter with a Security Forces teammate, along with their Marine comrades when they came under attack.

Sergeant Brooks heard a scream, and realized his wingman had been injured by a gre-

nade. He raced back to the base with the injured wingman, providing medical assistance along the way. After Sergeant Brooks placed the injured soldier in the care of emergency medical personnel, he returned to the fight and provided reinforcements that helped to secure the area.

I recently met Sergeant Brooks, and we talked about his heroic work in defending the airfield's perimeter. I was deeply honored to meet such a brave and admirable individual. I cannot imagine what our country would be like without individuals like Sergeant Brooks—he and his fellow soldiers deserve the praise of all Americans for their dedication and service in protecting our nation.

Mr. Speaker, the American people are forever indebted to the men and women in uniform for their courage, honor, dedication and hard work in serving our country. Staff Sergeant Deante Brooks exemplifies this spirit and is a true American hero.

IN RECOGNITION OF HILDA
GRIGORIAN

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 23, 2011

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Hilda Grigorian, a Glendale resident who has dedicated herself to helping those in need around the world, often in some of the most challenging and dangerous locations.

Hilda Grigorian was born and raised in Iran, and migrated to the United States in 1978 in pursuit of the American dream of education and career. Hilda achieved both of these goals—she obtained a bachelor's degree and MBA and is currently working toward her Ph.D. at Walden University. She also worked in the private sector for over two decades, focusing on international development.

Hilda began her international relief efforts with a trip to her motherland of Armenia, where she volunteered to help small businesses. After several visits to Armenia's rural villages, she established a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called Armenia Village Operation, which she started with her own funds and other private funding. The program implemented important projects in the rural villages of Armenia.

In 2005, Hilda traveled to Afghanistan to work with a USAID funded program to help vulnerable, widowed women with business planning and access to funds to regain their businesses which were destroyed by the Taliban. She then worked for UNDP in the youth development project. In 2008, she began working for USAID Afghanistan as a Field Program Officer, stationed in the Province of Nangarhar, which borders Pakistan. In 2009, she was transferred to the remote, rural Province of Ghor in western Afghanistan, where she helped people implement community development programs, created jobs through cash for work projects, and ensured a fair distribution of food to the people of Ghor.

Hilda's selfless dedication to the people of Afghanistan has immeasurably benefited some of the most at-risk people in the world, and has demonstrated the generous spirit of Americans toward those in crisis. She thrived in an environment that afforded her very basic living