

As I close, I can say with confidence that our community is a better place thanks to the ongoing, selfless service of people like Michael Fezzey. His leadership in the area of housing has earned the admiration of those throughout Southeast Michigan and I am pleased to recognize that leadership today in the United States Congress.

EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THAT THE CITIZENS' STAMP ADVISORY COMMITTEE, AS AN ENTITY OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE, SHOULD ISSUE A COMMEMORATIVE STAMP IN HONOR OF THE HOLIDAY OF DIWALI

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 25, 2013

Ms. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the House Resolution Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee, as an entity of the United States Postal Service, should issue a commemorative stamp in honor of the holiday of Diwali. I am proud to be joined in this effort by my colleagues Congresswoman Grace Meng and Congressman Ami Bera.

This House Resolution urges the United States Postal Service to issue a stamp in honor of the holiday Diwali. Meaning "row of lights," Diwali celebrates the triumph of good over evil, the awareness of one's inner light, the dispelling of ignorance, and bringing peace and joy through the awakening gained from this higher knowledge. Also marking the beginning of the Hindu New Year, this festive and important Indian holiday is observed in America, and across the globe, by Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, and Buddhists.

But despite the significance of this holiday, the United States Postal Service has yet to merit Diwali with the same recognition as other major religious holidays for which stamps are issued such as Christmas, Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, and Eid.

As one of the world's oldest religious holidays, Diwali has survived political, economic and social changes throughout history, while always carrying the universal symbolism of the victory of light, goodness, knowledge and truth. It is long overdue that we honor this significant holiday with a postage stamp of its own.

BALTIMORE CITY FIRE
DEPARTMENT

HON. NANCY PELOSI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 25, 2013

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, 45 years ago, history was made in the City of Baltimore. On January 23, 1968, Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro III—my brother—watched over the swearing-in of his appointee, Reverend Marion Bascom Jr., as the Baltimore City Fire Department's first African-American Commissioner.

Alongside his colleague and partner in the cause of equality, Konstantine Prevas, Commissioner Bascom took the oath of office. In a single act, he changed the face of the city's public servants and heroes—becoming, in his words, "the first black man to wear a white hat in the Baltimore City Fire Department." In a single moment, he altered the course of local history. In the years to come, he and his fellow members of the Board of Fire Commissioners would do more than become a model of racial harmony; they would advance the professionalism and effectiveness of Baltimore's firefighters.

Though progress was slow at times—though a history of segregation and bigotry and racism still weighed heavily on the shoulders of Commissioners Bascom and Prevas and others—these leaders fought, step-by-step, to ensure that Baltimore's force of firefighters would exemplify our highest ideals of equality and our highest degree of excellence.

Under the leadership of Commissioners Bascom and Prevas, the Baltimore City Fire Department gave African-American members of its ranks a fair hearing—listening and responding to their concerns about living and working conditions, and unfair treatment in areas of discipline, assignments, training, and promotions. It formally recognized the Vulcan Blazers, Baltimore's chapter of the International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters.

To enhance its service to the city, the department expanded community outreach efforts and helped create a new unit in the City Hospital to deal strictly and exclusively with fire victims and their injuries—and today, City Hospital still stands as the first and only burn center in the state of Maryland.

The Board of Commissioners oversaw the land acquisition, zoning, historic preservation, and construction of what's now called Steadman Station—located in the heart of downtown Baltimore and once considered the busiest station in the nation.

Today, the Baltimore City Fire Department is defined by the legacy of Commissioner Bascom: by fairness, equal rights, professional action, and a wholehearted devotion to public safety. No longer beset by racist policies; no longer held back by the scourge of segregation; no longer deterred by a past of Jim Crow—all because a mayor had the vision to appoint commissioners based on their merits, not simply their race, and all because his appointees had the courage to promote a future of progress.

Our family takes pride in its association with this extraordinary era of history for the people of Baltimore. My father, Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro Jr., oversaw the desegregation of the fire department. My brother appointed its first African-American Commissioner. Together, they created a department that reflected the diversity and character of the community it served and protected.

Today, 45 years after Commissioner Bascom took his oath, we can all be proud of this legacy. We can take inspiration from the acts of our predecessors. We can pledge to advance our heritage of opportunity, our commitment to fairness and justice, and our promise of equality for all.

HONORING THE 2013 ACADEMY NOMINEES OF THE 11TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT NEW JERSEY

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 25, 2013

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, every year, more high school seniors from the 11th Congressional District trade in varsity jackets for navy pea coats, Air Force flight suits, and Army brass buckles than most other districts in the country. But this is nothing new—our area has repeatedly sent an above average portion of its sons and daughters to the nation's military academies for decades.

This fact should not come as a surprise. The educational excellence of area schools is well known and has long been a magnet for families looking for the best environment in which to raise their children. Our graduates are skilled not only in mathematics, science, and social studies, but also have solid backgrounds in sports, debate teams, and other extracurricular activities. This diverse upbringing makes military academy recruiters sit up and take note—indeed, many recruiters know our towns and schools by name.

Since the 1830's, Members of Congress have enjoyed meeting, talking with, and nominating these superb young people to our military academies. But how did this process evolve? In 1843, when West Point was the sole academy, Congress ratified the nominating process and became directly involved in the makeup of our military's leadership. This was not an act of an imperial Congress bent on controlling every aspect of Government. Rather, the procedure still used today was, and is, a further check and balance in our democracy. It was originally designed to weaken and divide political coloration in the officer corps, provide geographical balance to our armed services, and to make the officer corps more resilient to unfettered nepotism and handicapped European armies.

In 1854, Representative Gerritt Smith of New York added a new component to the academy nomination process—the academy review board. This was the first time a Member of Congress appointed prominent citizens from his district to screen applicants and assist with the serious duty of nominating candidates for academy admission. Today, I am honored to continue this wise tradition in my service to the 11th Congressional District.

The Academy Review Board is composed of six local citizens who have shown exemplary service to New Jersey, to their communities, and to the continued excellence of education in our area. Many are veterans and Academy graduates. Though from diverse backgrounds and professions, they all share a common dedication that the best qualified and motivated graduates attend our academies. And, as true for most volunteer panels, their service goes largely unnoticed.

I would like to take a moment to recognize these men and women and thank them publicly for participating in this important panel. Being on the board requires hard work and an objective mind. Members have the responsibility of interviewing upwards of 50 outstanding high school seniors every year in the academy review process.