

Yeshivah of Flatbush and its honorees on the occasion of its 72nd Anniversary Banquet.

The Yeshivah of Flatbush has long served as a pillar of strength for my constituents by providing our children with the tools they will need to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Dr. Mayer Ballas, recipient of the Keter Shem Tov Leadership Award, has dedicated himself to helping members of the community as an advocate and spokesperson for Jewish people in need. He is the founding President of the Council of Rescue of Syrian Jews and has served as a member of the Federation Oversight Committee, the arm of Operation Abraham concerned with the resettlement of the most recent wave of immigrants from Syria. At the Yeshivah of Flatbush, Dr. Ballas sits on the Board of Directors and Board of Education and is a member of the Tuition Assistance Committee. He participates in all school functions and generously gives of himself and his time to the Yeshivah.

Hon. Steven Cohn, recipient of the Keter Shem Tov Community Service Award, is staunchly committed to both the Yeshivah and his community. For the past sixteen years, Mr. Cohn has served as the Democratic State Committeeman for the 50th Assembly District. He is the Vice-Chair of the New York State Democratic Party, Secretary of the Democratic Party of Kings County and has served as Parliamentarian to the Democratic National Convention. Working side by side with community leaders, elected officials and neighborhood residents to protect the environment, improve homeless shelters and maintain quality medical care in his district. His affiliation with the Yeshivah of Flatbush parallels his children's education and has strengthened over the years. In addition to working on the Banquet Journal, Chinese Auction and Building Committees, Steve is currently an Associate Treasurer on the Executive Board of Officers and sits on the school's Board of Trustees and Board of Education.

Dr. Cheryl Fishbein, recipient of the Alumna of the Year Award, is an alumna of both the Elementary School and the Joel Braverman High School. Throughout her adult life, Cheryl has focused her efforts on serving the community. She is President of the Jewish Community House in Bensonhurst and is currently overseeing its capital building campaign. She serves as the Metro Chair of the Institutional Trustees Campaign for UJA and sits on the organization's Planning and Allocations Committee. Additionally, Dr. Fishbein devotes much of her time to the Board of Jewish Education and serves as a Vice President of its Board of Directors. She also sits on the Boards of Gesher and the National Board of the Jewish Community Center Association.

Each of today's honorees have long been known as innovators and beacons of good will to all those they come into contact with. In recognition of their many accomplishments on behalf of my constituents. I offer many congratulations on their being honored by the Yeshivah of Flatbush.

SALUTE TO A. LEON HIGGINBOTHAM

SPEECH OF

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 3, 1999

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, as I witness attacks on affirmative action in education and a legal system that overlooks police brutality among African-Americans, I realize that our country is experiencing a huge gap in fairness and equality under the law with the passing of Judge A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr.

Mr. Speaker, Judge Higginbotham spent his life vigorously protecting and championing the causes of equality and opportunity for African-Americans.

The French philosopher Montesquieu once said that "In the state of nature, indeed, all men are born equal, but they cannot continue in this equality. Society makes them lose it, and they recover it only by the protection of the laws."

In confronting racial injustice, violence and inequality through the legal system, Judge Higginbotham recovered and secured equality for countless African-Americans. His life long commitment to eliminating discrimination forced our society to recognize the equality inherent in all men and women, despite their race or ethnicity.

In his capacity as special deputy attorney general of Pennsylvania, judge of the U.S. District Court for the eastern district of Pennsylvania and judge of the U.S. Third-Circuit Court of Appeals, many men and women regained their rights taken away from them by society.

His zeal in tearing down the walls of injustice and erecting the walls of opportunity began after he earned his law degree at Yale Law School by working in Philadelphia as an assistant district attorney. Six years later after becoming a special deputy attorney general for Pennsylvania, President John F. Kennedy named him to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). This appointment was notable in the fact that it made him the FTC's first black commissioner and its youngest as well.

In 1977, after serving as a district court judge in Philadelphia from 1964 to 1977, President Jimmy Carter appointed him judge of the U.S. Third-Circuit Court of Appeals where he served with distinction as judge, chief judge and senior judge until his retirement in March 1993.

Throughout the years, U.S. Chief Justice Warren, Burger and Rehnquist appointed Judge Higginbotham to various judicial conferences. In addition, the Congressional Black Caucus benefitted from his excellent legal mind in a series of voting rights cases brought before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Current South African President Nelson Mandela also called upon his knowledge and wisdom during the country's historic 1994 national elections where Judge Higginbotham served as an international mediator.

Mr. Speaker, the aforementioned feats and accomplishments mark this important fact: when he was called upon by presidents, world

leaders, Members of Congress and citizens to defend civil rights, Judge Higginbotham answered with vigor and passion.

Millions of Americans saw him protect the tenets of the Constitution during the recent House Judiciary Committee impeachment hearings. This was just two weeks before his passing on December 14, 1998.

Like so many times during his stellar legal career, he was a steadfast advocate and defender of the true meanings and intents of the law and our Constitution. During the hearings, it was not partisan winds that steered his testimony that the President should not be impeached. Rather, it was scholarly and intellectual interpretation of the Constitution and the separation of powers between the Judicial, Executive and Legislative branches of our government.

For those viewers of the hearings, that was their first contact with the great judge. However, I have constantly been a witness to—and a beneficiary of—Judge Higginbotham's passionate and eloquent defense of justice.

On behalf of the constituents of the 30th congressional district of Texas, I would like to tell his family what a great equalizer in this society he was to us. He served an extended family of poor, powerless and downtrodden individuals in this society. His advocacy for their causes meant a great deal to them and strengthened our principles as a country.

In particular he leaves his wife, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham; two daughters, Karen and Nia; and two sons, Stephen and Kenneth. I would like to thank them for allowing the country to share and benefit from his mind, heart and soul.

STATEMENT ON THE SUPPRESSION OF RIGHTS IN SERBIA

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 1999

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, as we have debated today the issue of American participation in any NATO peacekeeping effort in Kosovo, I urge my colleagues, regardless of their views on that matter, to focus on what is happening in Serbia itself. Slobodan Milosevic, President of an unrecognized Yugoslav state of which Serbia and Montenegro are part, is using Kosovo to perpetuate his regime, to rally Serbia's public opinion around him, and to label as "traitors" not only his opponents but anyone who thinks independently.

Last year, Milosevic imposed draconian laws which curtailed the independence of journalists to report news freely, and threatened the academic community's ability to maintain its intellectual integrity. In response, the Helsinki Commission which I chair, held a hearing appropriately entitled: "The Milosevic Regime Versus Serbian Democracy and Balkan Stability."

As an example of what is happening right now in Serbia, I would note for the RECORD what has happened to three of the witnesses at the hearing.

On December 28, 1998—less than three weeks after the hearing—Boris Karajcic, a

leader in the university student movement "Otpor" (Resistance), was attacked and beaten on the street in front of his Belgrade home by masked thugs with bats. As they fled, their comments indicated the political nature of the attack.

During the first week of February, Milan Panic, the Serb-American pharmaceutical executive who is a leader of the Alliance for Change, the main coalition of political opposition to Milosevic's ruling Socialist Party, has had his Serbian subsidiary company taken over by the authorities. The purpose was likely two-fold: to intimidate Panic and to gain hard-currency assets.

On March 8, Slavko Curuvija, the chief editor of newspaper Dnevni Telegraf and the new magazine Evropljanin, was sentenced along with two of his journalists to five months in prison by a Belgrade court for "spreading false reports with an intention to endanger public order." They remain free on appeal.

Mr. Speaker, these assaults on freedom demonstrate that Milosevic feels vulnerable to democratic forces which do, in fact, exist in Serbia, forces which may indeed be growing. Indeed, the Serbian Government undertook to make a paper prepared by the hearing witness from the United States Institute for Peace and openly circulated at that same hearing into an alleged confidential CIA document which showed, they alleged, that the U.S. Government was plotting to overthrow the Belgrade government.

Despite his insecurity at home, Milosevic does feel sufficiently secure in a U.S. policy which seemingly needs his presence for implementation for the Dayton Agreement in Bosnia, and to get an agreement in France on Kosovo. Our dependence on him, he reckons, means we will not seek to undercut his dictatorial power. The clear lack of attention many senior Administration officials have paid to Serbia' democrats has only reinforced this feeling in Belgrade.

Mr. Speaker, this must change. The actions against Karajcic, Panic, Curuvija and countless other advocates of a democratic Serbia must be condemned not with words alone. The United States must stop dealing with Milosevic directly. The United States must protest his assault on innocent civilians when they occur. The United States must encourage democratic change in Serbia, and assist those who promote this change from within, the true Serbian patriots.

One way in which the Congress can help in this regard is to move quickly on the legislation I have just introduced, H.R. 1064, the Serbia and Montenegro Democracy Act of 1999. This Act would ensure adequate attention is paid to democratic forces in Serbia and Montenegro by those allocating U.S. democratic assistance. The legislation has bipartisan support.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply concerned about developments in Serbia generally, and the incidents involving Helsinki Commission hearing witnesses in particular. As Chairman of the Commission, I am committed to making sure that the people in Serbia have the same rights and freedoms which so many other Europeans enjoy and take for granted, the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and defined in subsequent OSCE documents. The

suppression of these rights in Serbia is unacceptable, it ultimately will prove untenable, and it must change sooner rather than later, not only for the sake of the people in Serbia but all people in south-central Europe.

HONORING GENES THOMPSON

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 1999

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the unique community service of Genes Thompson.

Genes, a native of Greenville, North Carolina, has lived in the East New York community for the past 20 years with her husband, Dwight and their son, Anthony. As an East New York resident, she has devoted a great deal of her time to helping the community to be a better place in which to live. For example, Genes has been a member of the 76th Precinct Community Council since 1980 where her efforts and devotion has been instrumental in uplifting her community.

The Metropolitan Jewish Geriatric Center has employed Genes for the last 25 years as its Chief Switchboard Operator. She is also a shop delegate for Local 1199, 144 division for the past 19 years. In addition to these daily responsibilities, she is an active member of Liberty Baptist Church where she serves on the Pastor's Aid Committee as well as working with staff of Thomas Jefferson High school. Genes' civic activism includes membership in the Milford Street Block Association and work as a volunteer with the political campaigns of Senator CHARLES SCHUMER and New York State Comptroller Carl McCall.

I commend the achievements of Genes Thompson, a true community activist, to the attention of my colleagues.

HONORING MR. CHANCY WHEELER OF WEST UNION, OH

HON. ROB PORTMAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 1999

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay special tribute to a distinguished resident of West Union, OH, in the Second Congressional District, Mr. Chancy Wheeler. Mr. Wheeler will turn 100 years old on June 5, and he is being honored by the Government of France for his military service in the First World War.

Mr. Wheeler was born in 1899 in Mount Olivet, KY. He volunteered for the Kentucky National Guard, and then transferred into the United States Army in 1917. As a member of the First Infantry Division, 28th Regiment, First Machine Gun Brigade, he served in 1918 in the Aisne-Marne offensive, the St. Michiel offensive, and the Meuse-Argonne offensive. He was wounded twice in battle. For his actions, he received the Silver Star medal on July 21, 1918. He also received a 75th Anniversary Commemorative Medal for World War I veterans from the U.S. Army.

Mr. Wheeler will receive the French Legion of Honor in a ceremony organized by VFW Post 3400 in West Union, OH, on March 12. In his letter conveying the Legion of Honor to Mr. Wheeler, French Ambassador Bujon de l'Estang wrote: "The Legion of Honor is conferred on you by the French government as a sign of the high esteem my country has for you who personally contributed to the decisive support the United States gave to French soldiers in the defense of their country during World War I."

Chancy Wheeler distinguished himself in the struggle to "make the world safe for democracy" and served his country with honor. All of us in the Second Congressional District are grateful for his service and commend him on his recognition by the French Government. I wish him health and happiness in the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM "SONNY" RESSEL

HON. ANTHONY D. WEINER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 1999

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to invite my colleagues to pay tribute to the memory of William (Sonny) Ressel.

Sonny Ressel was neither a politician nor someone who took on the responsibility of helping others because of some ulterior motive. Despite working long hours, Sonny Ressel always found time for his family and the community that he loved.

Before his untimely death on February 8th, Sonny Ressel served as the Co-President of the New Kensington Neighborhood Association where he strove to improve his neighbor's quality of life.

Sonny Ressel was a man of action who dedicated his life to helping others regardless of who they were. Through his efforts, broken streets and traffic lights in Kensington were quickly repaired. In response to a growth in the number of hearing impaired residents in the community, Sonny secured the installation of "Deaf People Crossing" signs alerting motorists that some pedestrians would be unable to hear their horns.

With his loving wife Ricki, Sonny Ressel helped the old and the infirm of our community. They did this by making people laugh and reminding them that they were not forgotten.

Friends and admirers have likened Sonny Ressel to an angel who was put on earth to help others and to spread happiness. I can think of no better tribute for a man who always rose to the challenge of helping meet the needs of others.

Sonny Ressel was an innovator and beacon of good will to all those he came into contact with. On behalf of myself and my constituents, I would like to extend my condolences to the Ressel family on Sonny's untimely passing and to thank them for allowing us to share in the bright light that was his life.