

HONORING ST. MARY'S CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE 25TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the St. Mary's County Chamber of Commerce on their twenty-fifth anniversary.

Their initial meeting was held in April, 1974 by combining the Leonardtown and Lexington Park Chambers. A board of directors was installed and George Sparling was elected president. Eddie Bailey, Rubye Beaman, Eddie Burroughs, Robert Dudley, Bert Fenwick, Jack Fletcher, Joe M. Gough, Stewart Hobbs, Jim Kenney, Richard Lubbers, Charles Mason, Bill Raley, Buzzy Ridgell, Mary Salisbury, Les Shaw, Harry Lee Smith, Leroy Thompson, Jr., Elliot Weisman, and Rocky Willis served as the board of directors.

The chamber had 150 charter members. Office space was two rooms on the second floor of the First National Bank of St. Mary's in Leonardtown, courtesy of Joe M. Gough. They occupied those offices until 1988 when the chamber moved to Mechanicsville. Not only has the chamber grown in membership with 400 members today, but also in service to the community, with members serving on a number of county and state boards and local committees.

Over the years, the chamber has supported county events such as the Oyster Festival and Maryland Day. The Trade Fair was started in 1983 to give local businesses the chance to show their wares and to promote county businesses. As a result of a good working relationship with county government, state government and the Southern Maryland Congressional delegation, major accomplishments of direct and indirect services to the business community have been achieved. The chamber lobbied for five years to have the commercial inventory tax reduced, which affected 80% of the county's wholesale and retail businesses.

In 1976, the chamber operated the tourist information center at Charlotte Hall. In 1980, the Tourist Information Center found its permanent home at the chamber office in Mechanicsville. Over the years the chamber has evolved into a vital entity of St. Mary's County. Despite its growth, one thing has not changed; the original core values to promote local business and empower local citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and the remainder of my colleagues to join with me in applauding the service and sacrifice of the St. Mary's County Chamber of Commerce.

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE
REFORM ACT

HON. ROBERT T. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, joined by my colleague, Mr. BONIOR, today I introduce the Trade Adjustment Assistance Reform Act of 1999. This legislation will expand the safety

net for American workers by reauthorizing and improving existing adjustment programs for workers who are adversely impacted by trade. It combines the best features of the existing Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and the NAFTA Transitional Adjustment Assistance (NAFTA-TAA) programs into a consolidated TAA program and improves the effectiveness and timeliness of services provided to American workers hurt by international trade.

The bill would authorize the consolidated TAA program for 5 years through fiscal year 2004. Most importantly, the consolidated program would expand eligibility to workers who lose their jobs due to shifts in production by their firm to other countries. Currently, TAA eligibility is restricted to workers hurt by imports and NAFTA-TAA is limited to workers adversely affected by imports from, or shifts in production to, Mexico or Canada only. Our bill will ensure that comprehensive assistance is available to workers who lose their jobs due to imports from, or shifts in production to, any foreign country.

The legislation also ensures that rapid response and basic readjustment services will be made available to workers upon the filing of a petition for TAA eligibility. These services are critical to facilitating rapid reemployment of workers and providing important information relating to the resources available at the Federal, State, and local level to assist them. The measure also requires a one-third reduction in the time period for the Department of Labor to process eligibility petitions under TAA in order to ensure that benefits are made available to trade-impacted workers as soon as possible after their displacement. To ensure that these workers get the assistance they need, the bill provides a much-needed increase in the annual cap on training expenditures to \$150 million; a portion of which supports the training costs associated with the expanded "shift in production" provision, and a portion of which is needed to fund the significant increase in program caseload currently being experienced.

The legislation also harmonizes the differing rules of the current programs relating to requiring enrollment in training as a condition for receiving income support. The new rules retain the program's emphasis on linking income support to training but permit specified exceptions where appropriate to assist certain workers. In addition, the bill would reduce the hardship currently experienced by workers who attend community colleges by expanding the period for scheduled breaks in a training program during which a worker may continue to receive income support.

In keeping with an increased emphasis on integrated service delivery, the legislation seeks to enhance coordination between the consolidated TAA program and the dislocated worker program under the recently-enacted Workforce Investment Act. In particular, the bill would significantly improve the accountability of the consolidated program by ensuring that TAA and the dislocated worker program have common performance outcome measures; i.e. information on the placement in employment, earnings, and retention of employment by participants.

The legislation also assures that information will be collected and maintained that identifies

the countries to which production is shifted to and, to the extent practical, from which articles are imported. This will include information on the number of certifications relating to imports from, or shifts in production to, Mexico or Canada—which will assist in making eligibility determinations under related NAFTA programs and in assessing the adequacy of the consolidated program.

In addition, this legislation provides for the extension of the Trade Adjustment Assistance for Firms Program administered by the Department of Commerce under chapter 3 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974. And finally, the bill establishes a Presidential Commission on Workers and Economic Change in the New Economy to make further recommendations on program improvements.

Mr. Speaker, while much of the country is enjoying a booming economy, there are geographic areas and industries which are experiencing significant worker dislocation. It is critical that the Congress support programs that give workers the tools they need to find and prepare for good-paying jobs in the new economy. One of the important ways we can begin to develop a broad consensus on trade policy is to address the negative consequences of globalization by reaffirming and improving on our longstanding commitment to assist workers impacted by trade. I urge my colleagues to join in supporting these reforms.

MARINO SIMONETTI HONORED

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to my good friend Marino Simonetti, who will be honored by the Italian American Veterans of Luzerne County at their Past Commanders Ball on April 24. I am pleased to have been asked to participate in this tribute.

A 1948 graduate of Wilkes-Barre Township High School, Marino served in the U.S. Navy from 1948 to 1952, a period that included the Korean Conflict. Marino returned to the Wyoming Valley following his discharge and worked as an electrical inspector. He also operated Simonetti's Pizzeria.

Marino is active in all local veterans organizations. He is a member of the Korean War Vets, the Catholic War Vets, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He is the Bersagliere for the Italian American Vets, overseeing the color guard. He is best known for his dedicated volunteer activities at the Wilkes-Barre Veterans Affairs Medical Center, each year portraying Santa Claus and entertaining hospitalized vets on Saturday mornings at his own expense. His Halloween costumes are now a tradition in the halls of the Medical Center each October.

Marino is a member of the Korean War Vets Memorial Committee, the Committee to Preserve the Memorial at Letterkenny Army Depot, and the Committee to Restore the Italian-American Honor Roll Memorial in the Italian Cemetery. He was a guard at the "Moving Wall" Vietnam Vets memorial when it came to our area and he carried the American