

May 4, 1999

TRIBUTE TO SAINTS CONSTANTINE
AND HELEN GREEK ORTHODOX
CHURCH

HON. HERBERT H. BATEMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

Mr. BATEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the First District of Virginia's Hellenic community as it celebrates the 50th anniversary of Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Newport News.

Greek immigrants have lived and worked on the Virginia Peninsula from as early as 1900. From its humble beginnings to today, the Greek community has played a significant role in the growth and prosperity of the Virginia Peninsula. It also has established a number of associations and organizations for its members, which add to the strength of the community as a whole. The benefits of such associations are innumerable.

In 1929, a small group of Greek-American men on the Peninsula organized the Woodrow Wilson Chapter of the American Hellenic Educational and Progressive Association (AHEPA) while a group of Greek-American women organized the Greek Women's Penelope Society, an independent organization dedicated to community service. The Greek community soon began meeting regularly at St. Paul's Episcopal Church on 34th Street in Newport News and by 1934 a constitution was drafted to govern the growing community. The Hellenic Educational Society also was formed in 1934. This organization served as a community board to oversee the education of the young.

In 1944, a committee was formed to develop plans to build a church. Within three years, ground was broken on land near the Victory Arch in Newport News and Saints Constantine and Helen was completed by 1949. Then Archbishop Athenagoras—later Patriarch—participated in the dedication of the church. At that time, the congregation numbered 50 families. There are more than 1,000 members of the church today.

Soon after the Saints Constantine and Helen was built, a Philoptochos Chapter was formed to assist the needy on the Peninsula. This chapter is still in existence and the majority of the church's contributions to charitable organizations on the local, regional, national and international levels originates from this group.

As the number of Greek families in the community began to grow, so did the need for more space. In 1958, three school rooms were added to the church to provide an area for Sunday school classes. This provided both religious and language education for the children and any interested members of the Peninsula community. These efforts enhanced the spirit of the community by encouraging cultural identification.

By 1966, land was purchased on Traverse Road in Newport News to build a community center and a new church. The Hellenic Community Center opened in 1975 and is the centerpiece of the Greek community. It also is one of the largest gathering places available for groups to meet on the Peninsula. I, myself, have used the center for several functions.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

Ground was broken for a new church in July of 1981 and within a year services were being held in the new building. It was consecrated by Archbishop Iakovos in 1984.

Since 1967, Saints Constantine and Helen has held an annual festival to share the culture and traditions of the Greek community with Peninsula. Having attended the event for many years, I know first hand the enthusiasm of our community for the celebration. I also have witnessed the success of many of Saints Constantine and Helen's programs.

I take great pride in being a member of the Order of AHEPA. My wife, Laura, is equally proud of being a member of the Daughters of Penelope. It is truly an honor to represent this outstanding segment of the community in Congress.

Again, I wish to commend both Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church and the Hellenic community on the Virginia Peninsula. They nourish each other and make possible the success and contributions of each.

It is my hope and expectation that the Hellenic community on the Peninsula will continue to succeed, and that the next 50 years will be as, or more, notable than the last.

A TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL T.
WILTSIE

HON. DAVE CAMP

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Michael T. Wiltsie, a young man from the 4th Congressional District whose bravery I commend and whose actions I would like to call to the attention of my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives.

On Sept. 2, 1998, Michael was serving as a safety patrol officer near Ganiard Elementary School in Mount Pleasant, Mich. He and an adult crossing guard were stationed at the corner of Broadway and Adams streets, a busy intersection.

What happened next could have been a tragedy, but instead is the story of an heroic 12-year old whose quick thinking effectively saved the life of a 7-year-old boy.

The adult crossing guard had just walked to the center of the street to stop traffic when the 7-year old walked around Michael's outstretched arms to follow the crossing guard. At that moment, a truck making a left-hand turn failed to stop at the stop sign and passed between Michael and the crossing guard. Michael reached out and grabbed the little boy by his backpack, pulling him to safety just as the truck sped by.

Michael is one of the six young students being honored today at the AAA's School Safety Patrol Lifesaving Award Ceremony in Washington, D.C. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Lifesaving Award, which recognizes those patrols who risked their own lives to save the lives of others. More than one-half million children serve as patrols at 50,000 schools.

It is a special privilege for me to represent Michael in the U.S. House of Representatives.

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Our halls here are filled with the statues and memories of American men and women who have unselfishly given to others. I am pleased today to submit this tribute to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, to ensure that Michael's bravery is also recorded for history.

THE 24TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
TRAGIC FALL OF SOUTH VIET-
NAM TO COMMUNISM

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, April 30, 1975 marked the beginning of a treacherous boat journey for many Vietnamese who sought refuge in an unknown land and an uncertain future. These individuals risked everything for a chance to live freely and provide better opportunities for their children and families. I rise today to pay special tribute and recognize the valiant efforts to our Vietnam War Veterans and to the Vietnamese who fought and died for freedom and democracy in Viet Nam.

Earlier this month, I traveled to Viet Nam to meet with representatives of the U.S. and Vietnamese government to express my concern for the lack of human, religious and political rights. During my visit, I met with several prominent human rights activists including Dr. Nguyen Dan Que, Tran Huu Duyen, the Venerable Quang Do and the Archbishop of Saigon, Pham Minh Man. I learned first hand that despite the release of several prisoners of conscience under a presidential amnesty in September 1998, public criticism of the government by dissidents is still not tolerated. The few who do speak out publicly and advocate peaceful reform continue to be harassed and imprisoned.

As we recently witnessed, the protest that has taken place in Little Saigon, Orange County, California is a reminder to all Americans how sacred human rights, freedom and democracy are. For many, the display of the communist flag is a reminder of the pain and sufferings after 1975.

Mr. Speaker, as we reflect on this tragic day it is our duty as Members of Congress to honor the memory of the individuals that fought for liberty and democracy in Viet Nam.

REPORT FROM ADAMS COUNTY

HON. DAVID M. McINTOSH

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

Mr. McINTOSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give my "Report from Indiana" where I honor distinguished Hoosiers who are actively engaged in their communities helping others.

Mr. Speaker, it has always been my strong belief that individuals and communities can do a better job of caring for those who need help in our society than the federal government. The wonderfully kind and committed Hoosiers who I have met traveling around Indiana have not changed my view.