

the creation of a Dakota bark lodge will demonstrate Dakota heritage.

St. Paul and the three East Metro counties are also showcasing their heritage.

"We're celebrating our distinguished past and our promising future," said St. Paul's Otto. "We're celebrating what we have. We're celebrating what brings personality and charm to St. Paul."

That includes hosting, along with the Pioneer Press, 150 Pioneer Parties throughout the city. Events will span the whole year and include the city and surrounding area.

The Pioneer Press' role shows its continuing commitment to the community, said Marti Buscaglia, Pioneer Press vice president for market development.

"We have had a relationship with the community for 150 years and have been very much a part of that community, both in forming it and being its voice and its mirror," Buscaglia said. "As we go forward, it's important for us to continue that relationship with the community and to really serve as the local paper for St. Paul and the surrounding suburbs . . . to get to know our customers better, find out what their needs are and be able to give them what it is they want from their newspaper and from the newspaper as a corporate citizen."

At the county level, Ramsey is encouraging residents to volunteer at events.

Ramsey County is very community oriented," said Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt. "There's nothing more community oriented than celebrating your history."

Residents can learn a lot along the way, she said.

"A lot of people are surprised—It's like '150 years? Really?' '1A' she said.

As for the future, ensuring that St. Paul and Ramsey County remain economically strong is a goal, Reinhardt said.

In Washington County, organizers are celebrating the area's opportunities as well as its past, said Washington County Commissioner Dick Stafford.

"We can drive, in a few miles, from lakes and streams to oil refineries and moderate to million-dollar homes," Stafford said. "We've got every kind of industry you can imagine and every kind of recreation you can imagine . . . You've got every ethnic background you can think of, you've got every profession you can think of. It's probably a great microcosm of America."

Dakota County's sesquicentennial is "a work in progress," said Patrice Bataglia, county commissioner and co-chair of the project. Besides celebrating, the county hopes to educate residents, she said.

"What's so important is that it's the fastest-growing county," Bataglia said, citing the thousands of people who move to the area each year. "So many people who are moving to Dakota County are looking for an identify with Dakota County."

Reinhardt believes everyone can benefit from 150th anniversary celebrations.

"You really need to look back in order to know how you got to where you are and figure out where you want to be," said the Ramsey County commissioner.

"It's a celebration of our ancestors and our history, but more important than that, it's looking at how far we've come."

BANKRUPTCY REFORM ACT OF 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. PATSY T. MINK

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 6, 1999

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 833) to amend title 11 of the United States Code, and for further purposes:

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Chairman, I rise to express my opposition to the passage of H.R. 833, the Bankruptcy Reform Act of 1999. I will vote 'No' on final passage, not because I believe that the bankruptcy system doesn't need reformulation, but because H.R. 833 is an unbalanced piece of legislation which does not offer the flexibility to accommodate the diverse circumstances confronted by debtors and bankruptcy courts.

The American Bankruptcy system was designed to give individuals who found themselves in insurmountable debt the chance to start over again. H.R. 833 threatens the promise of a fresh start by forcing the myriad situations debtors face into a narrow, rigid formula. The strict, Internal Revenue Service "means test" used to calculate the average monthly expenses for all debtors does not even account for regional income and cost of living differences. In my own state of Hawaii, the cost of living is high. This provision will unjustly penalize my constituents who seek bankruptcy relief because their actual, higher living costs will be ignored. H.R. 833's proponents consistently refused proposals to create a more flexible means test.

H.R. 833 strips bankruptcy judges of the power to determine that exceptional circumstances exist in certain cases and adjust monthly expense allowances to accommodate such situations. Instead of seeking to find the best course of action to help debtors become solvent, H.R. 833, as amended, allows bankruptcy trustees who transfer their clients' petitions from Chapter 7 to Chapter 13 to be paid for doing so. This is bad, lop-sided policy.

H.R. 833 rewards credit card companies' practice of pushing easy credit on debt heavy clients. They are the only winners in this debate. The policy to force more debtors from Chapter 7 bankruptcy into Chapter 13 bankruptcy benefits only those creditors whose debts are dischargeable in Chapter 7 and not under Chapter 13: Credit Card Companies. H.R. 833 makes credit card debt non-dischargeable under Chapter 13 and puts these debts in the same category as child support and alimony payments.

I believe that people should be held personally accountable for their debts. I voted Yes on the substitute bill offered by Congressman NADLER, which would have reformed bankruptcy provisions in a fair, balanced manner. I regret that Mr. NADLER's restructuring substitute did not pass. I voted to pass the amendment offered by the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Judiciary Committee, Congressman HENRY HYDE and Congressman JOHN CONYERS which created a flexible meth-

od of computing a debtor's monthly living expenses by providing guidelines to account for extenuating circumstances. This bipartisan amendment balanced a creditor biased bill. The Hyde-Conyers amendment also failed.

As the bill stands, I am unable to vote for it.

HONORING SPRAGUE HIGH SCHOOL

HON. DARLENE HOOLEY

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 6, 1999

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I stand before you this morning to salute Sprague High School in Salem, Oregon, which has been named a 1999 "Grammy Signature School, Gold Award."

I want all my colleagues in Congress, everyone involved in the Sprague Music Department, and everyone who cares about kids and music to know how proud I am of them and of this accomplishment.

The Grammy Signature School Program is a special part of the Grammy Awards that recognize professional artists. We've all seen the Grammy Awards on television, and this Signature School Program is a special part of that prestigious recognition that singles out excellent high school music programs.

I am delighted to congratulate Sprague High School as one of sixteen schools across the country to receive the inaugural Grammy Signature School Program award.

Salem's Sprague High School is known world-wide as a high school that is committed to fine music. Whether it is the orchestra winning world-wide awards in Europe, the choir taking top national honors, or the band setting toes to tapping across the continent, Sprague teachers and students have worked hard together to make music that inspires.

These days, it's not easy teaching things that some people think are "extras," and music programs are often the first to land on the budget chopping blocks.

But anyone who has seen children in an orchestra practice, or heard the voices of a high school choir warming up in harmony, or delighted to the improvised rhythms of a high school jazz ensemble, knows that music and the arts aren't "extras" at all.

Those are essential elements not only of critical thinking and intellectual discipline, but also important places of physical and emotional refuge for students who are inspired by the arts. We are all too keenly aware of the need for students to have a sense of belonging in their schools, and by honoring the arts, we honor those students who thrive in the arts, and by encouraging them our culture is enriched.

So I am proud today to stand before you to honor the parents, teachers, music directors, principal Mark Davalos, and especially the students who pour their hearts and souls into creating music that brings joy to all.