

Olusegun Obasanjo was inaugurated after his victory in democratically-held national elections. This is a moment of truth for Nigeria. Obasanjo faces several tremendous challenges. He must build up democratic institutions in a country that has had precious little experience with them. He must overcome serious economic problems. And, he must repair Nigeria's negative international image. Nigeria may finally be on the path to prosperity and democracy, and the entire African continent could reap the benefits.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ROBERT E. ANDREWS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 8, 1999

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No.'s 167, 168, and 169, I was unavoidably detained and unable to cast my vote. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on all three of these votes.

A SALUTE TO OWEN MARRON,
CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL OF
ALAMEDA COUNTY'S UNIONIST
OF THE YEAR, 1999

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 8, 1999

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor today to salute Owen A. Marron on his achievement of being named the Unionist of the Year, 1999, by the Central Labor Council of Alameda County and acknowledge his accomplishments as he completes his career as the Central Labor Council's Executive Secretary-Treasurer. Mr. Marron has been a longtime leader in the U.S. labor movement, particularly in California.

Mr. Marron was born in Buffalo, New York and grew up in Southern California. Upon completion of high school, he worked in the Kaiser steel mills in Fontana, California. When he joined the United Steel Workers Union, he became the fourth generation in his family to join.

Following his discharge from the U.S. Army in Korea, Mr. Marron returned to the steel plant, soon becoming a grievance committee-man for his local. He later served his local as the recording secretary and Chairman of the Incentive Committee.

In 1964, Marron left the steel mills to pursue a career in the labor movement in California by working as a representative for SEIU Locals 660, 616, and 700.

In 1976, Marron became a delegate to the Central Labor Council of Alameda County and a labor representative of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

In 1982, Marron was appointed to the Alameda County Central Labor Council's staff. During his career with the Labor Council, he served as Assistant to the Secretary and Executive Secretary-Treasurer. In addition, he was elected as Vice President of the California Labor Federation.

Throughout his more than forty-year career in the labor movement, Marron has displayed strong and passionate leadership. His highlights include organizing over 150,000 trade unionists and their families in labor marches in 1982 and 1984; leading the historic Alameda County employees strike of 1976; mobilizing the entire Alameda County labor movement in a strike against Summit Hospital in 1992; and playing a pivotal role in bringing President Bill Clinton to the Alameda County Labor Day Picnic and South African President Nelson Mandela to visit Oakland.

He has made a positive and profound impact on the lives of many individuals and organizations. His leadership skills and dedication will be sorely missed. I proudly join his many friends and colleagues in thanking and saluting him on receiving this prestigious award and extending my best wishes on his upcoming retirement.

Marron will be honored as the Unionist of the Year in Oakland, California, on June 17, 1999.

WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM
ENHANCEMENT ACT

HON. CHARLES W. "CHIP" PICKERING

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 8, 1999

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to introduce alongside my colleagues, Mr. THOMPSON of California and Mr. CHAMBLISS of Georgia, the Wetlands Reserve Program Enhancement Act to extend authority for the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) to help family farmers stay on their land, and to benefit waterfowl and sportsmen at the same time.

Across the country, thousands of private landowners have discovered the WRP is an attractive alternative to farming high-risk and high-cost cropland that is frequently flooded. WRP provides these landowners with a voluntary, financial incentive to restore such areas to wetlands. The landowner in turn is free to use his or her WRP incentive payment to refinance debt, upgrade machinery or to buy additional land to make their farming operation more profitable.

In my hope state of Mississippi, WRP has been a very popular program with private landowners, and for good reason. With today's farm crisis, WRP is helping Mississippi farmers who could not otherwise afford to stay on their land or to pass it on to future generations. To give you a better idea of how popular WRP has been with farmers, let me share with you some statistics.

Since 1992, nearly 4,000 landowners from 47 states have enrolled 655,000 acres in WRP nationwide. My home state of Mississippi has benefited through the WRP by enrolling more than 74,000 acres for the purpose of wetland conservation. However, due to limited funding, only about one-third of all eligible Mississippi landowners could be accepted into the program. In some states, landowner demand for WRP exceeds available funding 5 to 1. Mr. Speaker, many more wetland acres could be preserved nationwide through the provisions of this bill.

The purpose of the Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Act is to extend WRP authority to help more landowners in the future. Specifically, my legislation extends WRP authority for enrolling new lands by three years to 2005, and replaces the current WRP acreage cap with a new 250,000-acre annual enrollment limit. This will allow 4,000 to 5,000 additional landowners to enroll in WRP over the next five years.

This additional land enrolled in WRP will benefit not only farmers, but also waterfowl and other wetland wildlife. In the Mississippi Delta states, most of WRP land is planted in high-quality hardwood trees that flood in the winter and provide critical habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife. In fact, WRP has become one of the largest wetland restoration programs ever attempted on private lands.

WRP is restoring waterfowl breeding habitat in states like South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin. It is restoring migration habitat in Illinois, Iowa, Ohio and New York. Most of all, WRP is restoring waterfowl wintering habitat in such diverse states as California, Texas and Louisiana.

Where there are ducks, there are duck hunters. Many waterfowlers have discovered that private land enrolled in WRP makes for excellent hunting. In places like Mississippi that have a proud waterfowling tradition, access to quality hunting sites is in high demand. In many cases, WRP is creating new opportunities for sportsmen to participate in this time-honored tradition.

My legislation seeks to encourage more of these kinds of partnerships and to ensure that WRP takes every advantage of opportunities to restore and enhance wetland habitat for waterfowl.

In summary, this legislation represents a win-win opportunity for farmers, conservationists, sportsmen, and wildlife. This is a commonsense proposal which I believe my colleagues in the House will find good reason to support. The WRP is the kind of non-regulatory, incentive based conservation program that landowners want and wildlife need as we enter the next century.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MAJOR
GENERAL DAVID W. GAY ON THE
OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 8, 1999

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to honor one of Connecticut's finest military officers. Major General David W. Gay is the Adjunct General of the Connecticut National Guard and today friends and family will gather to wish him well on his retirement.

Beginning his military career with the Marine Corps in 1953, General Gay has dedicated his life to serving and protecting our great nation. Throughout his distinguished career, General Gay has received numerous meritorious awards and decorations from the Marine Corps, Army National Guard and State of Connecticut for outstanding conduct. Among