

June 15, 1999

and fair proposal which can be supported by producers from all regions of the nation.

TRIBUTE TO MS. ASHLY HUNTER AND MS. LAURA JANE AMODEI ON THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL SPECIAL OLYMPICS

HON. FRANK MASCARA

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 15, 1999

Mr. MASCARA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to honor two special constituents in my district who are the epitome of strength, determination, and selflessness, Ms. Ashly Hunter and Ms. Laura Jane Amodei.

I am proud to announce that Ashly Hunter will compete in swimming when the International Special Olympics convenes June 26 through July 4 in Raleigh/Durham, NC, where she will swim the 25-meter breaststroke and the 50-meter backstroke. This is a dream for her that has been 20 years in the making.

Many people helped Ashly make her dream come true. In addition to her parents, Ashly's coach, Ms. Laura Jane Amodei, is also paramount to Ashly's success. Ms. Amodei has also been selected as an alternate coach to this year's games after dedicating over 20 years to the Special Olympics as a coach for the Mon Valley Swimming team of Washington Valley. Those who know Ms. Amodei and those fortunate enough to have been coached by her say she inspires her athletes to achieve maximum individual performance. Indeed, Ms. Amodei has enabled Ashly to master the very backstroke and breast stroke techniques that won her the right to compete in this year's games. It is this dedication and selflessness of special Americans such as Ms. Laura Jane Amodei that should inspire all of us to be the best citizens we can be.

Ms. Hunter won the right to compete in the International Games after a series of local, regional, and State victories, where she compiled an amazing 101 victories, including 56 gold, 31 silver, and 14 bronze. She will become the first Mon Valley resident to attend the International Special Olympics after competing for 15 years in the Washington County Special Olympics.

Whether Ashly is cheering the California University Vulcans basketball team on to victory, exploring her love of music and dance, or bike riding with her parents, who she inspired to become certified aquatic coaches, Ashly's love of life and people burns brightly. Her grit serves as testament to the joy and wonder of life to those around her. Needless to say, we, in the 20th District of Pennsylvania, are extremely proud of Ms. Hunter's fine accomplishments and the person she inspires us to be.

Mr. Speaker, I know the entire House of Representatives joins me in saluting the hard work and dedication of Ms. Ashly Hunter and Ms. Laura Jane Amodei and wishing them the best of luck at this year's International Special Olympics.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

SALUTE TO POLICE CHIEF JOSEPH SAMUELS, JR.

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 15, 1999

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor today to salute Police Chief Joseph Samuels, Jr., the first African-American Chief of Police in the City of Oakland.

Police Chief Samuels joined the Oakland Police Department in 1974 after working for a Finance Corporation as a Branch Manager. He rose through the ranks of the Police Department to the position of Captain where he spent three years in the Patrol Division. He later served in the investigative and support units of the Department.

In October, 1991, he was appointed Chief of Police of the City of Fresno in California. He has continued his civic involvement and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Oakland Boys and Girls Club, the Oakland Jazz Alliance, the Alameda County Chapters of the American Cancer Society and the American Red Cross.

During his tenure as Oakland's Chief of Police, part one felonies were reduced by 23.3%, homicides were reduced by 54.4% and violent crimes fell by 23.2%. Citizen complaints against Police Department personnel also decreased by 44% during Chief Samuels' tenure.

Chief Samuels' other accomplishments include securing over \$30 million in state and federal grants to expand the Department's personnel and community outreach. Chief Samuels also established nine citizen community oriented boards.

Chief Samuels' professional affiliations include membership in the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Police Executive Research Forum, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, the California Peace Officers Association, the California Police Chiefs Association, and the Alameda County Chiefs of Police and Sheriff's Association.

Chief Samuels has made a positive and profound impact on the lives of many individuals and organizations throughout the City of Oakland and I know that the community is more safe as a consequence of his leadership.

I proudly join his many friends and colleagues in thanking and saluting him on his years of service to the community and his commitment to law enforcement.

TRIBUTE TO THE INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN ARTS FESTIVAL

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 15, 1999

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, the International African Arts Festival, formally known as the African Street Festival, has been a cultural institution providing a venue for African-inspired culture to the Brooklyn community for 28 years. Started in 1971 as a graduation cere-

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mony for the Uhuru Sasa School, the festival grew into a major event attracting international attention. Held each summer during the July 4th weekend, the festival features an African marketplace of over 200 vendors providing unique arts, crafts, foods, and goods from all over the world. The marketplace is the backdrop for continuous entertainment on two stages. The festival has hosted award winning and internationally recognized entertainers and recording artists.

In 28 years, the festival has grown into a major event for the Brooklyn community. Attracting over 50,000 visitors each year, the International African Arts Festival continues to grow and dig its roots deeper into the community. Among the festivals many featured events are the talent search, "Ankh" awards ceremony, living legends awards, special showcases for seniors, a parade down Fulton street, scholarship presentations, African marketplace, and world-class entertainment.

Tens of thousands of people visit the festival every year just to shop for the diverse, rare items that have become the trademark of the marketplace at the International African Arts festival. The people of New York know that they can come to the festival to find the latest in paintings, sculptures, jewelry, furniture, and goods of every kind. The shopping atmosphere creates an economic boom attracting entrepreneurs and aiding in local, small business development. The economic benefits of the festival also results from the hundreds of jobs created by the festival.

The International African Arts Festival creates an environment of unity for the Brooklyn community. The world-class entertainment showcased at the festival represents the diversity of the African Diaspora. Audiences can expect to witness captivating performances by artists from Africa, America, the Caribbean, and Latin America on any one day. This atmosphere is further enhanced by vendors who sell delicious international foods. The friendliness of other participants and the warm feeling it fosters, under a bright sunny sky, completes the experience of Brooklyn's own International African Arts Festival.

MS. PAM HUNT IS HONORED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AS THE NATIONAL ELDERLY HOUSING MANAGER OF THE YEAR

HON. WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 15, 1999

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, today, on Capitol Hill, Ms. Pam Hunt of Pine Oaks Village in Harwich, MA, was honored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as the National Elderly Housing Manager of the Year. I would like to ask my House and Senate colleagues to join in honoring her exemplary efforts to provide a safe, community-based environment for the older residents of Pine Oaks Village.

Ms. Hunt was recognized not only for ensuring that the daily needs of her residents are met, but also for her dedication in making Pine Oaks Village the place its residents call home.

She has helped secure a Federal grant to enhance social services at Pine Oaks Village, encouraged residents to develop and direct their own programs, such as art shows, gardening, bridge, and quilting, organized holiday parties, and produced a monthly newsletter for her residents. Ms. Hunt makes consistent strides to improve the quality of life of her elderly residents.

Here in Congress, we are debating Social Security and Medicare reform, reauthorization of the Older Americans Act and other important issues affecting our Nation's senior citizens. It is comforting to know that while the needs of seniors are often overlooked by some—they are not forgotten at Pine Oaks Village.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. VITO FOSSELLA

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 15, 1999

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 204, I missed the vote due to weather-related problems.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

A TRIBUTE TO WENDY RASO OF PUEBLO COLORADO

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 15, 1999

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the dedication, hard work, and great achievements of Wendy Raso, of Pueblo, Colorado. Her efforts, in conjunction with the March of Dimes, to improve the health of babies and to prevent birth defects and infant mortality and membership in national nursing organization, have contributed to her selection as a recipient of a \$5,000 national nursing scholarship.

Ms. Raso has devoted eight years of work at the Pueblo Community Health Center while pursuing graduate studies at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. As a perinatal case manager, she focuses her time on the health of an infant before birth. Wendy's desire to better the lives of unborn children is the reason why she promotes healthy lifestyles for her patients.

Ms. Raso is hopeful that her award will call attention of Colorado's fifth-highest of low birth-weight rate in the nation. Through her work and achievements she is optimistic that Colorado can improve its birth weight ranking. Ms. Raso's determination and dedication to improving the health of unborn children have

led her to pursue graduate work in Denver in order to achieve certification as a midwife.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Ms. Wendy Raso for helping to ensure the health and future of Colorado's newest citizens. Individuals such as Ms. Raso who give so much time and energy to bettering the lives of others are to be commended. I would also like to congratulate Wendy Raso on being chosen as a recipient of the national nursing scholarship, and I would like to wish her the best of luck as she continues to pursue her education and service to others.

INTRODUCTION OF HOUSE RESOLUTION 208 CALLING FOR VETERANS CEMETERY PLANNING JUNE 15, 1999

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 15, 1999

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing, together with Mr. Evans, the Ranking Democrat on the Veterans' Affairs Committee as an original cosponsor, House Resolution—that would reaffirm the commitment of the United States to the men and women who have honorably served this Nation in the Armed Forces to provide reasonable access to burial in a national or State veterans cemetery. Our Resolution also would call on the National Cemetery Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs, vested with the responsibility of providing a final resting place for America's heroes, to commence without delay the planning for the construction of new national cemeteries and other activities to provide America's veterans reasonable access to burial in a veterans cemetery.

I am appalled at the Department of Veterans Affairs' less-than-inspired goal for performing its mission "to honor veterans with a final resting place and lasting memorials to commemorate their service to our Nation."

Currently, nearly one-third of United States veterans do not have the option of being buried in a national or State veterans cemetery located within a reasonable distance of their residence—being 75 miles, as determined by the VA's National Cemetery Administration. Shockingly, the National Cemetery Administration, as its fiscal year 2000 performance plan program objective, will try to provide only 80 percent of United States veterans with a burial option within a reasonable distance of their residence.

Mr. Speaker, a National Cemetery Administration goal, which does not provide 20 percent of United States veterans with a burial option within a reasonable distance of their residence, is not acceptable to me nor should it be to this House.

By VA's own statistics, the demand for cemetery space will rise sharply in the near future,

with burials increasing 42 percent from 1995 to 2010, and annual veteran deaths reaching 620,000 in the year 2008. However, for some inadequately explained reason, the VA's Fiscal Year 2000 proposed budget failed to request funding for even the planning of any new national cemeteries.

Last week I joined with Chairman Stump and Ranking Member Evans of the Veterans' Affairs Committee as an original cosponsor of H.R. 2040, the "Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999". That bill would require VA to contract for an independent study on improvements to veterans' cemeteries. Among other things, the study would assess the number of additional national cemeteries required for the interment and memorialization of veterans who die after 2010.

Mr. Speaker, my home State of Florida has the oldest veterans' population of any state. By VA's estimate, there will be nearly 25,000 veteran deaths in the greater Miami area in FY 2000, and by the year 2010, the annual death rate in South Florida will be nearly 26,000. Unfortunately, the nearest veterans cemetery is 250 miles away. It is for that reason, on April 29, I introduced H.R. 1628 to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a national cemetery in the Miami, Florida, metropolitan area to serve the needs of veterans and their families.

I would note for my colleagues that in both 1987 and 1994, the Miami area was designated by congressionally mandated reports as one of the top geographic areas in the United States in which need for burial space for veterans is greatest. Yet, as late as August 1998, VA's strategic planning through the year 2010 indicated nothing more than a willingness to continue evaluating the needs of nearly 800,000 veterans in the Miami/Ft. Lauderdale primary and secondary service area. Mr. Speaker, that is over 54 percent of the estimated State veteran population and 3.3 percent of the total U.S. veteran population.

The burial space needs of veterans are approaching a crisis stage in Florida; but Florida is not alone. According to testimony received at a recent hearing of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, of which I am the Ranking Democrat, ninety percent of eligible veterans are not—I repeat, are not—buried in a national or state veterans cemetery. Such hallowed grounds are simply located too far from their home and family.

Mr. Speaker, standing on the threshold of a new century as we are, it is our obligation as Members of the 106th Congress to again affirm America's long and solemn commitment to her veterans—past, present, and future—that they and their families will be provided an appropriate resting place of honor, and that the Department of Veterans Affairs will fully carry out its responsibilities to that end.