

Greece's independence from the Ottoman Empire, and to celebrate the shared democratic heritage of Greece and the United States.

On March 25, 1821, after more than 400 years of Ottoman Turk domination, Greece declared its independence and resumed its rightful place in the world as a beacon of democracy.

The people of Greece and the United States share a common bond in their commitment to democracy. Our Founding Fathers looked to the teachings of Greek philosophy in their struggle for freedom and democracy. And the American experience in turn inspired the Greek people to fight hard for their independence 180 years ago.

This bond between our two peoples stretches beyond the philosophy of democracy. The relationship between the U.S. and Greece has grown stronger and stronger through the years, and Greece remains today one of our most important allies.

Greece has made many valuable contributions to the United States and to the lives of all Americans. Greek-Americans are a vital part of our cultural heritage, and I feel fortunate that my district in New York has benefited from the active participation of Greek-Americans in our community.

I am proud to stand today in commemoration of Greek independence and in recognition of the contributions Greece and Greek-Americans have made to our country.

#### BANGLADESH NATIONAL DAY

### HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 27, 2001*

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the 30th Independence Day of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

On this important occasion, we should all remember the people who sacrificed their lives and others who endured immense suffering to achieve political self-determination. Despite this, and since achieving independence, the people and government of Bangladesh have played an increasing role in global peacekeeping and democratic consolidation.

Bangladesh is roughly the size of the State of Wisconsin but has a population estimated at roughly 130 million. It is bounded by India from the north, east and west and by the Bay of Bengal and Myanmar from the south. Bangladesh has a rich historical and cultural past as a consequence of the influx of varied races and nationalities, including the Dravidian, Indo-Aryan, Mongol-Mughul, Arab, Persian, Turkic, Dutch, French and the English cultures.

The area that is now Bangladesh was under Muslim rule for five and a half centuries, followed by British rule for another two centuries. It was, most recently, a province of Pakistan for 26 years. The people of Bangladesh achieved their Independence through a difficult nine month long war of liberation in 1971.

Since Independence, the people of Bangladesh have overcome formidable challenges, including rapid population growth and food shortages. The country is consolidating democratic principles at home, is a partner in

global peacekeeping efforts, has vast amount of undeveloped gas resources, and has become an exporter of development best practices abroad.

The U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship is deepening through trade and investment partnerships and an ongoing high-level official dialogue. President Clinton made a historic visit to Bangladesh in March 2000 and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made a reciprocal visit in October of that year.

To build on these achievements, I have established a bipartisan Congressional Bangladesh Caucus and invite all of my colleagues to join me in this endeavor. The Caucus will examine issues relevant to our bilateral relationship with the Bangladeshi government, and issues affecting the Bangladeshi-American community in order to facilitate the formation of coherent foreign policy with regard to Bangladesh.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the people of Bangladesh on the milestone of their 30th Anniversary as an Independent nation.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE NATIONAL DAY OF BANGLADESH

### HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 27, 2001*

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute and congratulate the nation of Bangladesh for thirty years of independence.

Founded in 1971 after gaining its independence from Pakistan, Bangladesh has evolved into a moderate Muslim democracy where the United States enjoys high prestige and respect. Bangladesh plays a moderating and welcome role in international fora like the G-77, the Nonaligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Since independence, Bangladesh has struggled with an enormous population of 128 million crowded into a nation the size of Wisconsin. Subject to regular monsoons and flooding, Bangladesh has made significant social and economic progress in a number of areas. In particular Bangladesh has made major strides to meet the needs of its growing population and is now largely self-sufficient in rice production. Bangladesh is also a leader in microenterprise lending. The world famous Grameen Bank has provided small business loans to more than 2.4 million customers in 39,000 villages. The bank has a 98 percent loan recovery rate from its customers, 94 percent of whom are women. In a recent and promising development, 40-50 trillion cubic feet of natural gas have been discovered giving Bangladesh a long term source of energy and enough to become a natural gas exporter.

U.S.-Bangladesh relations have also grown in recent years. The United States is Bangladesh's number one trading partner. U.S. investment in Bangladesh has grown from \$25 million to over \$750 million in the last four years. But economic interests are not the only ties that bind the U.S. and Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has played a significant role in international peacekeeping activities. Several thousand Bangladeshi military personnel are

deployed overseas on peacekeeping operations. Under U.N. auspices, Bangladeshi troops have served or are serving in Somalia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Kuwait, Bosnia, Haiti, and East Timor. Regionally, Bangladesh is a nation at peace with its neighbors and focused on regional integration through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

In addition, Bangladesh has demonstrated its commitment to environmental preservation by becoming the first country to participate in a debt for nature swap under the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998. This program allowed Bangladesh to exchange a portion of its concessional debt to the United States in return for the preservation of more than 3 million acres of tropical forest home to the world's last genetically viable population of Bengal tigers.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join me in commending the nation of Bangladesh for 30 years of independence.

#### TRIBUTE TO SENATOR GINETTE (GIGI) DENNIS

### HON. HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 27, 2001*

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Colorado State Senator Gigi Dennis for her years of service to the State of Colorado and to wish her good luck in her new position. Senator Gigi has served in the Colorado State Senate since 1995, but is resigning at the end of the month to accept an appointment from President George W. Bush to become the Colorado Director of the Department of Agriculture's Office of Rural Development. "I'm proud of her," said her husband Dean Dennis. "I'm proud of her accomplishments." I know that Gigi's friends and neighbors in south-central Colorado, her colleagues in the Colorado legislature, and elected officials all across Colorado—including me—share Dean's sentiments. We are all proud of Gigi!

Senator Dennis has held numerous positions of real significance during her seven years in office, including Vice Chair of the Transportation Committee, a Member of the Legislative Council and Chairman of the Majority Caucus. Senator Dennis also served as the Rio Grande County Republican Secretary. Additionally, she served as a member of the State Accountability Commission on Education, and the Vice Chairman of the Education Committee (NCSL).

Senator Dennis summed up her feelings like this: "This resignation is not like walking away from my constituents, but creating a bigger circle of people I can impact through this office. In the end, it doesn't make any difference who gets the credit or who wins the fight . . . but whether Colorado citizens are better off for what we do. I'm extremely honored that President Bush has selected me for this position. This is another terrific opportunity to continue to help the State of Colorado, particularly the rural areas that I've represented over the years."

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Senator Gigi Dennis on

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her new position and wish her good luck in the future. She will be missed in the state legislature.

Senator Dennis has served the State of Colorado well in the state Senate and I know she will continue that record of leadership in her new capacity with the Department of Agriculture.

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TRIBUTE TO LA VINA MARS

**HON. SCOTT McINNIS**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 27, 2001*

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish a longtime Bayfield employee best wish-

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es during her retirement. After serving as town clerk of Bayfield, Colorado for 29 years, La Vina Mars has decided to retire to spend a little more time with her family and her horses. As she does, I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her service and wish her well.

La Vina became the town clerk in 1972, when the town population was 300. At that time, she served as the town clerk, the librarian and the ticket agent for the bus line that stopped in Bayfield. "She's been the glue that's held the town together for 29 years," said Ed Morlan, a long time member of the Town Board.

La Vina will miss talking with residents the most when her career is over. "I have some qualms about not coming to work. I will think about it because I have enjoyed it."

La Vina has spent much of her 29 years as one of only two or three town employees. When she started, La Vina worked as a volunteer for a month to learn the job's ropes. Now that she's leaving, town officials say it will be hard to replace her. Many credit her with helping Bayfield make it through a tough period in the mid 80's when the town nearly went broke.

Mr. Speaker, La Vina will truly be missed by the town of Bayfield and the people she worked with. It is appropriate that this body say thank you to La Vina for her hard work and dedication.

La Vina, your community, state and nation are proud of you and thankful for your years of service. We wish you all the best during your well-earned retirement.