CELEBRATING THE CAREER OF HARRIS COUNTY COMMISSIONER JIM FONTENO

HON. GENE GREEN
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 28, 2001

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, at the end of his current term Harris County Commissioner Jim Fonteno will retire. Commissioner Fonteno is currently in his 26th year as Precinct Two Commissioner. He was first elected in 1974 and has won re-election terms in 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, and 1998. On April 12, 2001, the South Houston Chamber of Commerce will honor him, and I am proud to join them in paying tribute to Commissioner Fonteno for his dedication and commitment to public service.

For more than 26 years Commissioner Fonteno has served both his country and the residents of Harris County. He is a veteran, having served in the United States Army and in the Merchant Marine. He also served as a Municipal Court Judge for the City of Baytown from 1957 to 1958. Later, he served two terms, 1970–1974, as Port Commissioner. Port of Houston Authority, but resigned the position to seek the office of County Commissioner. Jim Fonteno is also a licensed auctioneer and has used his skill to raise over $4 million for various non-profit charitable events, churches, clubs, and organizations.

Commissioner Fonteno is committed to his constituents. Not only does he touch the lives of many underprivileged boys and girls, he has an unwavering commitment to our senior citizens. He is the founder and developer of various outstanding senior citizen programs in Harris County’s Precinct Two, including East Harris County Senior Citizens, a non-profit corporation. The East Harris County Senior Citizens sponsors various activities throughout the year, including trips to sporting events and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Another popular activity is the Senior Citizen Olympics, which is held annually. These fun-filled events have provided both social and physical interaction among senior citizens. In addition, 290 food banks are provided to senior citizens during the holiday.

Commissioner Jim Fonteno also spent much time in developing the the well-being of our youth. The East Harris County Youth Program, which he founded, is dedicated to serving, the needs of Harris County Precinct Two youth. The program originated as a pilot program comprised of a summer camp at J.D. Walker Community Center and an after-school program at Cloverleaf Elementary School.

The single most important role of the East Harris County Youth Program is to serve as a vehicle that makes learning fun. Designed to be a resource, not a substitute for school systems, the program is a strong proponent of students staying in school. Although academic achievements receive top priority, the East Harris County Youth Program also puts an emphasis on physical activity.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that we will have a tremendous void as the result of Commissioner Fonteno’s retirement. I am sure that I speak for many when I say that his tireless work will not soon be forgotten, and we are all thankful to him. I would like to personally wish him and his wife JoAnn well in this new stage of their lives, and hope that he continues to be a strong presence in Harris County.

U.S.-MEXICO POULTRY TRADE
HON. RICHARD W. POMBO
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 28, 2001

Mr. POMBO. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call the House’s attention to one of the agricultural success stories of the last decade. I refer to this nation’s poultry trade with Mexico, a trade that has benefited both nations tremendously and that today finds itself charting new paths for the future.

Mexico in the late 1980s emerged as an important new market for U.S. poultry products. Mexican meat processors began buying large quantities of turkey and chicken cuts, including mechanically de-boned meat, from the United States. This product was used to make the sausage, hot dogs, bologna and turkey ham products demanded by Mexican consumers.

There was for a time a concern that NAFTA might slow this progress. The agreement was written in the infancy of the U.S-Mexican poultry trade, and NAFTA’s authors did not foresee the explosion in Mexican demand for U.S. poultry. The agreement set a quota for duty-free poultry exports to Mexico that was far too small and set the over-quota tariff at a staggering initial rate of 269 percent. In fact, that over-quota tariff does not drop below 49.4 percent until it ultimately is removed in 2002.

Fortunately, the fears raised by NAFTA were not realized. The Mexican government has recognized the demand for poultry and has allowed a much higher level of duty free poultry imports than NAFTA requires. The results of this policy have been spectacular—and the primary beneficiary has been the Mexican economy and the Mexican people.

Mexico’s processed meat industry has doubled during the last five years and now creates jobs—directly or indirectly—for 290,000 people. Annual sales of processed meat, including processed poultry products, have reached $1.3 billion annually and are climbing. The consumption of meat protein products in Mexico has increased significantly, and the costs to Mexican consumers has been kept low.

Obviously, this has made the Mexican market a critical one for the U.S. poultry industry. Mexico now purchases about 10 percent of all U.S. poultry, and is the third largest export market for American poultry. For the turkey industry, the market is even more significant. Mexico is by far the biggest purchaser of U.S. turkey, consuming almost 10 percent of all the turkey produced in the United States and accounting for 55 percent of all our turkey exports.

Mr. Speaker, this success story needs to be continued. Mexico is undergoing historic political changes, and indications so far are that the Fox administration is continuing to maintain a positive policy toward poultry imports. However, there is certain to be continued pressure on the new government from some who want to eliminate competition in the market for processed meat.

Mexico’s meat processors cannot meet their consumers’ needs or price expectations without continuing waivers on the NAFTA quotas for U.S. poultry products. The Mexican government has understood this for the last seven years, and they are to be commended for putting the broader needs of their nation’s consumers and the entire economy ahead of parochial political considerations. Also, our Agriculture Department and the Office of the Trade Representative are to be congratulated for the time and attention they devote to ensuring fair and open trade between our two countries.

The U.S. and Mexican poultry and meat processing industries recognize the importance of free trade in the 21st Century. The two industries are signing an agreement pledging to work with their respective governments for a policy of open and unrestricted trade of poultry products.

As we wait for that goal to become a reality, we wish to express our appreciation for the hard work of the Mexican government and our own trade officials for the accomplishments to this point in promoting prosperous poultry trade between our two countries.

HONORING VINCENT COSMANO,
BAND DIRECTOR OF O’FALLON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL
HON. JERRY F. COSTELLO
OF ILLINOIS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 28, 2001

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Vincent Cosmano on his retirement and the 30 years of service he has given to O’Fallon Township High School in O’Fallon, Illinois.

The second of five children, born to James and Jean Cosmano of Chicago, Vince came from a family proud of their Italian heritage. As a youth, Vince was an achiever, performing in the high school band and attaining the rank of Eagle Scout. His passion for teamwork was shaped during his high school years where he excelled in football and swimming. Learning and an education were highly valued traits in the Cosmano household, Vince’s brothers Don and Bill chose careers in education and his sister Jean Marie and youngest brother Richard succeeded in their respective fields of work.

In college, Vince followed his passion, studying history at Illinois State University and playing the French horn. Fortunately, for the future high school band students at OTHS, Vince’s love for music became his calling. He graduated from ISU with a B.S. in Education in 1965, followed by a Masters in Music Education in 1971. From 1965 to 1971, Vince taught school, first in Wyoming, then Picher City and later Chillicothe. O’Fallon, Illinois would soon welcome and embrace the dynamic Vince Cosmano to their music department.
TRIBUTE TO DAMON SZYMANSKI

HON. MARK GREEN
OF WISCONSIN
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 28, 2001

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I’d like to say a few words today about one of my constituents, Damon Szymanski. Damon recently finished his 50th assignment as an ACDI/VOCA volunteer, a truly extraordinary achievement.

During Damon’s missions, he has played a crucial role in helping improve agricultural development around the globe, particularly in central and eastern Europe. He has contributed dramatically to our national goal of opening global markets through an infusion of our values of democracy and economic freedom. Damon has served as a strong bridge between the United States and the rest of the world.

He is here in Washington this week to receive an award from ACDI/VOCA for his record of outstanding service. On behalf of all of us, I’d like to say “thank you” to Damon—for everything he’s done to improve U.S. foreign relations and for everything he’s done to improve the quality of life of people in other nations.

TRIBUTE TO THE DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY

HON. JOSEPH M. HOFFEL
OF PENNSYLVANIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 28, 2001

Mr. HOFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Valley Forge Alumnae Chapter on their decade of public service.

In 1913, the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority was founded at Howard University by twenty-two African American Women. Since then, over 200,000 women have joined chapters all over the world. The Valley Forge Alumnae Chapter in my district was founded on February 10, 1991 by 27 civic-minded women who saw the need for public service in the western suburbs of Philadelphia.

The Valley Forge Alumnae Chapter has been active in a number of areas such as economic and educational development, international awareness and involvement, physical and mental health and political/international awareness. Through their efforts, they have successfully produced many community programs and projects. One such program, “Patriots of African Descent,” commissions artists in memory of African Americans who fought for our nation’s independence.

I am pleased and honored to celebrate this outstanding occasion with the alumnae. They have played an important role in our community and for this they should be commended.

WOMEN’S CENTER OF MONMOUTH COUNTY CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF SERVICE

HON. RUSH D. HOLT
OF NEW JERSEY
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 28, 2001

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the Women’s Center of Monmouth County’s 25th Anniversary. Over the last quarter of a century, the Women’s Center of Monmouth County (WCMC) has made a tremendous difference in the lives of women and their families throughout Monmouth County.

The WCMC is a New Jersey-based private, non-profit organization dedicated to ending domestic violence and sexual assault. Since its inception in 1976, the Center has helped more than 100,000 women, children and men gain control of their lives and stop the violence. Through the help of individuals, government agencies, small businesses and corporate