

its water policies every time a crisis hits. Now is the time to get ahead of this issue, and I believe that the 21st Century Water Commission can serve as a channel for sharing the successful strategies and ideas that will allow us to do so.

TRIBUTE TO JACK HALPERN

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. Jack Halpern, a highly accomplished Jewish American who will be honored on January 27, 2005, at the Annual Northeast Regional Tribute of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Jack, a resident of Manhattan, lives with his wife Lieba and their two wonderful children. He is a managing member of Atlantic Realty, which develops residential and commercial real estate in New Jersey, New York and Israel.

In addition to his duties with Atlantic Realty, Jack somehow finds the time to work as an activist. Following in the footsteps of his father Sam, who founded the family business after surviving the Holocaust, Jack has become an active supporter of numerous Jewish causes. As a member of AIPAC's National Executive Committee, Jack has been a leader in strengthening ties between the U.S. and Israel for many years.

In 2002, Jack founded the Energy Independence Task Force at the American Jewish Congress, where he currently serves on the Governing Council and Executive Committee. This important task force continues to work for fuel efficiency standards in trucks and SUVs. In addition they have met with many key Congressional and Administration officials in order to deliver the message that a long-term national energy policy focusing on reducing the United States' dependency on Middle East oil is a national security imperative.

Jack's long-time associations also include State of Israel Bonds, the Jewish Community Center of Manhattan, the Holocaust Resource Foundation, the Technion Institute and the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel.

Mr. Speaker, Jack Halpern is a model American citizen worthy of the award which will be bestowed upon him. His efforts have not only helped to strengthen the two countries he cares most deeply for (America and Israel) but have also helped to strengthen their special relationship.

For his continued service on AIPAC's Executive Committee and his work on improving U.S.-Israeli relations, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Mr. Jack Halpern.

INTRODUCING THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION ACT

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to introduce the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Act. Better known as NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration was created by Executive Order in 1970. It is the nation's lead civilian agency for oceans and atmosphere, yet Congress has never passed an overarching organic act describing the mission and functions of the agency. Instead, over the past 34 years Congress has defined the mission of the agency in a piecemeal manner with legislation focused on specific issues. The bill I am introducing today, which passed the Environment, Technology and Standards Subcommittee in the 108th Congress, is a first step toward Congressional passage of comprehensive legislation for NOAA.

Last year, the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy released its long awaited report with recommendations for a coordinated national ocean policy. One of its key recommendations is that Congress should pass an organic act for NOAA. In his response to the Ocean Commission report, President Bush supported this recommendation. The time is right for Congress to consider, and pass, this organic act for NOAA.

My bill establishes the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) within the Department of Commerce. It defines the mission of NOAA as "to understand and predict changes in the Earth's oceans and atmosphere and the effects of such changes on the land environment, to conserve and manage coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes ecosystems, and to educate the public about these topics." The recent Indian Ocean tsunami is just the latest evidence of the need for NOAA's research and services. My bill maintains the current leadership structure at NOAA, but adds a Deputy Assistant Secretary for Science and Technology to serve as the point person for the agency to coordinate the research and science activities of NOAA across the agency.

This bill also describes the functions of NOAA, which are divided into three broad groups to improve cooperation among NOAA's programs, as recommended by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. First is the National Weather Service, which provides weather, water and climate forecasts and warnings to the nation. The second group is operations and services, which includes all of NOAA's satellites services and its mapping and charting services. The third category of functions is research and education.

The bill focuses on pieces of NOAA under Science Committee jurisdiction, and does not currently include any references to NOAA's fisheries or resource management, which are under the jurisdiction of the Resources Committee here in the House. I am hopeful that we can work with other committees in the House and our colleagues in the Senate to pass a truly comprehensive organic act for NOAA, but for now we must start with this legislation.

I believe it is critical for NOAA's mission to be clearly defined so it can better fulfill its role in observing, managing, and protecting our nation's coastal, ocean and Great Lakes resources. I look forward to working with my colleagues in a bipartisan fashion to pass this bill into law this year. This will not be an easy task, but it is so important to our environment, our economy, and our children's and grandchildren's future, that we must succeed.

INTRODUCING THE CONYERS-SHERMAN CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleague, Congressman JOHN CONYERS, the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, in introducing the Conyers-Sherman Presidential Eligibility Constitutional Amendment. This Amendment will allow any foreign-born person who has been a United States citizen for 20 years or longer to qualify to run for President of the United States. Once enacted and ratified, this amendment will allow millions of well qualified Americans to aspire to our nation's highest office.

This bill is not about the election prospects of any one man or woman. It is about the dreams of all Americans. Every year I visit high schools in the San Fernando Valley. I tell those students that America is a great country, a land of opportunity. I want to tell them that it is also a country where any child can grow up to be President of the United States. Unfortunately, for many high school students in my district, the fact that they were born in another country is a complete and unequivocal bar to the Presidency.

All American children regardless of where they are born should have all the rights and responsibilities of native born Americans. All American children should be able to aspire to rise as far as their talent, energy and ability allow them, including our nation's highest office. There is no good reason to exclude Americans who will grow up to attend our colleges and universities, who will protect America in our armed forces, or who will work hard and pay their taxes, from our nation's highest office. When this Constitutional Amendment is passed and ratified each of them will have that opportunity.

The exact reasons for including the natural born citizen language in the Constitution are lost to history. The meticulous record of the Constitutional Convention, kept by James Madison, hardly gives it a mention. Regardless of that lost reasoning, America is now a nation of immigrants. We are a nation that should encourage those who come here to aspire to their highest goals and loftiest dreams. Mr. Speaker, the Constitutional Amendment Mr. CONYERS and I introduce today will make some of those dreams a possible reality for the first time in our history.