

CONGRATULATING THE ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL INDIANS ON THEIR INDIANA CLASS 3A GIRLS STATE BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

**HON. CHRIS CHOCOLA**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 15, 2005*

Mr. CHOCOLA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the South Bend St. Joseph's High School Indians on their Indiana High School Athletic Association Girls Basketball Class 3A state championship.

For the second time in 3 years, the St. Joe Indians' girls basketball team found themselves at the Conoco Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, Indiana for the state championship game. As the final game horn sounded on Saturday March 5, 2005, the Indians won by a score of 70-57 defeating Corydon Central High School.

Over 9,000 fans witnessed a 24-10 run in the fourth quarter allowing the Indians to bring home St. Joseph County's first state championship in girls basketball. This victory capped off a 25-1 record for the season.

I would like to acknowledge Head Coach Mike Megyese and Assistant Coaches Lou Megyese, Dan Applegate, Clem Litka and Brad Dunlap on an extraordinary season.

As their many fans know, this team has been led by an outstanding group of seniors who have taken St. Joseph's to an incredible 83-18 record during their 4 years.

On behalf of the citizens of Indiana's Second Congressional District, I would like to congratulate South Bend's newest champions including seniors Aimee Litka, Corey Jo Keim, Katie St. Clair, Erin Newsom; juniors Melissa Lechlittner, Ashley Miller, Becky Newsom; sophomores Sydney Smallbone, Kristen Dockery; and freshmen DeBorah Wilson and Cary Werntz.

Student Managers Sarah Pendl, Katie Dunlap, Christie Nurkowski, Courtney Szymanski, Gary Paczesny and Erin Rempala also deserve a special congratulation for their contributions to the team.

Mr. Speaker, I know that everyone in St. Joseph County including the Diocese of Fort Wayne—South Bend Superintendent Michelle Hittie, the St. Joseph High School staff including Principal Daniel Swygart, Athletic Director Frank Pomarico, Assistant Athletic Director Kristi Beechy, and all of the St. Joseph Indians' parents and fans are extremely proud of the accomplishment these young women have achieved.

Again, I would like to congratulate the Indians of St. Joseph High School on winning the county's first ever girls state basketball championship.

**CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND REHABILITATION ACT OF 2005**

**HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 15, 2005*

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to introduce the Civic Participation and Rehabil-

itation Act of 2005, legislation that will provide persons who have been released from incarceration the right to vote in Federal elections.

With just two States, Maine and Vermont, placing no restrictions on the voting rights of offenders or ex-offenders, the United States may have the most restrictive disenfranchisement policy in the world. Such prohibitions on the right to vote undermine both the voting system and the fundamental rights of ex-offenders. This legislation will serve to clarify and expand voting rights, as well as assist former felons with their reintegration into our democracy.

This past November it was estimated that approximately 2.3 percent of the voting age population, about 5 million people, were prohibited from voting because of state felon disenfranchisement laws. While it is undeniable that this group of disqualified voters was large enough to influence the outcome of close elections, partisan concerns obscure the fact that our varied, State-by-State approaches to ex-offender voting rights leads to confusion and disenfranchisement of legitimate voters under these existing laws. In the past two election cycles, flawed voter purges have deprived legitimate voters of their rights. Moreover, in Ohio, an erroneous interpretation of state law by the Secretary of State deprived thousands of ex-felons of even the right to register. Only Federal law can conclusively resolve the ambiguities in this area plaguing our voting system.

In addition to tainting this country's fundamental principle of the right to vote, denying voting rights to ex-offenders denies them of the opportunity to fully participate and contribute to their society. Disenfranchisement laws isolate and alienate ex-offenders, and serve as one more obstacle in their attempt to successfully reintegrate into society. Restricting voting rights, a critical tool of self-empowerment, can only lead to higher rates of recidivism, community apathy, and other social ills. We fail not just ex-offenders by denying them the right to vote, but the rest of a society that has struggled throughout its history to be legitimate and inclusive. Just like poll taxes and literacy tests prevented an entire class of citizens, namely African Americans, from integrating into society after centuries of slavery, felon disenfranchisement laws prevent ex-offenders from reintegrating into society after retribution.

Statistics on felon disenfranchisement indicate that congressional action is clearly warranted. The Sentencing Project estimates that 4.7 million Americans, or 1 in 43 adults, have currently or permanently lost the right to vote as a result of a felony conviction. 1.4 million or 13 percent of African American men are disenfranchised, a rate seven times the national average. Given current rates of incarceration, 3 in 10 of the next generation of African American men can expect to be disenfranchised at some point in their lifetime. An estimated 676,730 women are currently ineligible to vote as a result of a felony conviction. These statistics have prompted state responses. Most recently, Alabama, Nevada, Wyoming, and Connecticut, have adopted legislation that expands voting rights for ex-felons. We must now act at the Federal level.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE RUTH MCCLENDON

**HON. HENRY CUELLAR**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 15, 2005*

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Representative Ruth Jones McClendon for her dedicated service to the people of Texas.

Ruth McClendon has been a tremendous advocate for public safety and public health in the State of Texas. She is the creator of the Neighborhood Cellular on Patrol program, which has won acclaim from President George W. Bush for its effectiveness in reducing crime. She founded the Community Crime Prevention Network to fight neighborhood crime, sponsored legislation to support community policing and increase penalties for church burnings, and hosted a seminar with constituents to help them respond to gang activity.

While in the legislature, Representative McClendon passed two children's asthma bills, for which she received the American Lung Association of Texas Public Policy Award for 2001. She created a medical academy to prepare medical students to practice in inner city neighborhoods, and worked to pass a bill to dedicate \$400 million for a pediatric cancer center in San Antonio.

Her legislative activity has brought her numerous awards, including listings in the World's Who's Who of Women and Who's Who in Texas. She is a graduate of Texas Southern University, and holds an honorary doctorate from Guadalupe College Theological Seminary. She was the first African-American woman elected to the San Antonio City Council, and was named a 2003 Headliner by the San Antonio Chapter of Women in Communications.

Mr. Speaker, Ruth Jones McClendon has been a tireless and effective public servant, and a role model and guardian for her community. She deserves our gratitude, and I am pleased to have this opportunity to recognize her for her work.

**SOUTH PARK HIGH SCHOOL**

**HON. BRIAN HIGGINS**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 15, 2005*

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call your attention to the great South Park High School in Buffalo, New York, which this year is celebrating 90 years of excellence in educating western New York's young people.

Ninety-one years ago this week, on St. Patrick's Day, the people of South Buffalo broke ground at 150 Southside Parkway for the construction of what would become city of Buffalo Public School Number 206.

That same year, on June 1, the cornerstone was placed at PS 206, also known as South Park High School, marking the institution as the fifth public high school built in the city of Buffalo.