

chairing the council's Occupational Tax Committee. Among the many notable and worthy projects to which he has contributed vital energy and leadership was the placement of the "Eternal Flame" memorial in front of the Columbus Government Center, a project for which he and then-Councilor Bobby Peters led fundraising efforts in the private sector. His wisdom and counsel, especially in financial matters, are frequently sought by other councilors and by citizens in his council district, as well as throughout the city.

Jack Rodgers is known as a devout Christian, a longtime member and leader in Edge-wood Baptist Church of Columbus. He has often been called upon for invocations and other prayers in council meetings and on other public occasions.

His civic and social affiliations, which bespeak his dedication to service, include: the Rotary Club of Columbus; the Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center Board, of which he formerly served as vice-chairman; the Valley Rescue Mission, of which he is a former board member; president of the Heritage Educational Foundation; board member of the Columbus Technical College Foundation; and board member of the There is HOPE Foundation. His leadership qualities also have made him valuable to governmental associations: the Georgia Municipal Association; the National League of Cities; and the Georgia Municipal Association/Association County Commissioners of Georgia.

Today, as Jack Rodgers moves into retirement from government service, we honor him and thank him for all he has done for the benefit of Columbus, GA—as an elected official and as a private citizen dedicated to the good of others. His exemplary service to his community has set a standard of dedication and leadership that has inspired many and will inspire many others.

TRIBUTE TO MR. KEVORK S.
HOVNANIAN

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a most deserving business and community leader, Mr. Kevork S. Hovnanian. On Saturday, November 18, 2006, Kevork was honored as the Honorary Life Chairman and founder of the Fund for Armenian Relief at the New York Public Library.

Kevork has been a benefactor in his community for decades. His business successes have always been interposed by examples of community leadership in both the United States and Armenia. He has exemplified the pursuit of business consciousness and never compromised his commitment to providing "homes" and not just housing.

Kevork will leave a personal legacy marked by numerous accomplishments. In the 1980s, he partnered with the city of Newark to rejuvenate the areas impacted by the riots some thirteen years before. In 1996, the New Jersey Institute of Technology awarded him a President's Medal for "Distinguished Achievement

to an Outstanding Entrepreneur." Not three years later, his carer ethic earned him a place among other greats like Thomas Edison and George Gallup on the list of "Twenty Five Top New Jersey Business Leaders of the Century."

The achievements he has earned since his immigration to the United States have not made him forget his roots. Kevork has loyally contributed to the Armenian people in times of celebration and need. The Diocese of the Armenia Church and the New Jersey Council of Christians and Jews both named him Man of the Year in recognition of his aid to earthquake victims in Armenia.

He currently serves as the chairman of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund and Fund for Armenian Relief, which works for international development. This organization pledges to provide short and long-term plans for the economic and social development in Armenia. It is responsible for a variety of programs, ranging from soup kitchens to educational scholarships and implementing agricultural technology. There is a special focus on preparing Armenian youth as the future of their nation.

As much as he is an active part of the Armenian community, Kevork remains vigilant in providing available health services to children and families in the local community. In 2002, Mr. Hovnanian helped establish the K. Hovnanian Pavilion and the Alton A. Hovnanian Emergency Care Center at River-view Medical Center. The expansion of River-view provided the facility with a new pavilion and emergency care center, which now houses the most advanced emergency and critical care centers in the area. Earlier this year, he funded the first state-designated children's hospital in New Jersey's Monmouth and Ocean counties, named The K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital in his honor. Here, families can find dedicated and personal health professionals who treat their patients as if they were their own children.

Mr. Speaker, Kevork embodies the American dream. He came to America to escape political turmoil in Iraq, and through hard work and unwavering motivation, he is now able to realize that dream in others through his service to the community. His dedication and passion deserves the utmost recognition.

SIKHS CELEBRATE BIRTHDAY OF
GURU NANAK, FIRST SIKH GURU

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because earlier this month, about 15,000 Sikhs from all over the world celebrated the birth of the first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak, in his birthplace, Nankana Sahib, which is now in Pakistan. The Sikhs in attendance chanted slogans of "Khalistan Zindabad" calling for the liberation of the Sikh homeland, Khalistan. Over 3,000 Sikhs from Punjab were in attendance and many of them commented on how much better they were treated in Pakistan than in their own country.

A delegation of Sikhs met with Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. He pledged to build a road from Kartarpur, where Guru Nanak died and where there is a shrine to him, to the Indian border if India would build a road to the border also and repair a bridge at the border. This would enable Sikhs to go to Kartarpur and honor Guru Nanak whenever they choose to do so. I call on the governments of Punjab and India to build this road and fix the bridge.

The Pakistani government also issued an open invitation to Sikhs to come and visit Nankana Sahib whenever they wish with no restrictions, although they did express concern that agents of India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) would use this to come in and try to undermine Pakistan. That is a very real and legitimate concern.

It is tragic and offensive that the Sikhs who went to Nankana Sahib felt that they were better treated in Pakistan than in their own country. That just shows why the Sikhs in Punjab need to be free of Indian rule. The sovereignty of the Sikhs, recognized in the Indian constitution, was used in cancelling Punjab's water deals with India. It should be used by the Legislative Assembly to declare Punjab's independence, as the Sikhs did on October 7, 1987. Such a declaration from the legislature would carry a lot of weight.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come for the beacon of freedom, America, to take a stand. We can help to stop the tyranny and the repression by stopping our aid and trade to India until full human rights are restored to all people there. And it is time for a free and fair plebiscite in Punjab, Khalistan on the question of independence, as well as Kashmir, Nagalim, and wherever people seek their freedom. India promised Kashmir a plebiscite in 1948 and it has not yet delivered on the promise. When will "the world's largest democracy" decide that it is time for the people to enjoy the most basic of democratic rights, the right to self-determination? If India is the democratic country it says it is, what could be wrong with a simple vote?

I request the permission of the House to insert the Council of Khalistan's press release on the events in Nankana Sahib into the RECORD at this time.

SIKHS CELEBRATE GURU NANAK'S BIRTHDAY
WITH REVERENCE—AIR FILLED WITH
KHALISTAN ZINDABAD SLOGANS

WASHINGTON, DC, November 16, 2006.—More than 15,000 Sikhs came from the United States, Punjab, Thailand, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, and around the world to Nankana Sahib celebrate the 537th anniversary of the birth of their first Guru, Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh religion. Guru Nanak was born in 1469. This is the highest number of Sikhs who have attended the event since the partition of India. Over 3,000 Sikhs came from Punjab. At the celebration, the air was filled with slogans of "Khalistan Zindabad."

The delegation met with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in Islamabad on November 4. He welcomed the Sikhs with open arms and offered a road link between Kartarpur and the Indian border if India agrees to build a road on its side and repair the bridge. He said Sikhs were free to visit Kartarpur whenever they want without a visa. The Pakistani government has issued an open invitation to