

provide micro-lending to small businesses and to stimulate peaceful economic activities;

Encouraging, and allowing entry of, European and other foreign technical staff to enter Gaza and engage in assisting the private sector as well as non-governmental organizations in Gaza; and

Permitting entry of construction materials into Gaza necessary for the completion of \$300 million dollars worth of projects which have been suspended due to material shortages. These projects fall under the umbrella of international organizations including the United Nations Relief Works Agency, the United Nations Development Program, and the World Bank. The necessary materials can be earmarked for specific projects and their implementation can be supervised by these international organizations thereby avoiding improper usage.

I urge the U.S. Administration to help end the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and ensure the health, safety, and security for Palestinians and Israelis.

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#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. ALBIO SIRE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 14, 2008*

Mr. SIRE. Madam Speaker, I would like to state for the record my position on the following vote I missed on Tuesday, May 13, 2008. If present, I would have voted "yes" during rollcall No. 306 on H. Res. 1181, Expressing condolences and sympathy to the people of Burma for the grave loss of life and vast destruction caused by Cyclone Nargis.

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#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. RUBÉN HINOJOSA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 14, 2008*

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Speaker, I regret that I was unavoidably detained in my Congressional District in Texas on Tuesday, May 13, 2008. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes" on rollcall votes 306, 307, and 308.

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#### ISRAEL'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY

### HON. JOE SESTAK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 14, 2008*

Mr. SESTAK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and honor Israel on the 60th anniversary of its founding—May 14, 1948. Over the past 60 years, the United States and Israel have developed a close friendship based on our common democratic values and security interests. I strongly believe that it is in our Nation's best interest to further strengthen our relations with Israel and create a peaceful Middle East.

There are over 3,500 Holocaust survivors living in the Greater Philadelphia region, and many are in my district. These men and women serve as a constant reminder to me to the history and birth of this nation. I have been to Israel numerous times in the Navy, and I recently met with Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Salai Mender, and Commander-in-Chief for the Israeli Navy, Eli Marom, to discuss how our countries' relationship can be developed further.

Our conversation touched on our nations' economic relationship: the United States is Israel's top trading partners and American companies have significant investments in Israel's economy. I believe Congress has vested interest in continuing this economic relationship.

Furthermore, we discussed the state of Israel's military as well as foreign affairs, from Iraq and the Global War on Terrorism to the close relationship between Israel and the United States and their militaries. I firmly believe our economies would mutually benefit including the potential of a joint venture between the United States and Israel, such as the development of Littoral Combat Ships.

Joint ventures would result in great mutual benefit by providing not only greater interoperability between American and Israeli militaries—while also driving down costs for procurement by working together—but would also greatly enhance the already strong relationship between these two countries.

More than our common bond of trade and security, however, our people share the common belief of Theodore Herzl, who once said "if you will it, it is no dream." A safe and secure Israel is necessary not only for the people of Israel, but for the future of the democratic world. I stand here to affirm my commitment to enhancing the relationship between our nations and to congratulate Israel on its 60th anniversary.

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#### JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

### HON. ROBERT WEXLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 14, 2008*

Mr. WEXLER. Madam Speaker, it is an honor to join my colleagues in observing the third annual Jewish American Heritage Month, JAHM, which takes place over the entire month of May.

As you know, Jewish American Heritage Month allows us to annually recognize the historic contributions of the Jewish community to our Nation. The Jewish community has a rich history in the growth of America as we know it today, dating back nearly four centuries to the founding of our country, and it is essential that Congress along with local and State officials work together to promote greater awareness about the contributions of this multifaceted group of people to the fabric of America.

While American Jews make up only a small percentage of our Nation's population, their contributions have been significant in a number of arenas including technology, literature,

entertainment, politics, and medicine, as well as many other parts of our society and culture. In celebration of these contributions, communities across the Nation—including many in South Florida, which I am privileged to represent—have scheduled creative programming and discussion to honor these great Jewish Americans who have helped build this Nation.

The programming, which will take places across the country, will also provide an important platform for the discussion of Judaism and Jewish culture in areas of our Nation where Americans have had little or no interaction with members of the Jewish community. Given that anti-Semitism unfortunately remains prevalent throughout the country, it is more important than ever that we work to break down barriers and address ignorance and intolerance, which too often leads to anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and hate.

I am proud to stand with the American Jewish Community during the month of May to highlight past achievements and the ongoing contributions of a community that cares deeply about the well-being and future of this Nation. I urge all of my colleagues as well as the American people to join me in recognizing the myriad of contributions of the American Jewish community throughout this month and to take concrete steps to observe JAHM.

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#### RECOGNIZING THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR 2008 HONOR AWARD RECIPIENTS

### HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 14, 2008*

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding group of men and women in Northern Virginia. Each year, the Department of the Interior recognizes individuals who have contributed immensely to their departments with the Honor Awards Ceremony.

There are several types of Honor Awards that can be awarded to an employee: the Distinguished Service Award, the Safety Award, and the Valor Award. The Distinguished Service Award recognizes individuals that have gone above and beyond expectations and contributed to the Department. The Safety Award recognizes safety and health employees who performed outstanding service and played an important role in the Department. The Valor Award is given to individuals that demonstrated courage when they faced dangerous situations.

It is with great pride that we enter into the record the names of the recipients of the 2008 Honor Awards. Receiving the Distinguished Service Award: Ms. Barbara L. Chadwick; Mr. Robert Labelle; Mr. David Bama; Mr. Bruce Sheaffer; and The Safety Award: Ms. Louis Rowe.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all the men and women who serve in the Department of Interior. Their efforts, made on behalf of the American public, are selfless acts of heroism and truly merit our highest praise. We ask our colleagues to join us in applauding this group of remarkable citizens.