

In Virginia's 11th District, constituents of different backgrounds—including Chinese, Indonesian, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Malaysian—gathered on February 13th and 14th to ring in the New Year.

The celebration that many of my constituents attended was sponsored by the Asian Community Service Center and hosted by Luther Jackson Middle School in Falls Church, Virginia. This celebration was a testament to the rich cultural traditions that are often practiced by the residents of Northern Virginia.

To my constituents and all those who celebrate Chinese New Year, I wish you a prosperous Year of the Tiger.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL
DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Madam Speaker, today our national debt is \$12,402,054,835,588.68.

On January 6th, 2009, the start of the 111th Congress, the national debt was \$10,638,425,746,293.80.

This means the national debt has increased by \$1,763,629,089,294.88 so far this Congress.

This debt and its interest payments we are passing to our children and all future Americans.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Madam Speaker, I missed rollcall vote Nos. 17–19 on January 26, 2010. Had I been present, I would have voted:

Rollcall vote No. 17, Expressing support for designation of January 2010 as “National Mentoring Month”, “aye.”

Rollcall vote No. 18, Recognizing the importance of cervical health and of detecting cervical cancer during its earliest stages and supporting the goals and ideals of Cervical Health Awareness Month, “aye.”

Rollcall vote No. 19, Expressing support for the designation of January 10, 2010, through January 16, 2010, as National Influenza Vaccination Week, “aye.”

RECOGNIZING THE 2010 CHINESE
LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION
SPONSORED BY THE HAI HUA
COMMUNITY CENTER IN VIR-
GINIA

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speak-
er, I rise today to recognize the celebration of

Chinese New Year. This year marks the 4,708th year in the Chinese Lunar calendar.

In Virginia's 11th District, constituents of different backgrounds—including Chinese, Indonesian, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Malaysian—gathered on February 13th and 14th to ring in the New Year.

The celebration that many of my constituents attended was presented by the Fair Oaks Mall and sponsored by the Hai Hua Community Center in Virginia. This celebration was a testament to the rich cultural traditions that are often practiced by the residents of Northern Virginia.

This year, the Lunar New Year celebration also included a Lantern Festival celebration. The festivities consisted of cultural performances, demonstrations, and arts and crafts activities. To my constituents and all those who celebrated Chinese New Year, I wish you a prosperous Year of the Tiger.

THE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
SAFETY PROGRAM ACT OF 2010

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, together with Highways and Transit Subcommittee Chairman PETER A. DEFAZIO and the gentleman from Maryland (Ms. EDWARDS), I rise today to introduce the “Public Transportation Safety Program Act of 2010”, by request of Secretary of Transportation Raymond H. LaHood. I commend the Department of Transportation (DOT) for focusing its first legislative proposal on improving transit safety, and I am pleased to work together with Secretary LaHood and Federal Transit Administrator Peter M. Rogoff on this important initiative.

Currently, public transportation remains one of the safest modes of passenger travel. In recent years, the fatality rate for rail transit systems—such as subways and light rail—has decreased to just .002 fatalities per 100 million passenger miles. This is one of the lowest fatality rates of all surface transportation modes. At the same time, Americans are riding transit at record levels. The growth in transit ridership is almost triple the growth rate of the population, and substantially more than the growth rate for vehicle miles traveled on our nation's highways. This public transportation renaissance taking place in cities large and small across America further elevates the importance of transit safety, while also spotlighting an issue that is inextricably linked to safety—the state of good repair of public transit systems.

Unfortunately, the state of good repair of many transit systems has not kept up with the influx of new riders. Maintenance levels at many public transit agencies have decreased to a point where older, less safe rail cars, tracks, electrical equipment, and other assets are left in service long after their useful life. According to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), more than one-third of the total assets of the largest rail systems in the country are in either marginal or poor condition, and the estimated maintenance backlog for the na-

tion's rail transit systems exceeds \$80 billion. According to DOT's 2008 Status of the Nation's Highways, Bridges, and Transit: Conditions and Performance, an average of \$21.1 billion in annual capital investment is needed to bring all transit assets to a good condition by 2026. This level of investment represents an annual increase of \$8.3 billion—an increase of 64.8 percent—above current capital investment levels.

In addition to addressing this maintenance backlog, the Federal Transit Administration should strengthen its role in rail transit safety oversight. Currently, there are no nationwide mandatory minimum standards for rail transit safety. Unlike the Federal Aviation Administration and the Federal Railroad Administration, the Federal Transit Administration does not have the authority to directly regulate public transit systems. Instead, FTA oversees a State Safety Oversight (SSO) program which puts the safety oversight and enforcement responsibility for rail transit systems on States rather than the Federal Government. However, the legal authorities of the various state oversight agencies are limited and vary widely from State to State. According to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report in 2006, some States employ as few as 0.1 or 0.2 full-time equivalent positions dedicated to the safety of rail transit systems they are required to oversee. GAO also found that many SSOs lack sufficient financial resources and independence from the transit systems under their purview. The relationship between the Federal Government and States is a partnership, and a culture of safety must permeate this relationship, including at the Federal level. As in all partnerships, when one partner does not do his or her job well, the other must step in to help achieve their shared goals.

I commend the Obama administration for acknowledging the shortfalls of the current state-based safety system and I believe that the Department's proposal represents much needed improvements. It will assure that each State has an adequate number of fully-trained staff, that it has sufficient authority granted by the state legislature and governor, that it can compel compliance by the transit agencies, and that the state oversight entity has financial independence from the transit systems it oversees. I think those are reasonable propositions. Safety is our number one responsibility in transportation.

I would also like to applaud Secretary Ray LaHood for his leadership on this critical safety issue, and for directing DOT to take intermodal initiatives to enhance transit safety. This is a nonpartisan issue—protecting human life from injury or death. I appreciate the Secretary's decision to create a new, internal safety council designed to enhance the culture of safety at the Department. At a very basic level, we need to ensure that passengers feel completely safe as they board rail transit systems, as ensuring safety is a key component of creating livable communities, which is a goal that both Secretary LaHood and I share.

I look forward to working with the Department of Transportation on this proposal during consideration of the comprehensive, long-term surface transportation authorization bill. Improving transportation safety across all modes is a core principle of the “Surface Transportation Authorization Act”, and I look forward to

working with the Administration to further strengthen its transit safety provisions.

HONORING DR. RUTH SIMMONS

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Ruth Simmons who is President of Brown University and is the first African American to head an Ivy League institution.

Dr. Simmons began her life as the youngest of 12 children to a sharecropper in Grapeland, Texas. She spent her formative years in segregated Houston, and went on to complete a bachelor's degree on a scholarship from Dillard University in New Orleans. She completed her education with a master's degree and a doctorate in Romance literature from Harvard University.

Today, Dr. Simmons is regarded as one of the most notable people in academia and academic administration. Through the years, she has served as Dean at Princeton University and President of Smith College where she was responsible for starting the institution's engineering program. In 2001, she became President of Brown University, and there she has completed a \$1.4 billion initiative to enhance Brown's academic program entitled Boldly Brown: The Campaign for Academic Enrichment.

Dr. Simmons recently visited Dallas where the city's Brown University Club hosted her at a reception. Additionally, she attended a luncheon at St. Phillips School and Community Center, an institution dedicated to enhancing the lives of children and families with low and moderate income. We were very privileged to have Dr. Simmons visit our city, and I know that her personality and character will be an inspiration to the countless people that were privileged to meet her.

Madam Speaker, I encourage my fellow colleagues to join me in recognizing and honoring Dr. Ruth Simmons for her countless achievements and dedication to higher education. Additionally, I would like to personally thank her for visiting Dallas and inspiring people across our community to achieve their goals.

SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME
VICTIMS

HON. NITA M. LOWEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mrs. LOWEY. Madam Speaker, I would like to insert the following list of Shaken Baby Syndrome victims:

Cynthia Gibbs from New York,
Tanner Jurisch from South Dakota,
Cheyanne Huffines from Georgia,
Macie McCarty from Minnesota,
Jake Belisle from Maine,
Benjamin Zentz from Michigan,
Chole Salazar from New Mexico,

Madison Musser from Oklahoma,
Daniel Carbajal from Texas,
Nykkole Becker from Minnesota,
Gianna D'Alessio from Rhode Island,
Brynn Ackley from Washington,
Rachael Kang from Texas,
John Sprague from Maryland,
Ryan Sanders from Virginia,
Reagan Johnson from Virginia,
Brittney Sheets from New York,
Dalton Fish from Indiana,
Nicolette Klinker from Colorado,
Brianna Moore from West Virginia,
Shania Maria from Massachusetts,
Dayton Jones from Pennsylvania,
Breanna Sherer from California,
Evelyn Biondo from New York,
Kenneth Hardy from Pennsylvania,
Alexis Vazquez from Florida,
Joshua True from Washington,
Stephen David from California,
Michael Blair from Arkansas,
Olivia Thomas from Ohio,
Kaleb Schwade from Florida,
Aiden Jenkins from Pennsylvania,
Isabella Clark from Pennsylvania,
Aaron Cherry from Texas,
Skipper Lithco from New York,
Madilyne Wentz from Missouri,
Chelsea Forant from Massachusetts,
David Sedlet from California,
Joshua Cross from Ohio,
Taylor Rogers from Illinois,
Kaden Isings from Washington,
Hannah Juceam from California,
Sarah Donohue from New York,
Gavin Calloway from Maryland,
Kierra Harrison from Nevada,
Christopher Daughtrey from North Carolina,
Miranda Raymond from Pennsylvania,
Dominic Morelock from Ohio,
Emmy Cole from Maine,
McKynzee Goin from Oregon,
Bryce McCormick from Florida,
Dawson Rath from Pennsylvania,
Joseph Wells from Texas,
Stephen Siegfried from Texas,
Margaret Dittman from Texas,
Jamison Carmichael from Florida,
Bennett Sandwell from Missouri,
Amber Stone from New York,
Cassandra Castens from Arizona,
Gabriela Poole from Florida.

On behalf of these victims and many other innocent lives lost or damaged, I look forward to working with my colleagues to see that legislation becomes law so that we can expand efforts to eradicate Shaken Baby Syndrome.

HONORING MOLLY SABOLSKY, RECIPIENT OF THE HARRY F. BYRD, JR. LEADERSHIP AWARD

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Molly Sabolsky, a senior from W.T. Woodson High School in Fairfax, VA, for receiving a 2010 Harry F. Byrd Jr. Leadership Award. Senator Byrd developed the award to recognize and reward students that are strong academically and demonstrate leadership qualities. A \$10,000 scholarship is awarded to one student from each congressional district in Virginia.

Each high school in Virginia is able to nominate one student to compete for the award.

Students are nominated based upon their excellence in academics, leadership, good citizenship, and character. Molly Sabolsky embodies the reward through her academic achievement in the classroom and her leadership on the volleyball team.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in honoring Molly Sabolsky for being recognized by the Harry F. Byrd, Jr. Leadership for her academic success and leadership qualities.

HOUSTON LEADS NATION IN ENERGY STAR QUALIFIED HOMES

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 22, 2010

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, recently our Environmental Protection Agency announced a major milestone in saving electricity and avoiding greenhouse gases. One million Energy Star qualified homes have been built since the start of the program in 1992. \$1.2 billion has been saved on energy bills and we have been able to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 22 billion pounds. In 2009, Americans have saved more than \$270 million on utility bills.

I am proud to say that Houston, a portion of the second district of Texas, leads the nation, with 144,000 Energy Star qualified homes since 1995. Altogether, Texas cities hold 4 spots in the top 20 geographical areas.

Thousands of Texans are saving millions of dollars by being aware of their energy consumption, making smart energy choices, and getting the most bang for their energy buck. The guidelines to getting a house Energy Star labeled are strict, but using common sense when trying to save energy can prevent greenhouse gases. Homes must have effective insulation systems, high-performance windows, tight construction and ductwork, efficient heating and cooling, and high-efficiency lighting. Houston has the most of these homes, in a state where one-third of all electricity is used for air conditioning. That is almost three times the national average.

Studies have shown that if Texas embraces conservation and comprehensive sets of energy technology, our state could avoid building any new electric generating plants for at least 15 years. Right now in 2009, Texans have the highest average spending on residential electricity in the South. That is changing, and rapidly.

The Energy Star program has paved the way for a new, energy efficient America. Houston, Texas is at the helm and our nation's advances in efficiency and awareness show no signs of slowing.

And that's just the way it is.