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House of Representatives

A CONGRESSIONAL TRIBUTE TO THE CITY OF DOWNEY ON THE OCCASION OF THE CITY'S 50TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION.

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2007

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the City of Downey and ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating its residents on the city's recent 50th anniversary. I am honored to represent this unique and proud city as part of my 34th Congressional District of California.

Although we celebrate 50 years since the city's official incorporation, the history of Downey begins in the late 1700s when Spanish missionaries settled along the California coast. In 1784, former soldier Juan Nietos was granted provisional use of 300,000 acres of ranch land and, after his death, the portion of the land lying between the San Gabriel and Rio Hondo Rivers was carved out and named Rancho San Gertrudes. In 1873, a 96 acre parcel of the Rancho became the central district of a community called "Downey City." The town was named after John Gately Downey, an Irish immigrant who journeyed to California during the Gold Rush and later became governor of the state.

The development of Downey City began slowly. A tract map from 1873 shows a town consisting of only 16 blocks with ten acres for a railroad station. However, the small city prospered, soon becoming a commercial center for agricultural products and poultry raising. It was the agricultural industry that made it possible for Downey to sustain itself during the Depression.

By the early 20th century, Downey had become a haven for business, entering an era that became known as the city's "Golden Age." Downey's "Dare Devil" era brought the aviation industry to the city, and the Downey Board of Trade, known today as the Downey Chamber of Commerce, was founded.

The 1940s and '50s brought a population boom to Downey, growing from 12,000 residents in 1940 to over 86,000 residents by 1956. With its significant increase in population, Downey's leaders moved to incorporate, and on December 4, 1956, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved the incorporation of the city. The new City Council, under the leadership of the City's first mayor, James L. Stamps, were trailblazers, paving the way for the City's resounding future success.

Today, Downey boasts its "Future Unlimited" slogan and is a prosperous city that has managed to maintain its small town atmosphere. The city's residents and visitors can enjoy a wide range of activities: from great shopping to parks and museums; from golf courses to the Symphony Orchestra or the model City Library. Downey is where the Apollo Space program began its journey to the stars, and where you can find the world's oldest McDonald's and the site of the first Taco Bell eatery.

Fifty years since its incorporation in 1956, Downey has grown to a population of over 110,000 residents. The city serves as a hub for business, with California Business Magazine recently rating Downey in the top 25% of "100 Cities To Do Business In." Downey has made many outstanding contributions to the region, and was a leader in the founding of the "Gateway Cities Council of Governments." This partnership, comprised of 27 cities in Southeast Los Angeles County, effectively works to address the region's challenges, particularly with respect to transportation planning and economic development.

The City of Downey recently hosted a funfilled 50th anniversary celebration for its residents. The "Birthday Bash," which featured tunes honoring its hometown singing duo "The Carpenters," marked another milestone in the rich history of this city that I am so proud to represent. I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating Downey's first 50 years as this prosperous city looks toward its "Future Unlimited."