

Today, as part of National Teacher Appreciation Week, I want to thank each and every teacher for their amazing service to their students and this country.

On April 24th President Obama honored California Teacher, Rebecca Mieliwock, as Teacher of the Year in an event held at the White House. During the event on the 24th, the President sagely articulated that teachers in this country are not just working for their students or for their schools, but for the forward progress of our entire country. The American dream is first ignited in the classroom; only through effective support and funding of educators' crucial work can we hope to keep America exceptional in the 21st Century.

In February, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the RESPECT Program, an effort to promote collaborative teaching and professional development. It is an appropriate acronym and attribute for this profession. As an educator of more than 30 years, I have boundless respect for those that embrace the awesome responsibility of educating our children. Teachers must have our boundless gratitude, support and respect every day of the year.

Many people can point back to one teacher or class experience in elementary, high school or college that made a big impact on their life. This is the immense affect teachers have upon students. I can still remember Mr. Williams, my chemistry and physics teacher, at San Jose High School. It was through his influence and impact that I pursued a degree in the sciences at San Jose State University. A path that led me to become a teacher myself, a principal, a school board leader and ultimately a champion for teachers and students in Congress.

I encourage everyone during National Teacher Appreciation Week, to take a moment to remember their favorite teacher and to share a story with your family, friends and colleagues. America's continued and future success begins with each teacher and student. Educators from sea to shining sea have a lasting impact upon shaping, developing and encouraging students to thrive and flourish within our schools. These dedicated and hard-working men and women are the key to our nation's future.