result of high visitation levels, Congress in the last major federal highway and transit reauthorization law known as TEA 21 required the Secretaries of Transportation and Interior to undertake a study of alternative transportation needs in National Parks. The study found a pressing need to increase transit opportunities in order to relieve traffic congestion, enhance visitor accessibility, preserve sensitive resources and reduce pollution. However, it identified a number of barriers to implementing successful transit systems in National Parks, including the lack of a dedicated funding source.

The TRIP bill carries out the study findings by establishing a Transit in Parks Program to be administered by the Secretary of Transportation (Federal Transit Administration) and the Secretary of the Interior (National Park Service). The program would generally follow existing law requirements for mass transportation as it relates to the planning and development of transit facilities and would create a transit counterpart to the Federal Highway Administration's Parkways and Park Roads program. The legislation proposes a $90 million annual allocation for the Transit in Parks Program from the Mass Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund.

It should be noted that the National Park Service is currently using on average $11 million of its $165 million annual Parkways and Park Roads allocation for alternative transportation. This amount is insufficient to meet the alternative transportation needs for units of the National Park System identified by the TEA 21 study of approximately $90 million a year. Moreover, as the study noted, this shift in funding increases the gap between available funding and the amount needed to maintain the rapidly deteriorating and already underfunded park roadway system.

Currently, we are squandering some of our most unique natural resource heritage contained in units of the National Park System as a result of a relatively small investment in alternative transportation facilities. It is my hope that the funding in this bill will be additive to the extensively documented but unmet rural and urban transit funding needs which must be addressed in the TEA 21 reauthorization.

THE MENTALLY ILL OFFENDER TREATMENT AND CRIME REDUCTION ACT OF 2003

HON. TED STRICKLAND

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 5, 2003

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act, the companion to a bill introduced in the Senate today by Senator DEWINE.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, over 16 percent of adults incarcerated in U.S. jails and prisons have a mental illness. In addition, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention reports that over 20 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system have serious mental health problems, and many more have co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders.

These statistics, however, cannot adequately describe how devastating the combination of untreated mental illness and the criminal justice system can be for both an individual and the system. Today I had the pleasure to meet Tom Lane. Tom, a 43-year-old man who lives in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, now works for the National Alliance of the Mentally Ill (NAMI) as the Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs. However, just a few years ago in July 1997, Tom was suffering from severe depression. He was a cabinetmaker who had sustained a head injury from a construction accident that caused him to have seizures and prevented him from working. When he called a suicide hotline, police were dispatched. The officers put him in jail, where he did not receive treatment for depression and was not allowed to take his anti-seizure medication. When he started suffering two seizures a day, he was hospitalized. Upon his release from the hospital he still did not receive any treatment or recommendation of treatment for his mental illness and for days he slept in the bushes outside the hospital. Fortunately, Tom was eventually able to contact his family from a pay phone and they came to his rescue. Once he began receiving treatment, Tom was able to get back on his feet. Today he is a highly functioning, highly effective professional advocate for people with mental illness.

Tom's story illustrates how easy it is for a person with mentally illness to become entangled with the criminal justice system. Untreated mental illness often leads to behaviors that attract the attention of police officers. If a person with mentally illness does not receive treatment, his or her condition almost definitely will worsen when they are in custody. Generally, the criminal justice system is not equipped to identify and ensure people with mentally illness find appropriate treatment programs, either through diversion into community treatment or within a jail or prison. The bill I am introducing seeks to make sure people like Tom Lane don't fall through the cracks. It encourages collaboration between the mental health treatment and the criminal justice systems. This collaboration is essential for ensuring mentally ill offenders are given the treatment they need.

The Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act of 2003 is phase two of an effort that started in the 106th Congress, when Senator DEWINE and I successfully passed America's Law Enforcement and Mental Health Project (P.L. 106–515). This bill created a Department of Justice grant program assisting State and local governments with the establishment of mental health courts. Mental health courts—which are modeled on drug courts—provide specialized dockets in non-adversarial settings to bring mental health professionals, social workers, public defenders and prosecutors together to divert mentally ill offenders into a treatment plan. The goals of a mental health court are to expand access to mental health treatment, improve the community's response to mentally ill offenders, and reduce recidivism among the mentally ill population. I am pleased that this program has been incredibly popular.

The Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act of 2003 will build on America's Law Enforcement and Mental Health Project by providing additional resources for communities that wish to create mental health courts. The new bill represents a significant commitment to addressing the needs of both the criminal justice system and the mentally ill offender population. The bill will create a grants program for communities that will provide resources for diversion programs across the spectrum of the criminal justice community, including prebooking diversion programs like those that have been so successful in Los Angeles, California and Memphis, Tennessee. Communities will be able to design programs that provide mental health treatment in jails and in prisons. And finally, grants will be available for transitional or aftercare programs that seek to ensure offenders are provided appropriate treatment and care when they transition from jail or prison back into the community when they have completed their sentences.

The bill is intended to give communities much flexibility to design and operate the programs they identify as most appropriate for meeting their needs, and grant funds will be able to be used for planning, establishing a structure, and funding treatment. All successful grant applicants will be required to demonstrate collaboration between the criminal justice and mental health treatment agencies in a community. Too often, mentally ill offenders fall through the cracks because the relevant systems in a community do not work together. This lack of collaboration is detrimental to both the mentally ill offender as well as the stability of the criminal justice system. Therefore, criminal justice and mental health treatment agencies will be required to apply together for the grants established by the bill, compelling the collaboration that is needed to get those who are mentally ill and coming in contact with the criminal justice system the mental health and substance abuse treatment they need. In addition, the bill requires that grant applicants ensure mentally ill offenders are connected to education, job training and placement, and housing programs.

In addition, the bill calls for an Interagency Task Force to be established at the Federal level. Task Force members will include: the Attorney General; the Secretaries of Health and Human Services, Labor, Education, Veterans Affairs, and Housing and Urban Development; and the Commissioner of Social Security. The Task Force will be charged with identifying ways that Federal departments can respond collaboratively to the needs of mentally ill adults and juveniles.

I strongly believe that encouraging collaboration at the Federal, State, and local levels of government is essential to ensuring that people with mental illness are able to access the mental health treatment and other support programs they need.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass this bill and make our communities safer for all.

APPLAUDING THE RECENT ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE ILLINOIS STATE LEGISLATURE REGARDING THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

HON. ROBERT E. ANDREWS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 5, 2003

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today in strong support of the recent actions taken by the Illinois state legislature regarding the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), a proposed amendment to the Constitution which would unequivocally guarantee equal gender rights under the law. As many of my colleagues are certainly aware, the Illinois State Assembly recently voted on and passed the ERA, clearing the way for their counterparts in the Senate to consider this crucial legislation at the conclusion of their current recess. If Illinois' State Senate agrees to ratify the ERA, then only two more state ratifications will be necessary for this long overdue amendment to be added to our Constitution.

Some people have argued that the addition of an ERA amendment to the Constitution would simply be a change in semantics and nothing more. I strongly disagree. Presently, on average, women receive only 76 percent of the pay that men receive for comparable full time positions. Inequities such as these are inexcusable; they are disastrously damaging not just to women, but also to their families. Through the ratification of an Equal Rights Amendment, women would have an expanded legal basis to call for equal compensation for equal work.

Although the Equal Rights Amendment may have faded from the public spotlight at times, the movement to include women in the Constitution never died, and it is growing vigorously once again. Women had to wait until 1920 to be granted the right to vote under the Constitution. While this was certainly a monumental development, it has not produced full gender equality. The 14th Amendment, granting ''equal protection of the laws,'' did not, and still does not, fully protect women from damaging gender discrimination. Only an Equal Rights Amendment would ensure the Constitutionally guaranteed full equality that women deserve.

The ERA was originally passed by Congress in 1972, along with a seven-year time limit for ratification. In 1979, Congress extended the time limit for three more years, leaving the deadline at 1982. Within a decade of the initial 1972 passage, the amendment had been ratified by 35 states, three short of the necessary 38. For many years after that, the ERA was, for technical reasons, generally considered ''dead.'' However, legal analyses indicate that with just three more state ratifications, the ERA may in fact meet the requirements to be added to the Constitution. As has been verified by several legal experts, the fact that the time limit appears in the proposing clause rather than the text of the legislation leaves this deadline open to adjustment. When Congress chose to extend the deadline in 1979, a precedent was set; subsequent sessions of Congress may adjust time limits placed in proposing clauses by their predecessors. These adjustments may include extensions of time, reductions, or elimination of the deadline altogether.

It is therefore possible for current or future sessions of Congress to eliminate the deadline originally placed on ratification of the ERA, thus allowing the amendment to be added to the Constitution once it is ratified by three more states. This ''three state strategy'' is a very real possibility, and I have introduced legislation into the House of Representatives, H. Res. 38, to ensure that action will be immediately considered by Congress once three more state legislatures ratify the ERA.

Put simply, it is time for the Constitution to be amended to include an amendment which ensures gender equality for all Americans. Today, unlike some times in the past, the American people are decidedly ready for Constitutionally-guaranteed equal rights for men and women. A July 2001 nationwide survey by Opinion Research Corporation showed that 96 percent of American adults believe that male and female citizens of the U.S. should have equal rights, and 88 percent believe that our Constitution should explicitly guarantee those rights. Having the ERA in the Constitution will simply recognize what the American people already want—equal justice under the law.

Many leaders both here in Congress and in state legislatures are advocating for the ''three state strategy,'' as well as a renewal of the ERA by Congress through a second passage of the amendment. I feel that anyone who is serious about guaranteeing equal rights to women should be supportive of both of these approaches. It does not matter how the ERA is eventually made part of the Constitution, as long as guaranteed gender equality rights are the end result.

As the Equal Rights Amendment reads, ''Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.'' The ERA is unfinished business for the Constitution. It will be achieved, and present and future generations of women—and men—will thank us for it, and wonder why it took so long. It is simple justice, it is long overdue, and it is time.

INTRODUCTION OF FOCUS ON COMMITTED AND UNDERPAID STAFF FOR CHILDREN'S SAKE ACT

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 5, 2003

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues Mr. PLATTS, Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island, Mr. ANDREWS, Mr. SERRANO, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. SOLIS, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Mr. KILDEE, and Mr. SANDERS in introducing the FOCUS Act. This legislation would be an important step in increasing child care quality for all children.

High-quality child care can play an important role in healthy child development and school-readiness. Just as it is the parents who matters at home, it is the teachers who matter in child care. One of the most critical components of quality child care is a stable and qualified teaching staff. Children learning from more highly educated teachers perform better on tests of verbal and match achievement. Yet, child care staff—who have the responsibility of helping guide children's development—are among the lowest paid workers in America. In 2000, the average hourly wage for a child care provider was $8.16, which is approximately $16,980 annually. Moreover, most providers do not receive health insurance or paid leave and the annual turnover rate is about 30 percent. Academic and government studies conclude that low pay is one of the leading causes of poor quality child care. Low wages keeps qualified providers from remaining in the field and deters new providers from entering the field. A 2001 report by the Center for Child Care Workforce and the University of California Berkeley found that centers are losing qualified staff because of low wages and are forced to hire less qualified replacements. The study also found that not only are wages extremely low, but they are not keeping pace with cost of living increases. States report centers are closing or turning away children because they cannot properly staff their programs.

FOCUS directly addresses the problems low pay creates by providing stipends to qualified child care staff based on the level of education. This legislation would be a mechanism to assist States increase the pay of child care workers and to improve the overall quality of child care. The bill would supplement wages by a minimum of $1000 per year for providers with child development associate credentials and a minimum of $3000 per year for providers with B.A.'s in the area of child development. These stipends will help attract new qualified workers to the field and increase the retention and skill level of current workers. FOCUS also would provide funds for scholarships so that we can continue to increase the qualifications of the child care workforce.

Research on early childhood and brain development clearly demonstrates that the experiences children have early in life have a decisive, long-lasting impact on their later development and learning. We cannot expect children to transition to kindergarten and succeed in school if we do not take the necessary steps to provide quality care in the years prior to school entry. The average quality of child care is far poorer than what it should be in a country as wealthy and committed to our children's future as is ours. It is time we work to make quality child care for all children a national priority. Mr. Speaker, I urge Members of the House to join me and co-sponsor the Focus Act.

THE NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGES ACT OF 2003

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 5, 2003

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, I am most pleased to introduce the Native American Languages Act Amendments of 2003, with Representatives NEIL ABERCROMBIE and DON YOUNG as original cosponsors.

This vital legislation will authorize the Secretary of Education to provide grants to or enter into contracts with Native American language educational organizations, Native American language colleges, Indian tribal governments, organizations that demonstrate the potential to become Native American language educational organizations, or consortia of such