They state that Americans are opposed to their politically motivated ''partial birth'' abortions. They don't acknowledge that Americans believe the choice should remain with my family.

Almost nine years have passed since we lost Abigail, and not a day passes that I don't think of her. In my heart I know I did the right thing for me and my family.

EXPLANATION OF VOTE ON CONFERENCE REPORT ON FY 2004 DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, the final version of this legislation continues our shared bipartisan commitment to boost the income for all of our military personnel with a 4.15-percent average increase in base pay. This is an important testament to the brave men and women who risk their lives to defend America's freedom.

In addition, this conference report extends several special pay provisions and bonuses for active duty personnel through December 31, 2004. It reduces the average amount of housing expenses paid by service members from 7.5 percent to 3.5 percent in FY 2004 and eliminates the out-of-pocket expense completely by FY 2005. It increases the family separation allowance for service members with dependents, worldwide, from $100 per month to $250 per month for the period beginning October 1, 2003 and ending December 31, 2004. Finally, it increases the rate of special pay for those subject to hostile fire and imminent danger, worldwide from $150 per month to $225 per month for the period beginning October 1, 2003 to December 31, 2004.

While I am not satisfied with the provisions in this conference report regarding concurrent receipt for military retirees, it does provide some, overdue redress for this out-of-date policy.

But on balance, I am opposing this final conference report because I fundamentally disagree with key aspects of its policy presumptions and prescriptions. On balance, it will make America less safe in an increasingly unstable world.

First and most importantly, the growing reliance upon nuclear weapons that this legislation encourages makes our nation and the world less safe, not more so. Accordingly, I strongly disagree with the funding in this bill to continue work on high yield, burrowing nuclear ''bunker-busters'' that target underground military facilities or arsenals. I am equally opposed to the language in this bill that lifts the ban on research leading to low yield ''mini-nuclear weapons'' of 5 kilotons or less.

Last April, I sent a letter to President Bush that was co-signed by 34 of my colleagues to convey our grave concern that he is weakening long-standing U.S. policy governing the use of nuclear as opposed to conventional weapons. I regret that we have never received a substantive reply from the President. That congressional action coupled with the examples I've cited and other provisions in this conference report further undermine the U.S. nonproliferation efforts of Republican and Democratic Presidents alike and heighten growing international fear that Bush Administration's policies are fueling a new nuclear arms race.

Second, I am opposed to the blanket exemptions from our nation's environmental protection laws for the Pentagon in this bill. There is no convincing evidence that environmental laws like the Clean Air Act and the Endangered Species Act hinder our military's capacity to defend our nation.

But you don't have to take my word for it. Former EPA Administrator, Christine Whitman, testified to the Congress that she does not ''believe that there is a training mission anywhere in the country that is being held up or not taking place because of environmental protection.'' Furthermore, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) has reported to the Congress that the Pentagon has failed to produce any evidence that environmental laws have significantly affected our military readiness.

I do not think the Pentagon or any other federal agency should be above the law. Moreover, current law already allows case-by-case environmental exemptions for the Pentagon, when they are determined to be in the national interest.

Finally, this conference report also contains provisions that will be very harmful to hundreds of thousands of dedicated civilian men and women who make our Defense Department work.

Last year saw the largest government reorganization in more than 3 decades with the creation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, affecting 170,000 federal employees. Following extensive congressional debate, Secretary Ridge was granted authority to establish a more flexible that attempted to protect basic worker rights.

But this legislation will give Defense Secretary Rumsfeld broad authority to rollback worker protections for hundreds of thousands of Pentagon employees. There will be nothing to prevent agency managers from abusing their power for political advancement or engaging in discriminatory practices. Allowing managers the ability to waive such protections under the guise of national security and the need for greater flexibility is wrong. It will not make us safer.

Thanks to this legislation, Secretary Rumsfeld will be able to do away with the current personnel system in the Pentagon. I am unwilling to give the Bush Administration a blank check to undo, in whole or in part, many of the civil service laws and protections that have been in place for nearly a century to safeguard against the return of an unfair patronage system.

I want to be very clear. I support a strong national defense. I support modernizing our military. I support giving our troops the resources and training they need to keep our nation secure. But I cannot support this conference report which contains provisions that will take our military backwards, rather than forwards. I cannot support legislation that will re-ignite a global nuclear arms race, even as our troops in Iraq and elsewhere risk their lives every day to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. I cannot support legislation that takes away the rights of hundreds of thousands of hard-working Pentagon employees Finally, I cannot support legislation that disingenuously claims that stripping away important environmental protections here at home will somehow bolster our national security.

IN MEMORY OF KESH

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, his full name was Nayaran Dilip Keshavan Ayyangar, but everyone simply knew him as Kesh. Kesh was a journalist, a Hill staffer, a community activist and a friend to anyone who cared passionately about the political, economic and cultural relationship between his adopted country, the United States, and his native country, India.

Last Thursday, November 13th, Kesh was doing what he had done for the past 2 decades. He was advocating that India's interests were in confluence with the United States'. He had just finished taping an appearance on Lou Dobbs's Moneyline on CNN. Ten minutes after leaving the studio, Kesh was dead of a massive heart attack at the young age of 53.

Mr. Speaker, as a former Chairman of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans, I know first hand the gravity of the loss both countries have suffered. Not only was Kesh's knowledge of U.S. India relations comprehensive, the breadth and depth of his contacts, here in Washington and back in Delhi, was truly amazing.

A review of Kesh's career will give our colleagues an idea of why Kesh was such a critical player in the U.S India dialogue. For the past 2 years Kesh served as President of the New York City Chapter of the Indian American Forum for Political Education. Prior to that he was the Executive Director of the India Caucus here in this body. And for more than 15 years before coming to Capitol Hill, Kesh was a distinguished journalist, serving as Editor in Chief of the India Post, as the Washington Bureau Chief of the Indian American, as a reporter for the Washington Times and as the Chief Diplomatic Correspondent for the New York City Tribune. Kesh was educated here in the U.S. at the School of Journalism at Syracuse University and also in India at Osmanis University in Hyderabad, where he obtained a journalism degree, and at Andhra University, where he was awarded a degree in pharmacy.

Mr. Speaker, I am certain all members of this body join me in expressing our condolences to his father, a former head of the Indian Geological Survey, his sister, and his many friends, both here in the United States and back in India. We have all lost a devoted public advocate. Kesh's loss will be felt for many years.

HONORING SARGENT SHRIVER

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the dedication, spirit, and accomplishments of my good friend Sargent Shriver who celebrated his 88th birthday last week. I met Sarge while I was in Peace Corps Training in Questa, New Mexico in 1963. He was a hero figure: handsome, smart, engaging, and the President's brother-in-law. We were all so proud of being chosen to be in one of the