

I have known General Martin since he took command of AFMC in August 2003. I have received briefings from him and can assure you he is an authoritative and powerful speaker. General Martin is a man who is honest, provides a straight assessment and has the highest degree of ethics. His service honors the Air Force and our country. In providing an assessment of the need to transform the Air Force acquisition process, in classic style, he declared, in a delivery that would shame Jack Nicholson, the problem is: "some people can't handle the truth."

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2361,
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED
AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS
ACT, 2006

SPEECH OF

HON. JEB HENSARLING

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss funding for veterans' healthcare. As the son, grandson, and brother of veterans, I understand just how important this funding is to our brave men and women who have answered the call of duty to serve their country. Since coming to Congress, it has been one of my greatest pleasures to be able to provide our veterans with the care and the treatment they deserve.

Since 1995, Congress has increased spending on veterans by more than 59 percent—an average increase of 6.9 percent per year. During this Congress alone we have increased the death benefits and life insurance coverage of our Armed Services personnel. We have also provided funding for specialty mental health care for the first time ever, increased funding for the treatment of conditions like Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, and doubled funding for mental health care issues. This is indeed a record to which we can all be proud.

I was also proud to cosponsor H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act, in the 108th Congress. With the agreement of the House and Senate, another version of this bill was passed and signed by President Bush in order to allow certain military retirees to receive both their longevity retired pay and veterans disability compensation. As Speaker of the House J. DENNIS HASTERT noted, "Congressman HENSARLING's strong support for our nation's veterans and concurrent receipt legislation was critical to ensuring that we achieved the most significant, positive step forward for veterans in our nation's history."

Unfortunately, sometimes Congress can fall short. For instance, the Fiscal Year 2004 Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill, fell \$1.8 billion short of what was agreed to in that year's budget resolution. This inadequate level for funding for veterans healthcare greatly concerned me, and that is why I voted against the bill. When thousands of veterans were waiting 6 months or longer for healthcare, I did not believe that it was the time to skimp on needed resources.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the House of Representatives voted on the Fiscal Year 2006 Department of the Interior, Environment, and

Related Agencies Appropriations bill. Included as part of this legislation was \$1.5 billion in funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs to cover an anticipated budgetary shortfall for the current fiscal year. I am very pleased that the House of Representatives has approved the funding necessary to ensure that they receive the medical care they deserve. However, because the underlying legislation to which we attached this important provision violated the budget we agree to abide by earlier this year, I found myself in the difficult position of having to vote against this legislation.

There were a number of alternative methods that could have been used to alleviate this problem—methods that would not have violated the budget. Most notably, we could have amended H.R. 3130, which was approved unanimously by the House of Representatives on June 30, 2005, to provide the necessary funding levels. This broadly supported measure would have demonstrated our firm commitment to our veterans, and it is unfortunate this alternative was not utilized.

Mr. Speaker, in the end the greatest threat to adequately funding the needs of our veterans is Congress' seemingly inherent inability to control runaway wasteful spending in our budget. Each and every time we spend another dollar on wasteful measures like bullet-proof vests for K-9s, bridges to nowhere, or an underground cafeteria in the Carlsbad Caverns, is a dollar that is not available for our veterans.

One of Congress's most solemn obligations is to care for our veterans. I remain committed to funding 100 percent of the benefits veterans have earned through their service and sacrifice to our country. I will continue to work with Members of Congress to explore ways to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs gets the money they need within the rules of our budget agreement. I will not however, support legislation to grow the budget of another department, such as this bill would have done with the Department of the Interior, at the expense of our veteran's and our children's future.

COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAM

HON. JOE KNOLLENBERG

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 29, 2005

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, the Cooperative Development Program, CDP, of USAID serves an important role in America's international development assistance. For a modest annual investment, credit unions and cooperatives can have a greater opportunity to flourish through the work of the World Council of Credit Unions and other non-governmental cooperative development organizations.

In a world where three billion people live on less than \$2 a day, access to safe and sound financial services is essential to helping people build better lives for themselves. The World Council of Credit Unions, WOCCU, works to strengthen credit unions implementing technical assistance programs to improve credit union performance so that these non-for-profit cooperative financial institutions can offer an array of client-responsive services, extend their geographic coverage, and harness technology.

Created by the vision of the U.S. credit union movement, WOCCU has been implementing their technical assistance programs for over 30 years. Prior to WOCCU's formation in 1970, the Credit Union National Association, CUNA, had an international division called CUNA Global Projects dedicated to overseas credit union activities. Today, CUNA and their state league system, representing 86 million credit union members in the U.S., work with WOCCU to promote credit union growth in developing countries.

Through the current funding cycle of USAID's CDP, WOCCU will spend the next 4 years working with credit unions around the world and focused in Afghanistan, Kenya, the Philippines, Ecuador and Nicaragua to build networks—expanding low-cost transaction services for members, including remittances; creating enabling environments; training credit union managers and board members; and extending credit union operations to difficult operating environments, including HIV/AIDS-affected communities, conflict-prone zones and poverty-entrenched rural areas.

Credit unions and cooperatives provide hope for economic prosperity through grassroots businesses that provide jobs, income, basic education and democratic experience. I will continue to support the USAID Cooperative Development Program to sustain overseas cooperative development in developing countries and emerging democracies.

MEDICAID IS IMPORTANT FOR
PEOPLE AND CHILDREN WITH
SERIOUS ILLNESSES

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 29, 2005

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, as we approach the 40th anniversary of Medicaid on July 30, I want to underscore the importance of Medicaid to children and adults with serious illnesses. Medicaid is a public health insurance program that helps 52 million low-income and disabled Americans, including 540,000 Virginians, stay healthy. Nationally, half of Medicaid enrollees are children.

Medicaid is particularly important to people with serious illnesses. Medicaid can be the only way to pay for care.

Many people with serious illnesses must turn to Medicaid for several reasons. Many insurance policies have a lifetime upper limit of \$1 or \$2 million. Approximately 51 percent or 87.5 million people with employer-based insurance have a lifetime cap, according to a 2004 Kaiser Family Foundation survey. Many private insurance plans impose pre-existing condition and other exclusions and refuse to insure people with serious illnesses and disabilities. Many working Americans do not have job-based health insurance because their employers do not offer it. The cost of individual health insurance policies is often out of reach. And most Americans are too young for Medicare.

A serious, chronic illness can be emotionally and financially devastating. While we have made great strides in treating cancer today, everyone fears cancer. In 2004, 1.4 million new cases of cancer were diagnosed. In 2005, 34,000 Virginians will have cancer, says the