

teachers when Ms. Porter took over. She took immediate steps, such as finding music students from the University of Minnesota to teach the band members. And she reached out to the community, and the community responded.

Mr. Speaker, the crescendo of support started with the Brooklyn Center Rotary Club, which saw the problem and marched forward. Under the leadership of "Mr. Brooklyn Center," Phil Cohen, past Rotary President Carrie Engh of Bremer Bank Brooklyn Center and current President Frank Slawson of American Express Financial Planners, the Rotary Club contributed \$10,000.

The Lions Club also made financial contributions and the Brooklyn Center Business Association held a golf tournament to help the band. And the Brooklyn Center Taxpayers Association pitched in, too. The people of Brooklyn Center have really come together to support the band.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Porter's inspired leadership and the band's hard work resulted in the Grammy Foundation personally delivering the \$15,000 Grammy Enterprise Award to the band at Brooklyn Center High School!

Chris Porter and Chanel Chatham received a well-deserved standing ovation. The tremendous outpouring of affection and support for the band made it all worthwhile!

The story of the Brooklyn Center High School Band even brought tears to the eyes of singer Kelly Clarkson, who was a guest of honor at the event. The story reminded Clarkson of her own high school band, and the story has warmed all of our hearts.

From the trombones to the tubas, the Brooklyn Center High Band is truly playing a joyful tune! There was a lot of hard work that went into this masterpiece.

Thank you, Chris Porter and the wonderful Brooklyn Center High School Band, for bringing so much great music into our lives and the lives of young people. You have all showed us that hard work, creativity, talent and the right instruments can make a beautiful song!

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 5631,
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AP-
PROPRIATIONS ACT, 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 26, 2006

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation.

The Defense Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2007 funds our military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, among many other things. It is very similar to the Defense Authorization bill that I supported in the Armed Services Committee and on the House floor.

The bill provides \$447.6 billion in funding, including \$70 billion in emergency funds to support military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This grand total represents about 55 percent of the entire Federal discretionary budget. Overall defense spending has risen 40 percent since September 11th and is more than currently being spent by the rest of the world combined.

Appropriating \$70 billion for the so-called bridge fund is realistic and necessary, be-

cause we must support our men and women in uniform, but I also believe the Administration must begin to take responsibility for the full cost of the war in Iraq and consider these costs through the regular appropriations process. There is no "emergency" here—we know that since this bridge fund would take us only halfway through fiscal year 2007, we should be expecting another request before the year is over. With total costs for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan crossing the half trillion dollar point after passage of this bill, the American people deserve greater candor from the Administration about both the predictable costs as well as the anticipated benefits of our undertakings in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Although I don't agree with the "emergency" designation, I'm pleased that the conferees saw fit to increase the bridge fund levels to include \$17.1 billion to replace and refurbish Army equipment. This is the amount General Schoomaker testified that the Army needed in fiscal year 2007 to fully fund its reset program. It's true that even with this funding, the Army will still need tens of billions of dollars over the coming years for equipment rehabilitation and recapitalization—but this is an important start. The bridge fund also includes funding for Marine Corps equipment and body armor as well as \$549 million to cover costs of the enhanced insurance and death gratuity benefits.

I am pleased that the conference report fully funds military pay, benefits, and the pay raise of 2.2 percent for the base force. It also includes language that I advocated for prohibiting funding for permanent U.S. bases in Iraq.

I remain concerned about rising costs of weapons systems that have yet to be fully funded, such as the Future Combat Systems and missile defense program, among others. A recent report from the Department of Defense identified 36 major weapons systems as having significant cost overruns. And yet Congressional Budget Office projections are that we'll need to increase defense budgets by 17 percent per year simply to sustain the current force structure and weapons programs. And this is happening at the same time that operations and maintenance and personnel costs—as well as training and recruiting costs—are rising.

So Mr. Speaker, this conference report is not perfect. It does not solve or attempt to solve some of these looming budget problems. But overall, it deserves to pass and I urge its approval.

CONGRATULATING VINCENT D.
MURRAY ON RECEIVING THE
HAROLD W. MCGRAW, JR. PRIZE
IN EDUCATION

HON. JOHN LEWIS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 2006

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Vincent D. Murray, who will receive the prestigious Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education. Mr. Murray has been the principal of Henry W. Grady High School in Atlanta, Georgia since 1991.

Mr. Murray has been chosen for the prestigious 19th annual award for his leadership in transforming his inner-city public school into a higher achieving institution in which graduation

and college-going rates consistently have risen above the district and state averages.

Sixty-six percent of Grady High students are African American and 44 percent qualify for free or reduced price lunch. When Murray joined Grady High, more than a third of all freshmen were held back and repeated their freshmen year. The student body's passing rate on the Georgia graduation test was below the statewide average.

Mr. Murray has been consistent in his efforts and focused on innovative reform. The result is that today, four out of every five graduates go directly on to college or university, including Ivy League institutions. Average scores on the graduation test, SAT and Advanced Placement exams exceed district, state and national averages. Graduation rates have risen 38 percentage points for African-American students (to 84 percent), 26 points for economically disadvantaged students (to 86 percent) and 25 points for white students (to 97 percent). As a result of Murray's success in transforming Grady High, the U.S. Department of Education recognized him in 2000 with the Department's Title I Distinguished School Award. In 2006, the governor of Georgia named him a High Performance Principal, a top honor in the state.

Mr. Murray has a bachelor of arts degree in history and English from Morehouse College, a master of arts degree in early childhood education from the University of Georgia, and a doctorate in psychology/learning disabilities from Boston University. He has pursued post-doctoral studies at Clark-Atlanta University and Georgia State University.

I salute Mr. Vincent D. Murray for his outstanding contributions to education. He has dedicated himself to improving education in this country and his accomplishments continue to make a difference.

URGING THE CENTERS FOR MEDI-
CARE AND MEDICAID TO RECON-
SIDER IVIG REIMBURSEMENT

HON. CHARLIE NORWOOD

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 2006

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring your attention to a very important issue relating to medical reimbursement by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The Medicare Prescription Drug Improvement Act and Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA) created new reimbursement mechanisms for IVIG therapies. CMS's implementation of the MMA has resulted in reduced access to life-saving therapies for Medicare beneficiaries. CMS potentially closed the door to medical treatment when they issued the CY 2007 proposed rules for the physician fee schedule and the hospital outpatient prospective payment system, which, if implemented, would effectively limit IVIG treatment by not properly reimbursing providers.

IVIG is a vital medical service. It is a plasma-derived therapy tailored to the individual's diseases and treatment options to achieve optimal results. Nearly 10,000 Medicare beneficiaries are afflicted with primary immune deficiency (PID) which only responds to IVIG therapy. For many Americans there is no substitute for IVIG treatment.