

stood out as a community leader. In 1987 Mr. Cotton helped to build New Bethel M.B. Church. He established the Beat 4 Community Club and served as president for several years. Mr. Cotton has raised funds for different organizations. He is a strong supporter of the McAdams High School Football team.

Under the leadership of Mr. Jerry Lewis, President of the NAACP Attala County Chapter, Mr. Cotton is the leader in soliciting memberships for the chapter. Mr. Cotton has worked diligently in the political arena, helping his community stay abreast of political issues. He has served as a Trustee of New Bethel M.B. Church for the past 30 years, where he has helped to secure needed funds for the Church's many programs. Mr. Robert Cotton is a World War II Veteran and served 3 years and 8 months overseas. On November 10, 2010, Mr. Cotton celebrated his 91st birthday.

FEBRUARY IS JEWISH DISABILITY
AWARENESS MONTH

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 16, 2011

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Jewish Disability Network, a coalition of over 20 Jewish organizations, for its advocacy on behalf of the rights of disabled Americans. This February marks the third Jewish Disability Awareness Month, organized to push for greater recognition of the needs and concerns of disabled Americans.

Jewish tradition recognizes the importance of inclusion and prizes the ability of every person to participate fully in their community. Today, over fifty million Americans are living with a disability. Tragically, too many of them face barriers that lock them out of employment, housing, education, or health care. They are denied the opportunity to be productive and our society is denied the benefits of their abilities.

Only 21 percent of people with disabilities are employed full or part-time. One in six people with disabilities has not completed high school, 28 percent live in poverty, 19 percent have gone without needed health care at least once during the past year, and 34 percent lack access to adequate transportation. We are making progress through legislation like the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and through continued investments in IDEA, job training, health care and technology assistance. Those commitments must continue and we should reject budget cuts that would reverse the gains we have already made.

We must strive for inclusion. A 2010 survey by the Kessler Foundation and the National Organization on Disability found people with disabilities are less likely to socialize with friends and family, to go to restaurants or to attend religious services on a regular basis. Jewish Disability Awareness Month seeks to focus on the barriers that create isolation and remove them. The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, a leader of the Jewish Disability Network, puts it this way: "Stumbling blocks come in many forms, from less-than-accessible buildings, Shabbat services, prayer books and web pages to health care that is

harder to access or isn't sufficient for people with disabilities. We are obligated to remove these stumbling blocks."

Jewish Disability Awareness Month is an opportunity not just to highlight problems but to promote solutions. Doing so is not that difficult, nor does it need to be costly. One-third of disabled workers can be accommodated for no cost, and 80 percent of job accommodations cost less than \$500. The average added cost for homes built with accessibility features is between \$100 and \$600, while retrofitting a home can cost several thousand dollars. Enactment of legislation like my Inclusive Home Design Act can help bring and keep people with disabilities in our communities.

Today, the Jewish Disability Network will hold a Congressional briefing on ways to expand access to employment and education and protect the civil rights of the disabled. This month, congregations across the country will undertake activities to engage people with disabilities in their communities: taking disabled seniors to a meal or museum, providing lunch and learning sessions for parents of disabled children, or helping young disabled adults develop leadership skills in a social context. Throughout the year, the Jewish Disability Network works to put its principles of participation and inclusion into practice.

I am proud of those efforts, and I encourage my colleagues to learn more about them. Again, I want to congratulate Rabbi Lynne Landsberg, senior adviser for disability issues at the Religious Action Center; David Feinman, senior legislative associate of the Jewish Federation of North America; and the many others who are leaders in this critical initiative.

FULL-YEAR CONTINUING
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. CAROLYN MCCARTHY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 15, 2011

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1) making appropriations for the Department of Defense and the other departments and agencies of the Government for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2011, and for other purposes:

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Chair, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Rep. HOLT, for serving as my designee, and offering Amendment No. 12 during consideration of the Commerce Justice Science title of HR. 1. The amendment seeks to ensure that there is consistent funding included in the CR to implement the NICS Improvement Amendments Act of 2007, which became law in January 2008. In addition, I would like to thank Rep. DINGELL for his unfailing support for NICS and support for this amendment. He has been a long time NRA member, and a long time supporter of responsible gun laws.

The National Instant Criminal Background Check System, or "NICS", is a national database system that keeps track of individuals disqualified under current law from purchasing and possessing firearms. The NICS Improvement Amendments Act, signed into law in January 2008, requires all states to provide NICS

with the relevant records needed to conduct effective background checks.

The NICS Improvement Act provides grants to states and territories to update their records and transmit the records to the NICS database. Since the law was enacted, several states have benefitted from the grant program including Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, Illinois, New Jersey, Texas, Wisconsin and my home state of New York.

This law imposes no new restrictions on gun owners and does not infringe on the 2nd Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens. It simply makes improvements to a program that saves lives, and the bill was supported by the NRA.

In FY11, the law was authorized at \$375 million, and the appropriation level was \$20 million in FY10 and carried into FY11 through the current CR. While I believe that this program is a vital component in our fight against crime and should receive the fully authorized funding, I understand that tough decisions have to be made in this economic environment. That is why I am not seeking the fully authorized funding level, but instead am simply asking that we remain consistent and continue to fund the program at the FY10 level.

We need to give this program a chance to work and provide adequate funding to ensure that NICS has up to date records. Millions of criminal records are currently missing from the databases that make up NICS due to funding restrictions and technology issues at the state level. As a result, people who should not be obtaining guns, do.

This point is underscored by the circumstances surrounding the shootings at Virginia Tech. Under current law, the shooter in the Virginia Tech massacre should not have been able to purchase a firearm, but tragically he did. His information never made it into the national NICS system. He slipped through the cracks and he was able to purchase two handguns, and used them to brutally murder 32 individuals. Sadly, this same scenario happens every day.

The NICS Improvement Act has been effective. Since the NICS Improvement Act was signed into law, the number of state records of prohibited gun purchasers in the system has increased dramatically. According to Dept of Justice data, in Jan 2008 there were about 402,000 disqualifying mental illness records submitted from the states and territories to NICS. In August 2010, that number had more than doubled with 930,000 records submitted. The National Center for State Courts estimate that more than 2 million disqualifying mental illness records should be in the NICS, based on responses from only 42 of 56 U.S. states and territories.

Based on this data we are missing more than half of the records that should be in the NICS system. Clearly there is more work to be done and by continuing to fund this program at FY10 levels, we will continue the effort to keep guns out of the hands of people who should not have them. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment and express that it is the intent of Congress that funding for the NICS Improvement Amendments Act be maintained at the FY10 level.