amount is less than what was originally requested by the President for section 8 renewals, I am confident that HUD can meet the challenge of using this money in a cost-effective and sensitive manner.

The other good news concerns service coordinators. These staff persons work in section 8 projects to assess the daily living activities of residents and tailor a package of services that gives residents access to community services. Every day service coordinators help to save the lives of elderly and disabled persons who need help. When I learned that the money for this program had expired, and that service coordinators at the Westerly Apartments in Cleveland and other locations would soon be dismissed, I wrote to members of the Appropriations Committee asking that money be made available to keep this important program operating. I was very pleased to see that this appropriations bill states that ''at least $7,000,000 shall be used for grants for service coordinator and congregate services for the elderly and disabled.'' This money will allow HUD to renew all of the service coordinator grants that are expiring in the near future. The bill states that it is the intention of the U.S. Congress that the service coordinator program extend into the future. I commend the House and Senate conference committee for their willingness to maintain this vital assistance to elderly and disabled citizens.

During an era in which all government agencies are called upon to make hard decisions about how our tax dollars are used, this appropriations bill makes a number of wise choices. I therefore urge my colleagues to support this measure.

CONGRATULATIONS TO GAIL A. HOFFMAN FOR HELPING TO BUILD A BETTER ATLANTA

HON. JOHN LEWIS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 9, 1997

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce that Gail A. Hoffman, a resident of Georgia's Fifth Congressional District, once again has been recognized for her work to improve communities in Atlanta. The National Crime Prevention Council and Ameritech have selected Ms. Hoffman to receive the Ameritech Award of Excellence in Crime Prevention. Ms. Hoffman's efforts to work with troubled communities and to bring individuals from all walks of life together makes her worthy of this acknowledgment.

Ms. Hoffman is the president and executive director of the Bridging the Gaps project. BTG is a nonprofit organization with a mission to empower ethnically diverse communities, public and private organizations, and law enforcement with the ability to improve the quality of life for Georgia's refugee and immigrant communities.

BTG was created in 1987, after Ms. Hoffman and then Detective M.C. Cox began convening meetings with the Multicultural Crime Task Force to help confront increasing gang activity in the Asian community. Through these meetings, Ms. Hoffman recognized that, because of cultural differences and communication barriers, non-English speaking people feared the police and felt unsafe because they believe that they are not protected from crime. As a result, Ms. Hoffman developed BTG and several related projects.

To help bridge the cultural divide, BTG created a computerized language bank that contains the names of bilingual officers and civilians interested in translating for public safety officers and the courts. Law enforcement training courses, including language specific classes and community education programs, have helped eliminate communication barriers and cultural stereotypes among non-English speaking people and public safety officers. BTG has published a ''Personal and Home Safety Orientation Manual for Refugees and Immigrants'' manual in 11 different languages.

BTG also has convened approximately 120 meetings between public safety officials and ethnic communities. The project provides homework assistance, peer counseling, and English as a second language assistance to Southeast Asian youth who are vulnerable to gang recruitment activities. BTG provides youth support groups in five counties to assist over 150 refugees make positive life choices.

States throughout the country are interested in creating similar programs like BTG. Thanks to Ms. Hoffman's problem solving and leadership, better communication and understanding exist among Atlanta's diverse ethnic groups.

I thank Ms. Hoffman for the hard work and dedication that allowed her to earn the Ameritech Awards of Excellence in Crime Prevention. I applaud the National Crime Prevention Council's dedication to helping individuals fight crime and build community. I appreciate Ameritech's commitment to supporting crime prevention initiatives. I ask my Colleagues to join me in congratulating Gail Hoffman and other hard-working individuals who make a difference in their communities.

THE CLOCK IS TICKING ON THE PANAMA CANAL'S TRANSFER

HON. PHILIP M. CRANE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 9, 1997

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, in just over 2 years, the United States will transfer control of the Panama Canal and our adjacent bases to Panama under the terms of the 1977 Panama Canal Treaties. Already, preparations for this transition are underway. At this moment, U.S. military forces are scheduled to be drawn down in the region from the 5,600 that remain, out of the traditional 10,500 U.S. troops stationed there, to 4,400. The significance of this process, its imminent completion, and the impact it could have on the U.S. economy and the security of the region cannot be understated. For this reason, I am reintroducing a resolution today calling for the negotiation of a base rights, canal operation and security agreement with Panama that provides for a continued U.S. military presence in the region after December 31, 1999.

More than 80 years ago, the United States completed construction of the 51-mile-long interoceanic ship canal across the Isthmus of Panama, one of the great engineering marvels of its or any age. Since then, this man-made waterway has served the maritime nations of the world almost without interruption, enabling ships to travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific and vice versa much faster and cheaper than would have been otherwise possible. For more than 80 years, the U.S. military has stood watch over the canal from a series of bases located in a 10-mile-wide strip of territory adjacent to the canal. From that position, the United States has been prepared to respond effectively not only to immediate threats to the canal itself, but also to other problems that could have eroded hemispheric peace and security. By December 31, 1999, however, the United States forces on these bases must be withdrawn and control over them and the canal will be transferred to Panama. In preparation for this date, the U.S. Southern Command recently moved to its new headquarters just west of Miami.

The great importance of the Panama Canal to our country cannot be overlooked when you consider that 15 percent of U.S. seaborne trade, and 5 percent of the world's, passes through its locks. These figures become even more significant when you take into account that trade comprises nearly 30 percent of our gross domestic product [GDP], and that roughly 25 percent of U.S. economic growth in the last 4 years has come from increased exports. As a mature economy, it is clear that the United States must seek to open new markets to our products for our economy to continue to grow and create high paying jobs. For this reason, as chairman of the Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee, I have supported Chile's accession to the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA], as well as the trade liberalization underway through the Summit of the Americas and the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation [APEC] forum, and the initiation of a trade policy toward sub-Saharan Africa. However, it only takes one look at a globe to recognize the critical importance of the Panama Canal to getting U.S. exports to their destinations overseas. Absent the canal, U.S. products would have to be transported via more expensive routes, adding to their overall cost and decreasing their competitiveness in foreign markets. On this basis, it is clear that continued growth in U.S. exports and job creation is, at least in part, dependent on the regular operation of the Panama Canal well into the 21st century.

For all of these reasons, the United States national interest compels us to seek the negotiation of an agreement with Panama that will: First, allow the United States to leave military bases in Panama past the turn of the century; second, permit U.S. military forces to operate out of those bases; and third, enable the United States to guarantee the regular operation of the canal. At present, the administration is conducting negotiations with the Panamanians to provide for a continued United States presence in Panama. However, I believe that a continued U.S. presence is meaningless without also having the ability to intervene to guarantee the canal's security and insure its regular operation.

It is clear that the conclusion of such an arrangement would also benefit Panama, as 6,000 Panamanian citizens are currently employed on U.S. bases, and $200 to $600 million in additional income for Panama is tied directly to the United States military presence in the region. Moreover, a poll of Panamanians published in March found that 72 percent of those surveyed would like the United States bases to remain open after their scheduled closure date. Similar polls have shown that