

churches, PTAs, unions, fraternal organizations, service clubs, and political parties, just to name a few. A belief in the power of collective action has shaped the history of our nation from the American Revolution to the civil rights movement. Alexis de Tocqueville, who studied American life in the 1830s, wrote that "Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations." I am always impressed by how these organizations bring out the energy and talents in people. Every problem in the country I encounter is being addressed and ameliorated by some group.

But I am concerned about declining involvement of citizens in the community. In recent decades, many traditional community organizations have suffered declines in membership and participation. For example, the number of volunteers for the Boy Scouts and the Red Cross has dropped substantially since 1970; labor union participation has dropped by half since the mid-1950s; the League of Women Voters, Jaycees, and Lions have all seen double-digit drops in membership levels in the last 20 or 30 years. Anyone who has worked in an enterprise that depends on volunteers knows how difficult it is to recruit and keep them.

Several possible explanations for this change have been suggested. Some say that stagnant wages and a rapidly changing economy, coupled with the movement of women into the labor force, mean that citizens don't have the time to devote to community causes they once did. Americans now tend to move more often, hindering their ability to put down roots. In addition, adults are marrying later, divorcing more, and having fewer children than they did a generation ago—significant factors given that married, middle-class parents are the most likely to be civically involved.

Others note that technology, particularly the advent of the TV, has dramatically changed the way we spend our leisure time. Instead of going to a dance at the local lodge or gathering at the coffee shop, we may watch a movie on the VCR or log on to an Internet chat room. Technology allows us to spend less time in face-to-face contact with our neighbors. Americans' civic involvement seems to parallel the change in leisure activities. Although traditional civic organizations are less popular now, other groups, like the Sierra Club and the American Association of Retired Persons, have grown in recent years. For many, though, membership consists primarily of paying dues and reading a newsletter, rather than attending regular meetings and planning events. Many professional associations have also grown, and for some of us the workplace has supplanted the neighborhood as our primary focus for social interaction.

Why civic involvement matters: Communities benefit in a number of ways from the active involvement of citizens. First, citizens come to feel a greater stake in the community's welfare. I visit many schools in southern Indiana every year, and it is clear that one of the strongest factors in the quality of the school is the involvement of the parents. Many anti-crime programs have become successful only because citizens came together to address the problem.

Second, civic organizations have always sought to address problems the government didn't or couldn't solve. Voluntary efforts continue to play a huge role in the provision of services to needy Americans—from food banks to pre-school programs. Americans have always been suspicious of big government, but they also have a strong sense of compassion. Civic organizations allow them to reach out to those who need help.

Third, civic participation can act as a buffer against the potent forces of individual-

ism—which sometimes devolves into selfishness—and allow us to exercise other important values, like cooperation, altruism, and negotiation. I often find Americans emphasizing freedom almost to the exclusion of responsibility, and expressing their gratitude for being citizens of the best country in the world while failing to perceive the need to fulfill the duties of good citizenship. Civic participation can remind us that along with the individual liberties we prize comes responsibility to seek the common good. Working with others toward a shared goal also helps build bonds of trust, thus serving as an antidote to cynicism.

Fourth, civic participation also fosters participation in the political process. In southern Indiana the people who come to my public meetings are often also the same people who are active in civic organizations. They take seriously their right and responsibility to participate in government. And the skills of negotiation and compromise learned through civic involvement are the lifeblood of democracy.

Conclusion: Fortunately, we still have many groups that have a remarkably salutary effect, channeling the energy and talents of individuals into public service for the betterment of the community. Civic participation is not obsolete, but an essential part of improving the quality of life in the nation. Americans, I believe, retain their desire to help their families and communities, but they must do it within the realities of two-career families, hectic lifestyles, and rapid changes in the economy and in their careers.

We have to work to strengthen civil society. Ultimately, this will depend not on government, but the acts of individuals. We do have to be sensitive to the way in which government can impinge on the activities of civil society and to the manner in which the workings of our government and economy can disrupt the good efforts of individuals and families. Dismantling the government is not the answer, but neither is more government. Both a prudent but limited role for government and a strengthened civil society are needed.

I am not suggesting that we could or should try to turn back the clock to the 1950s, or that all hope is lost. A recent poll of young adults showed high levels of interest in public service. We should, however, think about ways to reinvigorate civic life in light of the realities of the 1990s, and try harder to find ways to encourage Americans to become full participants in the civic life of the nation.

#### NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION REAUTHORIZATION

SPEECH OF

**HON. LOIS CAPPS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 14, 1998*

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in favor of this bill to reauthorize the National Science Foundation.

I am particularly pleased that this bill is finally moving to completion. I know that my late husband, Walter Capps, worked on this legislation last year and I share his dedication to ensuring the continuation of the good work of NSF. I want to commend and to thank Chairman SENSENBRENNER and my colleague from California, Mr. BROWN, for their outstanding work on this legislation.

This bill authorizes \$3.8 billion for Fiscal Year 1999 and \$3.9 billion in FY2000 in fund-

ing for the NSF, worthy and much needed increases in funding for math and science research. This bill also contains a provision to encourage the NSF to donate equipment to schools to enhance science and math programs. I believe strongly that we must ensure that all of our schools have access to the latest in high tech equipment to give our kids the skills they need to compete in the 21st century.

I have spent my professional life in the fields of health care and education. I know full well the value of research in these areas and can personally attest to the value of math, science and engineering education in our schools. In my district, for example, the University of California, Santa Barbara, has received numerous NSF education grants. One of the grants helped fund a 4-year Teacher Enhancement program to assist 750 K-8 math teachers in several local counties. California Polytechnic State University, in San Luis Obispo, has done some great work on math curriculum development and building interactive math models on the Web with NSF grants.

Much is said today about the need to educate our children for the increasingly competitive environment of the 21st century. I agree with that viewpoint. However, I also believe that education inspires individual and personal growth, which inevitably leads to a more civilized and prosperous society. That is also what these NSF programs achieve. The National Science Foundation's mission to sponsor research and encourage new thinking in education is a critical element for our economic growth as we move into the 21st century.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

#### TRIBUTE TO GENERAL GEORGE WILLIAMS

**HON. FRANK RIGGS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 15, 1998*

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say a special thank you to Brigadier General George "Nick" Williams, U.S. Air Force, for the complete professionalism he always displayed while Commander of the 60th Air Mobility Wing (AMC) at Travis Air Force Base, California.

During his two years at Travis, Brig. Gen. Williams has overseen a great deal of change. One of our most vivid memories of his tenure as base commander, will be the massive construction program that is making Travis the showcase of the Air Force.

Especially noteworthy has been his emphasis on projects which have improved the quality of life of the troops he was responsible for. He has overseen the completion of over \$140 million in infrastructure improvement projects, including: A modern maintenance squadron building; a fire station; a state-of-the-art KC-10 hangar; a KC-10 simulator facility; four squadron operations buildings; a first class Health & Wellness Center; two Child Development Centers; five improved dorms; sixty-two military family housing units; a new officer and enlisted club; and, the largest BX in the Air Force. He has also helped to plan an ambitious expansion of the commissary schedule for next year.