

H and Future Farmers of America in school, and continues to support these organizations. Geneva served as president of the Tulare Kings Chapter of California Women for Agriculture, and also on the State Board. She is active in the Farm Bureau, and represents agriculture in the classroom.

Mildred "Micki" Parker, of LeGrand, CA, taught at both Chowchilla and Merced High Schools. She was a sponsor of the American Field Service and advisor to Future Business Leaders of America. She and her husband Richard farmed almonds for many years. After her retirement from teaching, she actively participated in day-to-day farm operations. Micki has been active in the Merced area with the County Area Agency of Aging, Community Action Board, Women's Club and Farm Bureau. She is also a member of the Merced Chapter of California Women for Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Common Threads Award winners. These women have shown outstanding involvement, not only in agriculture, but in strengthening their respective communities. I urge my colleagues to join me in wishing these honorees a bright future and continued success.

CELEBRATING OUR AMERICAN
HEROES

HON. STEVEN T. KUYKENDALL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, like many of my colleagues, I spent the recent district work period participating in celebratory events for African American History Month. I saluted the heroism of Eric Davis on the baseball diamond and in his fight against colon cancer, John Bryant of Operation Hope—our first non-profit investment banking organization, and Vernon J. Baker, a Purple Heart, Medal of Honor, and Bronze Star recipient for acts of valor in World War II.

Let me tell you a little about Vernon. Second Lieutenant Baker served in the Army and fought in World War II. On April 5–6, 1945, Second Lieutenant Baker destroyed enemy installations, personnel and equipment during his company's attack against a strongly entrenched enemy in mountainous terrain. When his company was stopped by the concentrated fire from several machine-gun emplacements, he crawled to one position and destroyed it, killing three German soldiers. Continuing forward, he attacked an enemy observation post and killed its two occupants. With the aid of one of his men, Second Lieutenant Baker attacked two more machine-gun nests, killing or wounding the four enemy soldiers occupying these positions. He then covered the evacuation of the wounded personnel of his company by occupying an exposed position and drawing enemy fire. On the following night, Second Lieutenant Baker voluntarily led a battalion advance through enemy mine fields and heavy fire toward the division objective.

Like Vernon, African Americans have played an integral role in defending American ideals since this country's origin. Their willingness to serve this country dates back to the Revolutionary War and their service as "privateers" in America's first merchant marine. They fought in the Battle of Concord, crossed the

Delaware River, and served in the Continental Army. Thousands served in the War of 1812, protected New Orleans when threatened in 1815, and fought with the Party of Lincoln to achieve emancipation. Almost 400,000 African Americans fought alongside white infantrymen in World War I, though they had to do so in segregated units and in the face of widespread misinformation that African Americans lacked the intellectual ability to serve their country. Today, almost 25% of our armed forces are African American.

We seldom hear of the acts of individual courage displayed by our African American vets. Yet, the simple act of signing up to serve—and facing bigotry, discrimination, and segregation head on—is at least as heroic as the act of serving this country. Even today, though, our history books lack real substance about the full contributions of soldiers like Vernon Baker to our military legacy. Recognizing their contribution, even if it takes African American History Month to prompt us, is the first step we must take.

Ultimately, the contribution of men like Vernon Baker should be remembered not as the contribution of an African American, but as the contribution of an American soldier. To quote Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, "Not color, not race, not religion, not pedigree of family, nor place of birth, not social standing, not size of his bank account, not his trade, nor her profession" makes one an American. "An American is one who loves justice and has a deep and abiding respect for the dignity of men and women. An American will fight for his freedom and that of his neighbor. An American will forgo ease and property and security in order to preserve for himself and for his children the rights of free men and women."

I proudly salute Vernon Baker, as well as Eric Davis and John Bryant, for their fight to preserve for all the rights of free men and women. I salute each, not because he or she is an African American, but because they are Americans, fighting for collective ideals and to make the world safe for all of us.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LEE TERRY

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained during rollcall vote 31. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay."

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE
NADLER SOCIAL SECURITY BILL

HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I am here today because, as the ongoing national dialogue at tests, the Social Security system is at a crossroads. The decisions we make this Congress will have aftershocks that will be felt well into the second half of the 21st century. Concern for our children and our children's children demand that those decisions be made carefully, seriously, and compassionately—keeping in mind Social Security's historic commitments.

Today, I am announcing the introduction of a comprehensive Social Security plan that will preserve the system while staying consistent with certain key values that have always provided the heart and soul of the nation's most popular social program: this plan does not raise the retirement age, it does not cut benefits, it does not raise tax rates, and it does not shift the risk onto individuals through individual private accounts funded by FICA taxes.

These are not academic considerations. They are the guiding principles of a program that has risen literally millions of human beings out of the wrenching grip of poverty—poverty that for so long was too often synonymous with old age or disability. For over half a century, they have been part of what defines Americans as a people.

President Clinton has already put forth an excellent framework to strengthen Social Security and Medicare and increase private savings, which keeps the system solvent until 2055. My plan builds on this firm foundation, but takes an extra step to completely eliminate the projected 2.19% actuarial deficit. According to the Social Security Actuaries, my plan brings the Social Security System into long-term actuarial balance for the foreseeable future—at least 75 years.

Briefly, here's how we do it. My plan implements the President's proposal to authorize the transfer of 62% of the projected budget surplus to the Social Security Trust Fund for a period of 15 years. It creates an Independent Social Security Investment Oversight Board that is authorized to hire private managers to invest a higher, though still prudent, portion of the Social Security surplus into index funds. And it increases—and then indexes—the cap on taxable wages, without removing the cap altogether. Currently, 93% of wage earners earn less than the cap, and will be totally unaffected. Under current law, less than 85% of all wages is subject to FICA contributions; this has slipped in recent years from the historic 90% due to the dramatic rise in disparity of wages. Raising the cap will restore the historic level, while affecting only the richest 7% of the population.

These steps will ensure the solvency of Social Security for at least 75 years, while ensuring the guaranteed benefits Social Security provides to seniors, individuals with disabilities, widows, widowers, and children. And—I can not say this often enough—it does so without raising the retirement age, without cutting benefits, without raising tax rates, and without shifting the risk onto the backs of individuals. This is meaningful, responsible legislation, and I intend to do my best to make sure my colleagues give it the hearing it deserves.

H.R. 475, MILITARY SPOUSES

HON. PATSY T. MINK

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, recently I introduced H.R. 475, extending eligibility to use the military health care system and commissary stores to un-remarried former spouses of a member of the uniformed services in certain circumstances.

Current law provides health and commissary benefits to un-remarried former spouses who

meet the 20/20/20 rule—those who were married to military personnel for at least 20 years, whose spouse served in the military for at least 20 years, and whose marriage and spouse's military service overlapped for 20 years.

A problem that frequently arises is that many members who retire upon attaining 20 years of service were married a year or two after entering active duty. The overlap of their service and marriage is just short of 20 years. Thus regardless of the subsequent length of marriage the spouse can never meet the criteria requiring the 20 year overlap.

H.R. 475 would eliminate this current inequity by extending to un-remarried former spouse's medical care and commissary benefits if the member performed at least 20 years of service which is creditable in determining the member's eligibility for retired pay and the former spouse was married to the member for a period of at least 17 years during those years of service.

This inequity affects not only individuals in my district, but spouses in every district across the Nation. Since the original introduction of this legislation, I have received letters and phone calls from Massachusetts, Idaho, California, Ohio, Arizona, Florida, Washington, Maryland, Kansas, and Utah.

The Department of Defense has stated that by providing a more liberal entitlement to these individuals, we would "tax" the Department's resources thus increasing the budgetary requirements. Well, I say it is worth it when I read about a woman from Arizona who was married to her husband for 36 years, but because she married him 1 year after his initial enlistment, she missed the 20–20–20 rule by 11 months. These stories are tragic, and we can do something to remedy this unfairness.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 475.

TRIBUTE TO BEVERLY PANKRAT
OF GIRL SCOUT TROOP 563

HON. SPENCER BACHUS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to salute an outstanding young woman who has been honored with the Girl Scout Gold Award by the Cahaba Girl Scout Council in Birmingham, Alabama. She is Beverly Pankrat of Girl Scout Troop 563. She has been honored for earning the highest achievement award in U.S. Girl Scouting. The Girl Scout Gold Award symbolizes outstanding accomplishments in the areas of leadership, community service, career planning and personal development. The award can be earned by a girl aged fourteen through seventeen, or in grades ninth through twelfth.

Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., an organization serving over 2.5 million girls, has awarded more than twenty thousand Girl Scout Awards to Senior Girl Scouts since the inception of the program in 1980. To receive the award, a Girl Scout must earn four interest project patches, the Career Exploration Pin, the Senior Girl Scout Challenge, as well as design and implement a Girl Scout Gold Award project. A plan for fulfilling these requirements is created by the Senior Girl Scout and carried out through

close cooperation between the girl and an adult Girl Scout Volunteer.

As a member of the Cahaba girl Scout Council, Beverly Pankrat began working toward the Girl Scout Gold Award on November 9, 1997. She completed her project, Introduction to the Internet and Web Page Design, and I believe she should receive the public recognition due her for this significant service to her community and her country.

TRIBUTE TO HERNANDO PINZON—
RETIRING AFTER 15 YEARS OF
CONGRESSIONAL SERVICE

HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, Today I rise to pay tribute to Hernando Pinzon, of Milwaukee, who will retire March 31, 1999, after 15 years of dedicated service on my District Office Staff.

Hernando was one of my very first hires when I was elected to Congress in a special election in the spring 1984. He has tirelessly served the residents of Wisconsin's 4th Congressional District ever since.

Hernando has a sign on his Milwaukee office door which reads "I put veterans first. May I help you?" That statement sums up Hernando's dedication to the men and women who have served, or who are currently serving, in our nation's armed forces. As my constituent liaison for veterans and military issues, Hernando works daily to ensure that these individuals receive the benefits and honors they deserve. From handling insurance and retirement matters for military families, to obtaining well-deserved military medals for service men and women that were overdue many years ago, Hernando certainly puts veterans first.

As my District Office liaison for Hispanic issues, Hernando has attended countless Hispanic Chamber of Commerce meetings and events on Milwaukee's south side. He has truly been my "eyes and ears" at Hispanic events, bringing numerous issues to my attention and making it known to the community that I am ready and willing to help.

But Hernando's first priority is of course his family. His wife Maria and his two children Carla and Hernando are the real joys of his life. I know that he is looking forward to spending more time at home. In fact I understand that Maria has enough remodeling projects lined up to keep him busy around the house for quite some time!

Best wishes, Hernando, on your well-deserved retirement. We will miss your dedication, your patience, and your quiet humor. May you and your children enjoy the years to come by bicycling, hiking and fishing as you have enjoyed many Milwaukee summertimes in the past. God Bless.

SOCIAL SECURITY EARNINGS
LIMIT CLARIFICATION

HON. STEVEN T. KUYKENDALL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to clarify some comments I made on

this floor last Thursday. Specifically, I spoke about the earnings limits now imposed by the Social Security laws. To clarify, there are two separate limits, one for individuals under the age of 65, and another for individuals between the age of 65 and 69. In 1999, those limits are \$9,600 and \$15,500, respectively. Individuals under the age of 65 with annual earnings of \$20,000 stand to lose \$5,200. Individuals between the ages of 65 and 69 with annual earnings of \$20,000 stand to lose \$1,500. In either event, individuals with critical expertise are encouraged not to work, to the detriment of all Americans.

JOHNSTON ATOLL

HON. PATSY T. MINK

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, recently I introduced H.R. 478, that requires the National Labor Relations Board to assert jurisdiction over Johnston Atoll.

Johnston Atoll is an unincorporated territory located about 800 miles southwest of Hawaii. Currently, the atoll is being used for weapons disposal where military and civilian employees work with hazardous materials and under potentially dangerous conditions to dispose of chemical weapons.

Civilian workers presently on the island cannot seek the protection of safe and fair working conditions as normally provided to workers in the United States because the civilian workers on Johnston Atoll are not under the jurisdiction of the NLRB.

This is a problem that is going on 9 years. In a petition before the NLRB in 1990, 185 employees of the civilian contractor were denied recognition as a bargaining unit by the Board because the Board declined to assert jurisdiction over the territory of Johnston Atoll.

My legislation recognizes this injustice and simply states that the Board cannot decline to assert jurisdiction over a labor dispute which occurs on Johnston Atoll.

Without my legislation, these workers are left without any recourse. There is no State or local agency to assist them, and the one entity established by Congress to protect them has declined to do so. This is a situation that we can easily remedy. By enacting H.R. 478, we provide the workers on Johnston Atoll the same protections as the rest of the Nation. I urge my colleagues to rectify this situation and support this bill.

POLITICALLY MOTIVATED
ARRESTS IN BELARUS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to decry the growing litany of repressive measures undertaken by the Government of Belarus against the opposition, especially against members of the opposition's Central Electoral Commission (CEC). Earlier this year, the legitimate Belarusian parliament—the 13th Supreme Soviet, disbanded