

Manny Goncalves, and Chris Chelo. Juniors include: Joe Shanley, Seth Falconer, Kevin Keough, and Sebastian Priest. The Sophomores are: Kevin Chelo, Sven Pfefferkorn, Michael Lima, Tyler Severyn, Josh Naginewicz, Casey Siok, and Corey Mange. The Head Coach is Tony Goncalves. Assistant Coaches are Jack Vilaca, Greg Kolodziej, and Dan Pires. Team managers are Sarah Russell, Jill Dube, and Jenn Russell.

Mr. Speaker, once again, allow me to send my congratulations to the Ludlow High School boys soccer team on their outstanding season. I wish them the best of luck in the 2001 season.

OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT
INTERNATIONAL WINS PRES-
TIGIOUS AWARD

HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, today I proudly share with my colleagues a recent accomplishment by Operations Management International, Inc (OMI), which is based in my district. Founded in 1980 by the Colorado-based, employee-owned CH2M HILL Companies, Ltd., OMI offers complete infrastructure development, financing, design, and operations and maintenance services. The company manages 160 water and wastewater facilities in the Americas, the Middle East and Asia.

On November 21, 2000, OMI made history by being the first company in the water and wastewater industry, as well as the first Colorado-based company to receive the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. This is the nation's premier award for quality achievement. OMI is the only company in the service category to win this year. In fact, only four companies nationwide will receive the Baldrige Award in all categories this year.

Named after a former Secretary of Commerce, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is an annual honor that recognizes U.S. organizations for performance excellence, and is the highest-level quality award given in the United States. Given the growth of Colorado's economy, and the quality of its workforce, I expect to see this award return often to our state.

The Baldrige Award evaluates organizations on seven performance excellence criteria: leadership; strategic planning; customer and market focus; information and analysis; human resource focus; process management; and performance and business results. OMI uses these important criteria as a cornerstone for its Obsessed With Quality management process, which focuses on empowering associates to develop new approaches to enhance how they perform their jobs. The company's mission is summarized in its "E3" motto: Exceed customers' expectations, empower people and enhance the environment—three main goals that illustrate how OMI conducts its business and developed its stellar reputation.

Winning the Baldrige Award rewards the deserving employees at OMI for two decades of work that has positively affected millions of lives worldwide, through the daily provision of superior utility management services. To win

such a prestigious award, OMI has proven that its emphasis on quality is evident in their work product.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in congratulating Don Evans, the president of OMI and his staff of over 1,400 on their outstanding achievement.

THE MONTGOMERY GI BILL
IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2001

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, as the Ranking Democrat on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I am today introducing H.R. 320, the Montgomery GI Bill Improvements Act of 2001, with my good friend Congressman JOHN DINGELL, the principal cosponsor of this important legislation. Our legislation will provide important and needed improvements in education benefits for veterans under the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) program, a key recruiting tool for the armed services and a key readjustment benefit for the men and women who honorably serve our Nation in uniform.

Substantial MGIB enhancements are long overdue. The 106th Congress passed an important, but modest increase in MGIB benefits late last year. While I supported and was pleased by the MGIB amendments approved last year, those changes were clearly only an interim, first step toward revitalizing one of America's most successful and effective programs. It is widely known and agreed that the true purchasing power of veterans' education benefits remains inadequate. MGIB benefits today still do not provide our servicemen and women the resources they need to pay for the ever-increasing costs of higher education.

The GI bill is rightly regarded by many as the greatest social program ever enacted by Congress. Its impact on post World War II America was profound. Millions of America's veterans who might not have been able to afford a college education received college degrees from some of our country's greatest institutions of higher learning. The GI bill helped spark our Nation's post war economic boom and contributed to the development of our cultural heritage. Although not considered an investment at that time, the World War II GI bill was a great investment in both individual veterans and in our Nation as a whole. Overlooked too often is the fact that the cost of this investment has been repaid many times over. It was an investment in our Nation that we can and should make again.

The time is right to make the same commitment again to America's men and women in uniform. We now face a crisis in recruiting high ability young Americans to serve in our Armed Forces. With a booming economy and an overworked and sometime under-appreciated military force, young men and women are not choosing military service and too few of those who have joined are not re-enlisting. This trend cannot continue if we are to maintain a viable fighting force.

President Bush has expressed his strong support for revitalizing our Nation's military forces. The surest way to achieve this goal is to recruit and enlist our most able young men and women. Operation Desert Storm is a stun-

ning example of the importance of attracting the most able of our young men and women to serve in the military. Ten years ago, Iraq has the fourth largest standing army in the world and the highly touted and elite Republic Guard. Iraq's despotic leadership had used these overwhelming forces to invade neighboring Kuwait. America and her allies determined this bald aggression would not stand.

Precipitated by Iraq's hostile actions, the war to free Kuwait was to be the mother of all wars. In truth, Iraq's massive Army and elite Republican Guard units were routed in 48 hours. Clearly, America and her allies had technological superiority, but technological superiority did not win the war. The war was won because American forces had high ability young men and women who could make effective use of the war-fighting technology available to them. The troops won the war. Operation Desert Storm is a strong and clear demonstration of the fundamental importance of recruiting and enlisting the most capable young men and women to serve in the Armed Forces.

Our military relies on education benefits to recruit quality soldiers, sailors—airmen and marines. To be an effective recruitment tool, the educational readjustment benefits provided to our veterans must provide the range and quality of education benefits that will attract and retain quality young people in a growing economy. That was also the conclusion of our newly confirmed Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Anthony Principi, when he chaired the Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance in 1999. Mr. Principi, in the Commission's final report, recommended an education benefit much like the original GI bill—with full payment for tuition and books for those enlisting for 4 years or more and a substantial increase in educational assistance for those who enlist for a shorter time period.

The Principi Commission was right. Like its recommendation, this legislation would provide benefits for two tiers of service members; those who enlist or reenlist for a minimum of 4 years (Tier I) and those who enlist for less than 4 years (Tier II). In addition, this bill would increase the stipend level under Tier I and increase the basic benefit under Tier II to reflect increases in the costs of education since enactment of the MGIB program. For servicemembers who enlist or reenlist for a minimum of 4 years, the bill would:

Pay the full costs of tuition, fees, books, and supplies.

Provide a subsistence allowance of \$800 per month (indexed for inflation) for 36 months.

Eliminate the \$1,200 basic pay reduction required under current law.

Permit payment for approved specialized courses offered by entities other than educational institutions.

For those who enlist for less than 4 years:

The MGIB basic benefit would be increased from the currently authorized level of \$650 per month to \$900 per month. This benefit level would be close to the amount that would be paid if the basic benefit had kept up with increases in the cost of education.

The \$1,200 basic pay reduction would be eliminated.

Trainees would be eligible for accelerated lump-sum benefits and would receive payment for approved specialized courses offered by entities other than educational institutions.

Some may say the cost of this measure is too much. The first year cost, for example, is approximately \$800 million in fiscal year 2002. The cosponsors of this bill understand that this is an investment—in a strong military and a stronger America. It will attract more high ability young people to the Armed Forces while providing the economy with highly skilled, college educated veterans. More importantly, the brave men and women who serve in America's Armed Forces deserve, and have indeed earned, far better than the inadequate educational assistance program now available to them. I strongly urge my fellow colleagues to support this bill and the policy it represents of demonstrating a continued national commitment to our veterans.

For the first time in 40 years, America is enjoying a significant on-budget surplus. This week the Senate Budget Committee estimated the surplus could reach \$5.7 trillion over the next ten years. In comparison ten-year cost of H.R. 320 is likely to be \$5.7 billion—or one-tenth of one percent of the current budget surplus projection. It is clear that we can indeed make this investment now. If our goals are to have a strong military and a strong economy, America cannot afford to fail to make this investment.

The MGIB served veterans of the second half of the 20th century very well. However, the MGIB must now be re-examined in the context of a January 1999 report by the Departments of Commerce, Labor, and Education, the Small Business Administration, and the National Institute for Literacy. This report, entitled "21st Century Skills for 21st Century Jobs," has important implications for veterans entering the civilian workforce following their military service. Emphasizing the importance to the nation of investing in education and training, the report concluded changes in the economy and workplace are requiring greater levels of skill and education than ever before. It predicted eight of the ten fastest growing jobs in the next decade will require college education or moderate to long-term training, and jobs requiring a bachelor's degree will increase by 25 percent.

The report also noted workers with more education enjoy greater benefits, experience less unemployment and, if dislocated, re-enter the labor force far more quickly than individuals with less education. It also reports that, on average, college graduates earn 77 percent more than individuals with only a high school diploma. If America's veterans are to successfully compete in the challenging 21st century workforce, they simply have to have the ability to obtain the education and training critical to their success. As noted by the Tran-

sition Commission, ". . . education will be the key to employment in the information age." Although the current GI bill provides some degree of assistance, it is a key that opens very few doors, and it is my belief that all the doors of educational opportunity must be open to our veterans.

According to the 1997 DOD report entitled "Population Representation in the Military Services," 20 percent of the new enlisted recruits for that year were African-American, 10 percent were Hispanic, 6 percent were other minorities, including Native-Americans, Asians, and Pacific Islanders, and 18 percent were women. The report further notes that, although members of the military come from backgrounds somewhat lower in socioeconomic status than the U.S. average, these young men and women have higher levels of education, measured aptitudes, and reading skills than their civilian counterparts. These young people, most of whom do not enter military service with financial or socioeconomic advantages, have enormous potential, and it is in the best interests of the nation they be given every opportunity to achieve their highest potential. Access to education is the key to achieving that potential. It is also important to remember that, through the sacrifices required of them through their military service, this group of young Americans—more than any other—earns the benefits provided for them by a grateful nation.

Of equal concern to me as a member of the Armed Services Committee is the MGIB's failure to fulfill its purpose as a recruitment incentive for the Armed Forces. Findings of recent Youth Attitude Tracking (YATS) Studies confirm recruiters are faced with serious challenges, and these challenges are likely to continue. These surveys of young men and women, conducted annually by the Department of Defense, provide information on the propensity, attitudes and motivations, of young people toward military service. Recent YATS show the propensity to enlist among young males has fallen from 34 percent in 1991 to 26 percent in 1998 in spite of a generally favorable view of the military. In addition to a thriving civilian economy, which inevitably results in recruiting challenges, the percentage of American youth going to college is increasing and the young people most likely to go to college express little interest in joining our Armed Forces. Interestingly, these same youth note that if they were to serve in the military, their primary reason for enlisting would be to earn educational assistance benefits.

The study concluded the propensity to enlist is substantially below pre-drawdown levels and, as a result, the services will probably not

succeed in recruiting the number of young, high-ability men and women they require. High-ability young men and women are defined as those who have a high school diploma and who have at least average scores on tests measuring mathematical and verbal skills. The Department of Defense tells us about 80 percent of the recruits will complete their first three years of active duty while only 50 percent of recruits with a GED will complete their enlistment. GAO notes that it costs at least \$35,000 to replace a recruit who leaves the service prematurely. The report states these findings underscore the need for education benefits that will attract college-bound youth who need money for school, a segment of American young people we conclude are now opting to take advantage of the many other sources of federal education assistance. The current structure and benefit level of the MGIB must be significantly enhanced if these high quality young men and women are to be attracted to service in our Armed Forces.

Many factors have come together to create what could soon develop into a recruiting emergency. First, our thriving national economy is generating employment opportunities for our young people. Additionally, young Americans increasingly see a college education as the key to success and prosperity. In 1980, 74 percent of high school graduates went to college but, by 1992, that percentage had risen to 81 percent and has been steadily increasing. As a result, the military must compete head-to-head with colleges for high-quality youth. As I have mentioned already, the percentage of young Americans who are interested in serving in the Armed Forces is also shrinking. Make no mistake about it—the strength of our Armed Forces begins and ends with the men and women who serve our nation. Just as education is the key to a society's success or failure, it is also key to the quality and effectiveness of our military—and the MGIB increases provided by this legislation are a big step in the right direction toward providing that key. Some will say there is no recruitment problem and recruitment goals are being met by the various services. With notable exceptions, in most cases recruitment goals have been met in recent years. I urge my colleagues, however, to look behind the numbers. It is clear to me that standards have been reduced in order for recruitment goals to be met. Clearly this is not the course to take to revitalize the nation's military.

I strongly encourage my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to support America's veterans and the military by supporting this vital legislation.