

in the 106th Congress was a giant step in the right direction.

Since it passed in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act has been effective. In fact, the Justice Department estimates that violence against women has decreased by 21 percent since the law was originally passed. The law also has been credited with providing shelter space for more than 300,000 women and their families.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my many colleagues here in the House who supported and fought for this important legislation, both in 1994 and the reauthorization last year. I am proud that reauthorization received such strong bipartisan support, and I am hopeful that our future efforts to address this tremendous problem will receive similar levels of support from both sides of the aisle.

The reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act brought much-needed attention to these issues, attention that will be translated into greater public awareness of this issue and a greater public commitment to solving the problems of violence against women.

But another particular area of violence against women that needs more congressional attention is sexual assault. The statistics on this issue are staggering. A rape occurs every 90 seconds, and estimates show that one out of every three women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime.

Seven out of every 10 rapes are committed by someone the victim knows. Seventy-six percent of the women over 18 who are raped and/or physically assaulted are assaulted by a current or former husband, cohabitating partner or date.

What can we do to address this horrendous problem? We must talk about it. We must raise public awareness. For years, these problems have been swept under the table, and women have been hesitant about talking about them in public or even reporting them.

I am thankful that this trend is in reverse and the public is becoming more outraged about these heinous crimes against women. We, as leaders, must be willing to bring more attention to the fight against sexual assault and domestic violence.

By focusing public attention on these acts of brutality against women, we can raise public awareness. We can make a difference. We have already seen positive effects of the Violence Against Women Act, but that is just a start.

As the month of March draws to a close, I would like to point out that the month of April is nationally known as National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. I would like to see this designation made official.

Officially designating April as National Sexual Assault Awareness Month would raise public awareness. Violence against women is a large, unrecognized and all-too-often ignored problem in all of our communities. The

costs of these violent acts is borne not only by the women who experience it, but by their families, communities and our Nation as a whole.

This is a national issue, and it must receive national attention. We must continue our congressional commitment to making our streets and homes safe for women and children.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

A TRIBUTE TO GOVERNOR JOAN FINNEY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to convey my thoughts and prayers for the former governor of our State, Governor Joan Finney, and her family. Last month, Governor Finney was diagnosed with liver cancer. I wish her strength and courage as she fights this devastating disease.

Governor Finney has had a long and distinguished career in service to the public. She was a trailblazer for women in elective office, and her example has served as inspiration and a role model for others in our State and around the country.

Joan Finney served our State for 16 years as Kansas Treasurer. She started her career as a Republican and switched to become a Democrat.

In 1990, she became the first woman ever elected governor of our State. Governor Finney is truly a woman of the people.

Throughout her years of public service, she was able to connect to everyday Kansans in a way all of us who hold elective office can respect and admire.

I was privileged to serve in the Kansas Senate during Governor Finney's term as governor. During that time, she always had the well-being of the people of our State as her priority.

While we sometimes disagreed, I always knew where the Governor stood on each and every issue. She was honest and straightforward. No public opinion polls, no focus groups, just Joan Finney doing what she thought was best for the people she loved, the people of Kansas.

Governor Finney was always respectful, and her heart was always in the

right place. She believed passionately in her positions and worked hard for the hard-working people of Kansas.

Family is very important to Governor Finney. Members of her family played key roles in her campaigns and in her administration.

I know that her family is with her now as she faces this great challenge. May the strength and goodwill that she displayed in her years as public service now help her defeat this terrible disease.

My thoughts and prayers go out to Governor Finney, to her husband Spencer and to her children, Sally Finney, Richard Finney and Mary Holliday.

Kansans care greatly for you, Mrs. Finney, and we pray God will bless you and give you courage and strength.

AMERICA'S FARMERS AND RANCHERS NEED A NEW FARM BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the 276 million of us who do not work in the farming and ranching sectors need to take time today on National Agriculture Day to give thanks to the 700,000 men and women of American agriculture for all they do to feed our Nation and, indeed, much of the rest of the world.

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to pay highest tribute to some of the hardest working people in America. I know of no other people who take such great financial risks, give more of themselves each and every day, and who do so with great discipline and dignity.

With the depression that is afflicting rural regions of our country, America needs a new declaration of economic independence, and that declaration should insist that America's farmers and ranchers are not expendable. Their husbandry and stewardship are central pillars of our national security and freedom.

Today, we are witnessing an alarming hollowing out of America's countryside and a wanton destruction of precious arable lands that have sustained us and on which future generations will depend.

Rural America is on life support. The current farm depression, now in its fourth year, is the deepest since 1915. This year's prices were at a 27-year low.

The average age of our farmers is 57 years, and now they are getting over three-fourths of their earnings in public support because the market does not work for them.

And up until today, National Agriculture Day, what have we heard from the new administration? Silence. Not the peacefulness of the countryside, but the eerie solemnness of the graveyard.

President Bush, when he delivered his State of the Union address just a few weeks ago in this Chamber, had