

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING MICHAEL FERRUCCI, JR., ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 10, 2001

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to join the many family, friends, and colleagues who have gathered to pay tribute to my dear friend, Michael Ferrucci who is celebrating his retirement after a tremendous career with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. His outstanding leadership and unparalleled dedication has made a real difference in the lives of many.

I have often said that we are fortunate to live in a country that allows its workers to engage in efforts to better employee standards and benefits. State, county and municipal governments employ a number of laborers who deserve the best for their families. Michael has fought hard for better wages, more comprehensive health benefits for members and their families, and safer work environments—ensuring that state, county, and municipal employees are afforded these basic rights. Michael has been a true leader for our working families, giving them a voice during the hardest of economic times.

Michael began his career in 1953 as a maintenance worker for the Connecticut Highway Department. Elected first as Steward then Secretary and finally as President of AFSCME Local 867, he has served the union membership from the beginning. In addition to his service with Local 867, Michael went on to serve as the elected Secretary of Council and was later elected President of Council 16 representing Connecticut State Employees. Michael eventually left his state employment when he was appointed as the Executive Director for Council 16. It was during his tenure as Executive Director of Council 16 that state workers won collective bargaining rights—much in part to Michael's tremendous leadership.

Council 16, representing state employees, and Council 4, representing municipal employees, later merged to create what is today the largest union in Connecticut representing 34,000 State, Municipal, and Private Sector members. Michael held a number of leadership positions in Council 4 prior to his election as Executive Director nearly five years ago. In addition to his service with AFSCME, Michael has also served as a Labor Advocate on the Connecticut State Board of Mediation and Arbitration for over fifteen years.

Throughout his career, Michael has demonstrated a unique commitment to AFSCME's union membership. Through his vision and because of his unparalleled dedication, Connecticut's state and municipal employees and their families have a strong union that is always willing to ensure their needs and interests are heard and met. It is with my deepest thanks

and sincere appreciation that I stand today to pay tribute to Michael Ferrucci, Jr., as he celebrates his retirement. His good work and strong voice will certainly be missed—and never forgotten.

VERMONT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT CONGRESSIONAL TOWN MEETING

HON. BERNARD SANDERS

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 10, 2001

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize the outstanding work done by participants in my Student Congressional Town Meeting held this summer. These participants were part of a group of high school students from around Vermont who testified about the concerns they have as teenagers, and about what they would like to see government do regarding these concerns.

I submit these statements to be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, as I believe that the views of these young persons will benefit my colleagues.

ON BEHALF OF KEVIN VAN GENECHTEN—
REGARDING GLOBAL WARMING, MAY 7, 2001

Kevin Van Genechten. My name is Kevin Van Genechten, doing global warming, for Colchester. Global warming is the steady rise in temperature caused by buildup of gases like CO₂ and methane gas in the Earth's atmosphere. The gases act like the glass in a greenhouse; they let the heat in, but not out. The main cause of gas buildup is the burning of coal, oil and wood CFCs. 1998 was the hottest year in thousands of years. The nine hottest years on record have all been in the past two decades. Humankind's actions on the global scale have changed not just the landscape of the earth, but the world's climate too. Increasingly sophisticated measures of the Earth's climate and the weather systems have provided a wealth of evidence that the earth has been getting steadily warmer. An intergovernmental panel for climate change set up in 1988 to put together the thinking on global warming is leading the search. It has found that global temperatures are increasing alarmingly, already having risen between .3 Celsius and .6 Celsius in the last century. Sea levels are rising and previous environments are being altered, some irreparably. The rising temperatures we have witnessed may seem slight, but are we currently experiencing the greatest rate of change in the temperature ever. The effects are already being felt, and things may get much worse. Most of the impact of global warming won't be felt for another 30 years. And yet hurricanes, storms and extreme weather conditions are recorded almost weekly. Our reckless destruction of the environment through industrial pollution is creating a dangerous world. The burning of fossil fuels, such as oil and coal, and the emission of harmful gas must be addressed if we are secure ourselves a future on planet Earth. And although interested parties are bringing pressure from the big pressure groups like the Worldwide Fund for Nature—which may soon disappear—it may be

these gestures are too little, too late. There is still hope in the air and time in this millennium to make the necessary changes to happen. However, we leave this century fudging on fossil-fuel emission targets, which almost everyone now agrees is the strongest way to combat global warming. Big changes in lifestyle and energy production will be needed to slow the global-warming time bomb.

ON BEHALF OF KATIE KEVORKIAN, CARLIN HEBERT, AND BETHANY WALLACE—HIGH DROP-OUT RATES, FOCUSING ON INADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES, MAY 7, 2001

Bethany Wallace. Our subject is the increasing dropout rate in, not only our county and our school, but, you know, across the nation. It said in the little packet that we were going to focus on the lack of social services which I don't think we did.

Congressman Sanders. That's okay.

Bethany Wallace. That is not really what we are focusing on. My part—I will give you a little basis. We didn't really know a lot about the dropout rate when we were given this task to present. So what we did is, we divided it into factors that would affect the dropout rate. And mine is the alternative programs, Katie's is the pregnancy rate, and Carlin's is the extracurricular activities. At Mt. Anthony, we have an alternative program that I don't think a lot of people are aware of, and we certainly didn't know what it was all about. So we went to the alternative program a few days ago and just sat down and interviewed both the students and the teachers there. And what we found out was that the alternative program is a combination of two former programs, the girls program and the boys program. And right now it's in one building, and it is funded by the high school, it is considered part of the high school, but with its own budget. There are about 25 students in the program right now, all different levels in high school. They also have a branch of that for the middle schoolers, that is called the Stars Program, but we didn't really dig into that. The students there—we have a little list—have been referred to the program because of a variety of reasons, varying from high absenteeism, which is what they said in there, and poor performance academically, for whatever reason. In sitting down with the students and talking to them about it, more than three-quarters of them said that, if it wasn't for this program, they probably would have dropped out of high school. So in presenting this to you, I just hope to show you how beneficial these programs can be. However, they do have faults. The students that graduate from the program graduate with a normal high school diploma, and to achieve that diploma, you have to have the same requirements of credits that we in the high school have, and that is 26 credits. The difference is that their classes are all pass-fail. And I have—just personally, I have mixed emotions about that, because I just don't know—I won't get into that. But their classes are all pass-fail. They get a normal high school diploma. They are not always there for just four years. It varies. They can be there for five years, they can be there through the Stars program and the alternative program. There are three main teachers in the program. And what they were telling us was,

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

and what you could see, is that it was designed as kind of a family-type of thing, where the teachers knew a lot about the personal lives of the students, and the students really liked that. If they didn't want them to know about their personal lives, they would usually leave. And one of the problems—because we also wanted to know what was wrong with the high school, what the students in the program didn't like about the high school. And a lot of what they said was how big it is. And, as you saw with the group that went before us, we do have a very big school, so you can get lost, in that you can slip through the cracks. If you need help and you don't go for it, it is not always given to you. And these people, they do come—the majority of them come from broken homes or dysfunctional families or things where they have a lot of problems, and are not getting the help that they need. And their teachers in the high school, they were saying, weren't always aware of that, and weren't really interested in that. So in the program, they work through things. The teachers are not only educators, but they are also kind of counselors and moms, and they give hugs and everything. We thought it was the coolest thing when we went over there. We didn't know what to expect, and we came back, and we were like: Oh, my God! We just couldn't believe it. But it does seem like a very close-knit thing. And the classes are constructed—they're offered as needed. Like if 15 of the students really need a Western Civ class that semester, that is what the teachers will do. Another problem that might be with the alternative program is, we found out that one of the teachers is only certified to teach—was it elementary English and social studies? And we didn't really know how that worked in. And I kind of had a problem with that; I don't know if Carlin and Katie did. But it seemed to work for them.

Congressman Sanders. Okay.

Bethany Wallace. That's basically the gist on the alternative programs. And we found that, especially with it coming from the students, it was really helpful, and they did a lot to keep the kids in school.

Congressman Sanders. Bethany, thank you. Katie or Carlin, are you going to go next?

Carlin Hebert. I focused more or less on extracurricular activities and how they affected dropout rate. And like the other group said, the extracurricular activities really are focused on a lot in our school. Many, many people play sports. Almost everyone participates in some way—drama, band, something. And we walked around and surveyed a lot of students, and a lot of them said they would consider dropping out, or at least wouldn't be coming to school as often—you know, they just wouldn't enjoy it—if they couldn't then participate in something after school. It drew a lot of students towards the school, because they said, if it simply was, You come in, you sit down, you take the class, and then you leave and go home, there would be nothing in it for them. They just wouldn't enjoy it. And so we said it was maybe 55 percent, probably, said they never even would consider dropping out. But there was a large percentage that did say that they just—without sports of some sort or activities, that they just—there would be nothing there for them to do. They don't enjoy classes, and basically that.

Katie Kevorkian. I focused on the pregnancy factor. And I'm going to start out with a little story that was told to me by the teachers in the Stars program, one of the teachers in the middle school program. She had a girl a few years ago who, at 13, became pregnant. And once that happened, she couldn't attend school anymore, she couldn't

attend the Stars program, because, once you have a baby, you can't really do that. And she couldn't find childcare. She actually had twins at age 13, and the woman there was her teacher, who was trying to get her an education. She sent her to tutorial centers, she helped her set up childcare, but the girl apparently was very disagreeable with her childcare, and ended up taking her kids out of that. She is now 15, and she has missed so many credits that she cannot graduate high school at age 18, and, at 15, she was working on her GED. I interviewed people from two places, two area places, where pregnant teenagers often go. One was the Tristate Pregnancy Center, and they basically give out—they try to educate teenagers when they are pregnant, and show them their options. And then they work through another place I interviewed, Sunrise Family Resource Center, to help them get their GED and finish their education. Sunrise also does that. They try to provide childcare. They have programs such as Reach Up, which helps with—they try to get them some benefits. And the other one is—Can you let me see that? Vermont Homeroom. They try to get childcare and educate them. And pregnancy is a problem. It has gone down in the last ten years, but, in our community, it is still a huge problem. The rate is higher there than in any other place in Vermont. No, the rate is higher there than the rate in Vermont. Excuse me.

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 10, 2001

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill that will help alleviate a problem that has plagued the senior weather forecasters at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

One of the most important missions NOAA undertakes is the accurate forecasting of weather phenomenon. Every highly specialized weather forecaster is responsible for everything from making landfall predictions of hurricanes along the Eastern Seaboard, to gauging wind conditions above fires and ensuring the safety of those trying to put them out. These forecasters, all of whom as GS-14 (or lower), nonmanagerial employees, often work weekends and late into the evening trying to give the most accurate information possible.

Unfortunately, many of the senior forecasters are under paid for the overtime they routinely put in. This bill seeks to alleviate that problem by standardizing the overtime pay system and giving the Secretary of Commerce the flexibility to pay those forecasters who's duties, "are critical to the immediate daily operation of the forecast and warning responsibilities of the National Weather Service and directly affect public and aviation safety."

It is time that we started recognizing the important role that these forecasters play in terms of public safety and the health of our economy. By working weekends and nights, a forecaster may successfully predict the path of a storm and provide critical time needed to evacuate people and protect local businesses. I urge all of my colleagues to cosponsor this important legislation and to contact my office if they should have any additional questions.

APPROVING EXTENSION OF NON-DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT WITH RESPECT TO PRODUCTS OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

SPEECH OF

HON. ROGER F. WICKER

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 6, 2001

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in reluctant opposition to this resolution. While I have always been a strong supporter of free trade, I can not support expanding trade with Vietnam until the administration addresses a serious conflict between Vietnam and the United States catfish industry. Frozen fish fillets of an entirely different family of fish are imported and unlawfully passed off to customers as "catfish" in such large and increasing volumes that it threatens the future success of the American catfish industry.

American consumers are being defrauded into believing that they are receiving farm raised U.S. catfish instead of another species of fish raised along the Mekong River in Vietnam. Most of the Vietnamese fish are raised in floating cages and ponds along the Mekong River Delta, feeding on whatever floats down the river. Yet they are fraudulently marketing them as farm-raised grain-fed catfish. Since the Vietnamese do not place a high value on cultivating the fish in a controlled environment, their cost of production is much lower.

Importing interests of the Vietnam fish, searching for new markets, were allowed by the FDA to use the term "catfish" in combination with previously approved names. This has resulted in imports entering the U.S. in skyrocketing quantities and being fraudulently passed off to American consumers as "catfish."

It is unlawful to pass a cheaper fish species off as another species. There is evidence of widespread illegal packaging and labeling of the Vietnamese fish which violates numerous existing laws, including the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act, the Trade-Mark Act of 1946, the Customs origin marking requirements, and the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act.

I understand that the bilateral agreement includes some trademark protection, but until importers are required to comply with current law, I do not think we can expect these protections to be enforced.

Since 1997, the total import volume of Vietnamese catfish has risen from less than 500 thousand pounds to over 7 million pounds in 2000. According to this year's recorded import numbers, imports are reaching levels of 2 million pounds per month and on target to reach over 20 million pounds in this year alone. As of May this year, Vietnamese imports of frozen fish fillets were equivalent to 20 percent of the sales of the United States farm-raised frozen fillets.

There are over 189,000 acres of land in catfish production, of which 110,000 are in my home state of Mississippi. U.S. catfish farmers produce 600 million pounds of farm-raised catfish annually and require 1.8 billion pounds of feed. This supports over 90,000 acres of corn, 500,000 acres of soybeans, and cotton seed from over 230,000 acres of cotton.