

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.