

allowed America to carry out its war effort and to feed the country and its troops.

After the war, during the late 1940s and into the 1960s, braceros helped keep America growing and expanding. Some worked on farms, others in railroad construction or other jobs. Unfortunately, despite working a full day in the fields, despite being fully exposed to the elements and a full range of other challenges, braceros did not receive compensation in full. As many as 400,000 workers saw their paychecks reduced by as much as \$70 million.

During the first 7 years of the program, it was an overt, explicit policy that each worker would sacrifice 10 percent of his or her salary, with the promise that it would be available to them upon their return to Mexico. It was a policy which very well may have continued long after that period, and affected far more workers. And, yet, the money disappeared. It went unaccounted for. At least \$70 million of it—which, with interest, may be worth as much as \$500 million to a billion dollars today—was gone.

Today, Members of both parties speculate about the possibility that American workers will not get the full Social Security payout to which they are entitled upon their retirement. Here is a real-life example of exactly that scenario. In this case, it was tens (perhaps hundreds) of millions of dollars that rightfully belonged to people who had little resources then—who had little resources in the years since. And, in many cases, few resources today. Without this legislation, these people will lack the most basic resource of all: the ability to have their complaint heard.

Do we know where the money went? No. However, we do know this: Under the Bracero program, the U.S. Government acted as the employer. Workers were contracted out to various businesses—farms, for example. The U.S. Government withheld 10 percent of their wages. The funds were then to be transferred to Wells-Fargo Bank and this bank was to transfer it to the Banco de Mexico which

would then (supposedly) transfer it to regional banks.

Somewhere along the way—sometime during a process which we know began on U.S. soil and may, for all we know, ended on U.S. soil, too—the money was lost. Or taken away. All we know is, the money is still owed. To discover where the money went, to get some accounting of what went wrong, is one of the primary goals of a lawsuit filed last year in federal court. But, even that basic step is blocked until certain legal matters are resolved. These matters are addressed in this bill, the Bracero Justice Act of 2002.

For example, my bill addresses the issue of the statute of limitations. We must eliminate any time limits on legal action. Just as we have seen with Holocaust survivors who were robbed of their assets or the Japanese citizens interned in our country for years—waiving the statute of limitations is a necessary step in seeking justice that is decades overdue. My bill also addresses jurisdictional questions, allowing suits to be filed in any district court, so the full universe of workers can gain relief.

The Bracero Justice Act also seeks a waiver of sovereign immunity, so that action can be taken against a government—whether the United States or Mexican Government—if it is found that their actions contributed to this fiasco. Eligibility of class members matters, so that the full category of workers who may have been harmed, which may have included braceros working into the late 1960s, may have legal standing. In short, what we are asking is that such cases be heard and decided on their merits so that justice cannot be dismissed on a technicality, so that we can discover—first and foremost—the truth.

I am confident that my colleagues will agree that the American legislative and judicial system can be put to work to help people who were put to work to build and grow and feed our country. Please join me in cosponsoring my bill, the Bracero Justice Act of 2002.

RECOGNITION OF JUNE L.  
MCNEELY

**HON. HENRY E. BROWN JR.**

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 12, 2002*

Mr. BROWN of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit the following poem, "First Place in the Heart", by a fellow South Carolinian, June L. McNeely.

This poem expresses my feelings toward patriotism, family, and faith. by: June L. McNeely

“FIRST PLACE IN THE HEART”

(By June L. McNeely)

Let's put GOD back in America, let HIM have first place in our heart.  
Let's put GOD back in America and right now is the time to start.  
Let us all stand together as a family hand in hand and pray for GOD's mercy and for the healing of our land.  
HE has given us a country that is special to us all.  
Let's not bow to the enemy, but keep standing very tall.  
Let's put GOD back in America. This beautiful country we call home.  
Put HIM in our homes and schools and all of our gathering places.  
Then everyone in this world will see GOD's love in all our faces.  
Put all of your trust in your HEAVENLY FATHER. He will all of your burdens bear.  
HE will never leave you nor forsake you.  
HE has promised to always be there.  
HE will help you through each moment so all of your fears will cease.  
Let's put GOD back in America and with HIS help live with others in peace.