

Abdullah and other Arab leaders to help reform the Palestinian leadership, as outlined by President Bush on June 24, 2002, from one based on corruption, incitement, terror and suicide bombings to one based on democracy, peace and constructive dialogue. This will be the major thrust of my conversations with the Crown Prince this Sunday in Jeddah. It is important to note that Crown Prince Abdullah and other Saudi officials have already played a constructive role in the reform effort by assisting the Palestinians in writing a new constitution. Without concerted international pressure, there will be no genuine reform of the Palestinian leadership and, I fear, no end to suicide bombings. These terrorist acts must end if we are to reach a comprehensive and lasting regional peace based on security, recognition for Israel, and statehood for the Palestinians. Indeed, the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to have a nation of their own will be destroyed unless there is a change of attitude among those in the Arab and Muslim worlds who encourage and provide moral, financial and material support to so-called martyrs who commit these heinous, inhuman and immoral terrorist acts.

As a strong supporter of an unbreakable bond between the United States and Israel, I care deeply about the future security and prosperity of the Jewish homeland. In meetings with Saudi leaders, I will remind them of the unprecedented terrorism the Israeli people have faced over the past 20 months and the tragic toll that suicide bombers have inflicted on innocent Israelis. It is also imperative they understand that like America, Israel has the right to defend herself against these barbaric attacks and that the United States will stand in solidarity with Israel during this difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to avert another tragedy like September 11 and defeat the scourge of terrorism, America needs allies—we cannot do it alone. I am going to Saudi Arabia because more effective cooperation and understanding between our two countries is fundamental to winning the international war on terrorism, and members of Congress must play more than just a consenting role in that effort.

PUBLIC SAFETY TAX CUT ACT

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2002

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Public Safety Tax Cut Act. This legislation will achieve two important public policy goals.

First, it will effectively overturn a ruling of the Internal Revenue Service which has declared as taxable income the waiving of fees by local governments who provide service for public safety volunteers.

Many local governments use volunteer firefighters and auxiliary police either in place of, or as a supplement to, their public safety professionals. Often as an incentive to would-be volunteers, the local entities might waive all or a portion of the fees typically charged for city services such as the provision of drinking water, sewerage charges, or debris pick up. Local entities make these decisions for the purpose of encouraging folks to volunteer, and seldom do these benefits come anywhere

near the level of a true compensation for the many hours of training and service required of the volunteers. This, of course, not even to mention the fact that these volunteers could very possibly be called into a situation where they may have to put their lives on the line.

Rather than encouraging this type of volunteerism, which is so crucial, particularly to America's rural communities, the IRS has decided that the provision of the benefits described above amount to taxable income. Not only does this adversely affect the financial position of the volunteer by foisting new taxes about him or her, it has in fact led local entities to stop providing these benefits, thus taking away a key tool they have used to recruit volunteers. That is why the IRS ruling in this instance has a substantial deleterious impact on the spirit of American volunteerism. How far could this go? For example, would consistent application mean that a local Salvation Army volunteer be taxed for the value of a complimentary ticket to that organization's annual county dinner? This is obviously bad policy.

This legislation would rectify this situation by specifically exempting these types of benefits from federal taxation.

Next, this legislation would also provide paid professional police and fire officers with a \$1,000 per year tax credit. These professional public safety officers put their lives on the line each and every day, and I think we all agree that there is no way to properly compensate them for the fabulous services they provide. In America we have a tradition of local law enforcement and public safety provision. So, while it is not the role of our federal government to increase the salaries of these, it certainly is within our authority to increase their take-home pay by reducing the amount of money that we take from their pockets via federal taxation, and that is something this bill specifically does as well.

President George Bush has called on Americans to volunteer their time and energy to enhancing public safety. Shouldn't Congress do its part by reducing taxes that discourage public safety volunteerism? Shouldn't Congress also show its appreciation to police officers and fire fighters by reducing their taxes? I believe the answer to both of these questions is a resounding "Yes" and therefore I am proud to introduce the Public Safety Tax Cut Act. I request that my fellow Members join in support of this key legislation.

IN HONOR OF HEROES WHO HAVE FOUGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY

HON. ALBERT RUSSELL WYNN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2002

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Speaker, as we approach Independence Day, I submit for the RECORD a speech given in my Congressional District on Memorial Day, by James E. Merna of 7503 Dover Lane, Lanham, Maryland, honoring the heroism of veterans from Prince George's County, Maryland, that have fought to protect our freedoms.

HONORING FIVE SONS OF PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY, MARYLAND, THAT HAVE FOUGHT TO PROTECT OUR FREEDOMS

(By James E. Merna, Former Maryland State Commandant, Marine Corps League)

Thank you Mayor Harrington, Councilwoman Marion Hoffman, Bill Hickey, other Town of Bladensburg elected and appointed officials, members of American Legion Post 131, leaders of other veterans organizations, and fellow veterans. Thank you for inviting me. I am pleased to be here.

The town and citizens of Bladensburg should take great pride for the many years you have conducted ceremonies such as this. Bladensburg is not only a historic town—a famous port town—it is also a very patriotic town. Thanks also to Colmar Manor American Legion Post 131 for helping to make these events happen.

Memorial Day, as it is now observed, is a special day set aside to remember the service and sacrifice made by Americans who answered their country's call to duty in all wars—those who gave their lives, those who served and returned, those who were injured or disabled as a result of their service those who remain missing in action, and those who serve today in Afghanistan and around the world to defend freedom and to fight terrorism.

In my remarks today, I want to talk about five brave Sons of Prince George's County, who answered their nation's call, and of their courage, devotion to duty, and personal sacrifice. I believe it is a message for all, but especially for our young people. Better role model other than their parents or close relatives, they could not have.

I stress younger people in light of an announcement from the U.S. Department of Education this month that said "More than half of America's high school seniors do not have even the most basic grasp of U.S. history, showing no improvement in a nationwide test since 1994."

The Education Department issued a national history "report card" which measured the performance last year of fourth, eighth and 12th graders in history. Students did not know, for instance, that America's fundamental belief in individual liberty was expressed in the Declaration of Independence, or that the image of UNCLE SAM was used to appeal to patriotism during wartime.

Educators said the results were "truly abysmal," pointing out that the higher the grade and closer a student was to voting age, the lower the understanding of U.S. history.

In grade 12, only 43 percent of students had a basic or proficient knowledge of history. More than a third of fourth graders and nearly 40 percent of eighth graders also did not have a basic understanding of the subject. The Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, stressed that "basic" is the bottom of the achievement ladder. And, he said, they didn't even reach that—"the lowest rung."

In this complex day and age, this is troublesome. History is a key component of our nation's school curriculum, and it is through history that we understand our past and contemplate our future. Especially following the September 11 attacks that targeted U.S. democracy. It is appalling that some of the questions that stumped students involved the most fundamental concepts of America's democracy. Our work is cut out for us—we need more enlightened students—and better trained history teachers.

The first notable Son of Prince George's County that I want to mention, is one of your very own, a life-long resident of Bladensburg. When I think of him, I'm reminded of the many great songs that were popular during World War II. And I'm referring to records, not CD's, tapes, or DVD's.