

INTRODUCTION OF THE HOMETOWN HEROES SURVIVORS BENEFIT ACT OF 2002

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 5, 2002

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the service and sacrifice of our nation's public safety officers.

Each community in America is blessed to have its own unique group of hometown heroes; the firefighters, law enforcement officers, and others who keep our streets safe, protect our families and possessions from fire, and are the first to respond to an emergency. They are dedicated and prepared, and when we call on them, they risk their lives for us.

Last year, Congress improved the Public Safety Officers Benefit, which provides a one-time financial benefit to the families of public safety officers who die because of an injury sustained in the line of duty. However, despite our efforts there are families who are prevented from receiving these benefits because of a technicality in the law.

Heart attack and cardiac related deaths account for almost half of all firefighter fatalities (between 45–50 firefighter deaths per year), yet the families of these fallen firefighters are rarely eligible to receive this benefit. Fighting fires is dangerous, exhausting, and stressful work. A firefighter's chances of suffering a heart attack or stroke greatly increases when he or she puts on heavy equipment and rushes into a building to fight a fire. The families of these hometown heroes should receive this benefit when their loved ones die of a heart attack or other cardiac related death while they are on duty selflessly protecting us from harm.

Today, along with several of my colleagues, I am introducing a bill to correct this unfortunate loophole in the Public Safety Officers Benefit. The Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefit Act will allow the families of public safety officers who have died from a heart attack or stroke while on duty, or within 24-hours after participating in a training exercise or responding to an emergency situation, to receive this benefit.

Our hometown heroes put their lives on the line for each of us everyday. This legislation shows them our support and appreciation for their extraordinary bravery and heroism. I invite every Member to join us in this effort by cosponsoring this important legislation.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MARJORIE CREEN

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 5, 2002

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, it is with great admiration and respect that I offer congratulations to my constituent, Marjorie A. Creen, of Chisago City, Minnesota. Majorie, a senior at Chisago Lakes High School has been named winner of the VFW 2002 Voice of Democracy broadcast scriptwriting contest. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dennis and Judy Creen and was sponsored by VFW Post 7267 in Lindstrom, Minnesota.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its Ladies Auxiliary conduct a Voice of Democracy audio/essay competition designed to give high school students the opportunity to voice their opinion on their responsibility to our country. The theme of this year's audio/essay contest was "Reaching Out to America's Future."

Marjorie, on behalf of a very proud constituency: "Congratulations on a job well done."

REACHING OUT TO AMERICA'S FUTURE

(By Marjorie Creen)

Will is a small boy. He is in first grade and is 6 years, 8 months old. Besides playing tetherball and riding bikes, Will's favorite thing to do is color. He draws pictures for his mom and dad, and for his grandma and grandpa. Recently, Will was coloring a picture of an American flag when he noticed that he didn't have a red crayon. Will is a smart young boy and knew that he needed red to finish his drawing. He searched through his pack of crayons, then on the table, and finally looked to the floor. Low and behold, there was his crayon. Will was quite happy to see it lying a few feet from his desk. He reached out for it, but it was too far away. Frustrated he stretched even more to get it, but still, he could not pick up his red crayon.

As odd as it may seem, the United States is much like Will. Just like the young boy, we are trying to create something beautiful and perfect for all of us to enjoy. However we too are missing something that we need to make our dream come true. This child has one up on us, though. Will knows what he is missing, therefore he can reach out in order to achieve it. What exactly are we missing? I figured out what I thought we were missing by looking at what the finished drawing should look like.

When I think of what the United States should be, I think of a place where racial differences do not exist. I see a place where there are no "bad streets" in major cities and where people can feel safe to walk alone at night. I want a place where people are less self-absorbed and when a cashier says, "Have a good day!" she actually means it. I see a place where the veterans of World War II, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf are praised and honored for protecting the rights that many people today don't realize we have.

What all of these things add up to is respect. I feel that that is something major our beautiful country lacks. The reason I think respect is so crucial is because it leads to other effects. Once a country has respect, it then has unity, pride, love, happiness, harmony—the list is endless!

To show respect, people could stop swearing at each other, gain more patience in rush hour, allow someone with less items to go in front of them at the grocery store, and remember to stand when the National Anthem is played. Respect is America's red crayon.

Soldiers, sailors, and airmen fought hard to give their children, and their children's children the freedoms we have. It is hard for us to appreciate these things because we have never seen what is like to not have them. My generation has never known a time where we couldn't voice our opinion, sue someone we were unhappy with, or practice the religion of our choice. These freedoms we enjoy have always been there, and hopefully WILL always be there. I just pray that in the future, my fellow peers will learn the true value of the things that we take for granted. Perhaps we need them to be taken away from us, so then one day we can realize what we had and how truly great it was. Sadly, that will be the day that we finally give the veterans of war the respect they deserve.

Respect for the fine soldiers who worked hard to preserve our freedom is a giant leap in the right direction. I think that once we show respect for these brave men and women, we will understand the meaning of the National Anthem. The words will no longer be a simple song that is played before the start of a basketball game, it will be the heroic hymn that defines what people have sacrificed to give us our liberty.

We need to be like Will, the young boy who needs a red crayon. We, the people of this great country, must reach out with arms stretched to the future. Not only must we reach, but we need to stand up, proud and strong, and show respect for the people who fought and died to give us our rights. Respect is what this country needs. Respect for all who live in it, and respect for all who fought for it, so that we could live with freedom, rights, and pride.

A TRIBUTE TO MARTIN MATICH ON HIS 75TH BIRTHDAY

HON. JERRY LEWIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 5, 2002

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I would like today to pay tribute to Martin Matich, a very good friend and a man who has earned a reputation throughout California as a builder of flawless public works and community leader. Mr. Matich reaches his 75th year this month.

The Matich Corp., which Martin Matich ran for 40 years until his retirement as chairman in 1992, is one of Southern California's largest heavy construction companies. It builds freeways, bridges, runways, flood-control channels and dams. The San Bernardino County company, founded by Matich's father John, has built more than 1,000 miles of roads and freeways in California, Nevada and Arizona, and constructed runways and aprons at 40 military and civilian airfields.

Under the leadership of Martin Matich, the company became known for its top-quality work and innovation. The Matich Corp. developed continuous-slip forms that allowed 90-foot-deep intercontinental ballistic missile silos to be built at Vandenberg Air Force Base in one step, making them stronger and faster to finish. It also pioneered continuous-pour concrete paving machinery, which allows long stretches of highways to be built without elaborate forms.

The company, which is now run by Matich's son, Steven, has completed more than \$1 billion in projects in its 85-year history. Six members of the family's third generation are still in company management. It's latest endeavor is to repave and improve hundreds of miles of highways in Mexico, which will help that country meet the challenges of trade with the United States.

Martin Matich has been so involved in local and regional community affairs that the local press often calls him the most influential non-elected person in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, an area known as the Inland Empire of Southern California. His advice and counsel is sought by presidents, senators, House members and most local officials—and he provides it, without regard to party affiliation. He knows the mood of Inland Empire residents, and he is dedicated to putting their interests first.