

Merced, or Tulare County. They should have past or present roots in agriculture while showing outstanding involvement in a variety of community activities in addition to agriculture. The honorees make a difference with their philanthropic giving while serving as visible and credible role models for other women.

Maxine, a native of Los Angeles, California, has always been considered a lifelong "country girl." Farming has played a major role in Maxine's life through good and bad, and she finds her satisfaction in knowing that she helps to feed and clothe our nation and a great part of the world through it. She and her husband, Fred, farm diverse crops and manage a dairy along with their grown children in the Easton area of Fresno County.

Mrs. Machado is an active volunteer in church, political, school, and agricultural activities. Some of Maxine's philanthropic and community involvement includes being the President for the Fresno County Cabrillo Civic Club #10 and the American Union School Parent's Club. She was involved in the St. Jude Catholic Church's Alter Guild and Church Building Fund and C.P.D.E.S. Hall and Holy Ghost Celebration Committees. Mrs. Machado has also been a member of the Fresno County Farm Bureau Women, the Fresno County Republican Women, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the Fresno County Right to Life.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Maxine Machado for receiving the 2002 Common Threads Awards. I invite my colleagues to join me in commending Maxine for her commitment to community service and agriculture and in wishing her many years of continued success.

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A PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING
HEATH EMERSON GROGRO

HON. ROBERT W. NEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 18, 2003

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, Whereas, Heath Emerson Grogro has devoted himself to serving others through his membership in the Boy Scouts of America; and

Whereas, Heath Emerson Grogro has shared his time and talent with the community in which he resides; and

Whereas, Heath Emerson Grogro has demonstrated a commitment to meet challenges with enthusiasm, confidence and outstanding service; and

Whereas, Heath Emerson Grogro must be commended for the hard work and dedication he put forth in earning the Eagle Scout Award;

Therefore, I join with Troop 403, the residents of Coshocton, and the entire 18th Congressional District in congratulating Heath Emerson Grogro as he receives the Eagle Scout Award.

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INTRODUCTION OF THE COLLEGE
OPPORTUNITY FOR A BETTER
AMERICA ACT

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 18, 2003

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to submit, with sixty-

three of my colleagues in the House, the College Opportunity for a Better America Act.

Higher education has become more important than ever to ensure America's economic prosperity, national security, and health. Yet, swelling enrollments among low-income and working class families, massive state budget cuts, and rising tuition continue to strain our ability to ensure access to a college education for all Americans.

As a result, increasing numbers of students and their families are relying on debt to finance their college dreams. Over the past eight years the typical student loan debt has nearly doubled to \$16,928, with 64 percent of students borrowing to finance their college costs. In addition, nearly two-fifths of all student borrowers graduate with unmanageable debt levels, and as a result, many may seek higher-salaried positions rather than public service careers.

At the same time, severe shortages of highly qualified personnel in many public service sectors, such as teaching, nursing, childcare, and child welfare, threaten the health and well being of our nation.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the United States will need more than 2 million new teachers over the next 10 years. In a recent report, the American Hospital Association found that there is a national shortage of 126,000 nurses; just as the number of nursing school graduates decreased by 29 percent between 1995 and 2001. In addition, the number of unfilled child welfare specialists is growing rapidly; while the nation's childcare programs are plagued by high staff turnover, fueled by poor compensation.

We can no longer afford to ignore the growing shortage of a skilled public service workforce. We must invest in our recent graduates to enable more of them to pursue public service careers. The College Opportunity for a Better America Act would take an important step to filling shortages of highly skilled workers in the public service sector by providing up to \$17,500 in loan forgiveness for graduates who enter teaching, child care, nursing, child welfare, and other high priority public service careers.

In short, the Act would provide the financial means necessary to attract and retain a highly skilled public service workforce.

America's higher education system has long served as a vehicle to achieve economic prosperity, national security, and an educated citizenry. From our nascent beginnings, when public education served as the means to equalize our society, to the National Defense Act of 1958—which launched many of our federal student aid programs—we have used higher education as a tool to move this country forward.

I strongly urge my colleagues to join me in honoring this tradition by supporting the College Opportunity for a Better America Act. It is an important step to help fill America's critical public service work gap.

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MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY

HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 18, 2003

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, as we all heard from the President's speech last night,

we are regrettably closer to engaging in military action to oust a murderous dictator, Saddam Hussein. At this time, we should focus our thoughts and prayers on the men and women standing in harm's way to liberate a country that has so often in history been a center of culture, innovation, and education.

Our troops are young volunteers serving a country they love, and a foundation of freedom in which they deeply believe. They have many worries, as would any human being in this situation, but they know their jobs and the risks that accompany military service. As an American and a veteran, I have strong, heart-felt feelings and a sense of pride for these young soldiers and airmen willing to fight for a people they do not know and a cause that requires constant vigilance.

It is these feelings I have for troops that led me and a number of my colleagues to openly question recent media interviews that subject these young troops to questions, which in my mind, have no business being posed days before possible military action.

The initial coverage that brought me to the floor today aired on Peter Jennings "World News Tonight," on Monday, March 10. The segment contained interviews with American troops on the Kuwait/Iraq border. Specifically, some of the questions focused on hypothetical situations regarding combat, enemy responses, and casualties.

This morning, a USA Today article ran with the headline "As War Looms, Young Soldiers Confront Fear . . . 'Black Hawk Down' scenario among worries" (Many of us remember "Black Hawk Down" was based on the operation to capture Somali warlord Adid.

These interviews are asking questions regarding fratricide, combat deaths, chemical or biological weapons, "personal demons," and "bloody urban fighting." As many of us in the House are veterans, we know the sacrifices that come with service, including the loss of life. We have heard countless times, as have our troops, what threats may be encountered if we engage Iraq, and, what the risks entail. As such, our young troops do not need to be reminded of those possibilities by individuals who only seek to generate a story. Nor should the family and friends of loved ones serving in the Middle East be subjected to these stories that further exacerbate worries they may already have.

Our men and women serving in these areas are professionals and they know the job they have to do, though it is obviously a job they would prefer to accomplish by other means than force (I would like to add that we in Congress and the President share that desire). Nonetheless, our troops and their commanders know they must focus on the tasks assigned and the mission objectives that must be completed. I believe that focus can be hindered when certain media personalities, who have no comprehensible idea of what it is like to be in the very situation our troops are facing, continue to dredge up these feelings purely for national coverage.

Such coverage does not serve the home front well either. In Florida, we have activated more Guard and Reserve forces than any other state in the union. In my district, I have watched unit after unit depart for destinations unknown in support of Enduring Freedom. These are incredible individuals—as are their families. My thoughts and prayers go to them as well, for they too are sacrificing.