

HONORING MR. FRED HILL UPON HIS INDUCTION INTO THE PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN HALL OF FAME

HON. THADDEUS G. McCOTTER

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 27, 2003

Mr. McCOTTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in recognizing Mr. Fred Hill, as he was recently inducted into the Plymouth, Michigan Hall of Fame.

His passion for Plymouth, Michigan has led him to serve as President of the Plymouth Community Chamber of Commerce, Plymouth Community United Way, Kiwanis Club of Colonial Plymouth, and Plymouth Downtown Development Authority. Mr. Hill also served on numerous boards and committees including the City Charter Commission, Salvation Army Board, and the Plymouth Jaycees. He is also the founder and leader of the nationally known Fred Hill Briefcase Drill Team.

Mr. Hill is a tremendous ambassador for the Plymouth community, and we at home are indebted to, and grateful for his dedication, passion, and humor—if not his singing.

Mr. Speaker, I extend my sincere appreciation to Mr. Fred Hill, as he is inducted into the Plymouth, Michigan Hall of Fame, for his fine service to our country.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 1345, THE EQUITY FOR RESERVIST ACT (ERA)

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 27, 2003

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, recently I learned about an extraordinary individual, Mr. Gary Kibbee, a firefighter with the South San Francisco Fire Department and member of the Navy reserves. Firefighter Kibbee was activated shortly after September 11, 2001 and has remained deployed in an active duty role since then. He serves his country with honor and distinction, and I feel safe knowing that men like him are defending our nation.

I am deeply concerned, however, that while Firefighter Kibbee is concentrating on the extraordinarily difficult and dangerous mission he had been deployed to perform, he is also being forced to worry about the welfare of his wife and two children. For Firefighter Kibbee's family has to worry not only about whether he will return, but also about how they will make ends meet.

The Kibbee family is victim of a "pay gap" suffered by many of the over 200,000 Reservists and National Guardsmen currently activated. While he is activated, Firefighter Kibbee receives military pay that is significantly less than his civilian pay. This is a sacrifice he, his family, and his brothers and sisters serving in the Reserves and National Guard should not have to bear.

Thankfully, for the past year Firefighter Kibbee has been able to rely on the generosity of the City of South San Francisco to cover the discrepancy between his civilian and military salary. However, South City, like so many other cities and towns, is facing looming

deficits and is unable to continue to cover the difference in salary after 12 months, even for a two-time "Firefighter of the Year" award winner. Firefighter Kibbee was recently notified that his activation has been extended for another 12 months, taking his total time on active duty to the full two years.

Mr. Speaker, if Firefighter Kibbee's concern was unique it would be extremely unfortunate. However, the fact that there are many other brave men and women sharing his concerns is truly a tragedy. Too many members of our Reserve components are faced with the difficult choice of defending their country or providing for their family.

When a civilian is called up to active duty the Reservist's civilian salary is placed on hold and their paycheck now comes from the military. Often the amount of military pay is significantly less than the amount of their civilian salary. As a result of this discrepancy the families of reservists are asked to carry a double burden; a member of their family is temporarily absent—as is a portion of his or her salary.

In order to substantially reduce the discrepancy in pay between civilian and military salaries for Reservists and members of the National Guard who are involuntary activated for more than thirty days, I, along with five of my colleagues, have introduced H.R. 1345, "The Equity for Reservists Pay Act." I am pleased to report that this bi-partisan legislation also has the support of both the National Guard Association and the Reserve Officers Association. I request that copies of both are included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

While the problems caused by this discrepancy in salary has long been known, the recent shift in the frequency and length of activations has aggravated the salary discrepancy issue. During the Cold War era, the Reserve components were hardly utilized, and in fact between 1945 and 1989 Reservists were involuntarily activated by the federal government only four times, an average of less than once a decade. In the aftermath of the Cold War our nation has relied more heavily on the Reserve components, involuntarily activating Reservists units six times since 1990, an average of about once every two years.

Mr. Speaker, the mobilization of Reservists in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks has been the largest and longest since the 1990–91 Gulf War. Currently there are over 210,000 men and women Reservists on active federal duty. The average length of deployment since September 11th has been, for some, the longest continuous activation ever.

The brave men and women serving in America's Reserve and National Guard make tremendous sacrifices for their country. Some are called to make the ultimate sacrifice. One sacrifice they and their families should not have to make is worrying about their financial security. It is the duty of our government to ensure that the men and women of the military reserves are not financially burdened when they answer their call to duty.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that this bill does not provide extra compensation to members of the National Guard and Reserve components, but rather ensures that our Guardsmen continue to receive the amounts of their civilian salaries.

It is well known in the Department of Defense that the potential for income loss during activation is a major concern for both officers

and enlisted personnel in the Reserves. Given the Pentagon's increasing reliance on the Reserve Component, there exists a valid concern that the potential for financial losses would have a negative impact on recruiting and retention in the Reserves. Passage of H.R. 1345 would alleviate this concern and provides both for the financial security for our Reservists as well as security to our nation as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, this important legislation is designed to ensure that federal, state and local government employees and those employed in the private sector can continue to defend our country without being forced to worry about their families pinching pennies to adjust to a life on a reduced salary. The legislation covers members of the Reserves who are involuntarily called up for a period of longer than 30 days as defined in Section 101(19) of Title 37 United States Code.

The coverage of Federal employees uses a commonsense and cost neutral approach. The bill simply requires the employee's federal agency to pay the employee the difference between their military pay as defined by Section 101(21) of Title 37 (not including allowances) and their civilian base pay. Since Federal agencies and departments have already budgeted for their employees' salaries, there should not be additional expenditures required to cover any discrepancy the reservist employee suffers as a result of his or her involuntary call up.

In addition to the numerous Federal government employees that this bill would cover, I believe that Congress should also assist state and municipal governments in providing the difference in salary that their Reservist employees face. H.R. 1345 also provides assistance to the state and municipal governments who choose to provide financial equity to their employees by allowing the states to request a reimbursement of 50 percent of the expenditures required for the first 9 months. After 9 months, the participating state and municipal governments are eligible for a full 100 percent reimbursement.

In order to ensure that our government's generosity is not taken advantage of, I have included language into this legislation to prevent abuse. The anti-fraud provision of this bill, which is analogous to California law, requires municipal employees to return to their government jobs upon deactivation. An employee who accepts money to make up their salary discrepancy and doesn't return will have the received funds treated as a loan to be paid back in a manner to be determined by the Secretary of the Treasury. Additionally, the appropriate Secretary has the discretion to waive all or part of the loan should an appropriate situation arise.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, in order to provide the necessary incentive for non-government employers to make up the discrepancy in income that their brave employees encounter as a result of being involuntarily activated for more than 30 days, this legislation amends Subpart D of Part IV of subchapter A of Chapter 1 of the Internal Revenue Code, creating an "Active-duty Reserve Component Employee Credit." This credit should provide an incentive for private companies to continue to pay their employees. This credit will be equal to 50 percent of the compensation paid to the reservist employee to make up the difference between their private salary and reservist pay.