

SENSE OF THE HOUSE COMMENDING NATION'S BUSINESSES AND BUSINESS OWNERS FOR SUPPORT OF OUR TROOPS AND THEIR FAMILIES

SPEECH OF

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 4, 2003

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. I rise today in support of H. Res. 201, which commends American business for its support of U.S. Reservists and National Guardsmen called to active duty.

Nationwide, Reservists are averaging far more number of days either deployed or away from home than at the height of the Gulf War in 1991. They are being called up more often, are serving for longer periods of time, and are absolutely vital to our national military strategy. The U.S. military does not undertake any sustained operations anywhere in the world without using the National Guard and Reserve.

Over 216,900 reservists have been called to active duty since 9/11, with most having to temporarily leave their civilian jobs to serve. Although their jobs are assured when they return, for their employers, war means having to continue business without key employees. Small firms in particular must make extraordinary sacrifices when they lose one of their most productive workers. Yet, despite these hardships, many companies continue to support these employees and their families while they serve their nation. H. Res. 201 expresses the sense of the House that our nation's businesses and business owners should be commended for their support of our troops and their families as they serve our country.

It is important to acknowledge the sacrifices and contributions made by American business in support of the Reservists and Guardsmen they employ. Many of these companies, without legal obligation to do so, continue to pay reservists the difference between their military pay and what they earn on their civilian jobs. Many also continue to pay health and insurance benefits for those employees and their families.

Members of the guard and reserve can't do their job without the support of their family and employers. It is fitting that we take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution that American business, both corporate and family-owned, is making to the defense of our nation and to our national military objectives.

ALL SPOUSES OF MILITARY RETIREES DESERVE OUR HELP

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 9, 2003

Mr. FILNER Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise to call attention to my bill, H.R. 2393, "Continued Benefits for Injured Spouses Act".

Under current law, enacted in 1982, former spouses of military members or retirees are eligible for military medical benefits and exchange and commissary privileges if the military member had performed at least 20 years

of military service, had been married for at least 20 years to one spouse, and 20 years of marriage and service were overlapping. This is known as the 20/20/20 restriction. Further legislation was enacted two years later to include additional former spouses under a 20/20/15 restriction.

While this law recognizes the contribution and sacrifice of many military spouses who later divorced, there is a group who are completely left out through no fault of their own. Spouses who must leave a marriage through divorce due to documented abuse are often left with none of these benefits. Domestic violence and physical or sexual endangerment to the spouse or the children, proven by medical or counseling records, should be taken into account. Divorced because of this situation, the injured spouse should continue to receive all benefits.

H.R. 2393 will change the law to 20/20/10—only for these special circumstances, meaning that the military member would have been married for at least 20 years to one spouse, would have performed at least 20 years of military service, with 10 years of service and marriage overlapping. This change would allow an abused spouse to escape from a potentially dangerous marriage and still keep benefits.

Teresa, a woman in my Congressional District, has found herself in these circumstances. She told me, "I didn't begin this marriage looking for a way to divorce. I believe in commitment, and there were some good years. But had I known when I married him how he would hurt me and endanger my life, I would have backed away. I have done all I can to keep this marriage together. His response to legal separation was to come over and throw our 15 year old around until I called the police. I will never allow him to hurt our children again."

Most of our military members are honorable and good people. But, in the few cases where spousal or child abuse is involved, we must protect the families. I invite my colleagues to join with me in supporting military spouses who have found themselves in dangerous marriages. Please co-sponsor H.R. 2393.

TRIBUTE TO HILDA VAUGHAN

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 9, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Hilda Vaughan, an exceptional individual who has selflessly devoted her time and energy to the betterment of this nation. I applaud her outstanding character, and her desire to support and educate her community. Hilda demonstrates impressive qualities worthy of such praise, and today we honor her retirement as a salute to a job well done.

Hilda was born in Lynchburg, Virginia, and spent her adolescent years thirsting for knowledge. After graduating from Rustburg High School in Rustburg, Virginia, she obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Lynchburg College, and married her beloved husband, Ted Vaughan. Hilda moved to Silt, Colorado, and served her community well, by holding a number of clerical, secretarial, and accounting po-

sitions. Additionally, Hilda achieved her EMT-B certification and assisted the Grand Valley Fire Protection District. Hilda's attention to detail, together with her unwavering determination, led her to become and perform as an outstanding substitute teacher and librarian for 23 years. As a student teacher in Lynchburg, she educated herself to become a mentor as well as a teacher. Her first substitute teaching position was in the RE-2 School District, in Rifle, Colorado. Through her experiences in different geographic areas and districts, Hilda expanded her vast knowledge and wisdom, and became an excellent asset to every school district she served. Today we admire a woman who selflessly donated her time and efforts to upholding the structure of her community.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride I honor such an outstanding individual before this body of Congress and this nation. Hilda contributed so much, and she was so thoughtful, words will never express our appreciation to her. Hilda, thank you for your hard work in our country, and I anticipate great achievements from you in the future.

TRIBUTE TO PATRICIA HARPER GARRETT

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 9, 2003

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Patricia Harper Garrett, of whom it can be said, "Teaching was in her genes." Her grandmother was the Principal at Belle Glades Jr. High School and later Principal of Roosevelt Jenkins High School in Starke, Florida, where her parents were both students. At the end of this school year, Mrs. Garrett will be retiring from the teaching profession after 35 years.

Patricia Garrett is a graduate of George Washington Carver High School and Bethune Cookman College. She is also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and an Associate Member of Jack and Jill of America.

Throughout her teaching career, her title has changed several times, including Work Experience Coordinator at Booker T. Washington and Richmond Heights Junior High Schools and Cooperative Education Coordinator/Department Chairperson at Miami Sunset Senior High School. However, her goal has always been the same: to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of young people.

Ms. Garrett realized at an early age, from years of watching her grandmother and mother who were both teachers, that education was crucially important. After college, she came to realize that her skills could best be utilized helping to educate young people.

Ms. Garrett has received numerous honors over the years in recognition of her skill, commitment, dedication, and enthusiasm for educating young people. In 1997, she received perhaps her greatest honor: the selection of her daughter, Jessica Garrett—a fourth-generation teacher in her family as Miami-Dade Public Schools Region Beginning Teacher of the Year. The legacy of educators continues with her youngest daughter, April Garrett, who is in her first year of teaching.

Congratulations, Patricia Harper Garrett. Thank you for your service, and enjoy your retirement.

TRIBUTE TO GEORGE RYAN

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 9, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with a profound sense of pride that I stand before this Congress and this Nation to pay tribute to an outstanding educator, coach and leader from my district. George Ryan of Grand Junction, Colorado spends most of his time with the student-athletes of the area, providing them with leadership, and direction. I am honored to recognize his accomplishments here today.

George grew up interested in sports, and worked hard to receive a football scholarship to Youngstown College but enlisted in the armed forces to dutifully serve our country. One of the greatest things to happen to George was being stationed at Fort Carson in Colorado, where he met a young nursing trainee who would soon become his wife, Mary Ann. The couple soon wound up in Grand Junction, where George became a teacher and coach.

George's interest in our Nation's youth led him to serve on the District 51 school board. After some time there, he shifted his volunteer time to athletics and began to officiate at track meets. He worked as an insurance claims adjuster during the day, so he could provide some financial stability for his family. His hard work on the track garnered George quite a reputation as a track official, where he worked 15 State Track Championships. George was so good at his job that he received an invitation to the NCAA Track Championships in 1982, working the hammer throw, discus, and the javelin. He enjoys officiating track meets and working with young people so much that it has become his number one hobby.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to stand before this Congress and this Nation to praise George Ryan. George has provided the city of Grand Junction with an exemplary model of community service. He has spent countless hours helping children engage in sports, while providing them with a role model they can look up to and admire. Thank you, George, for your years of service.

RECOGNIZING AND COMMENDING ALL WHO PARTICIPATED IN AND SUPPORTED OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM IN AFGHANISTAN AND OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM IN IRAQ

SPEECH OF

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 4, 2003

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 177. This resolution acknowledges the accomplishments of the U.S. armed forces and expresses the deep gratitude of the nation to the 21 steadfast allies and coalition members in Afghani-

stan and Iraq. It also commends Defense Department civilians and contractors for their work and support.

It is a privilege to take a few minutes to pay tribute to the men and women who distinguish themselves daily in selfless service to this nation. More than 1.4 million men and women make up America's active and reserve forces, and over 300,000 of them are deployed for military action in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In addition to their duties as soldiers, members of the armed forces also serve as our nation's unofficial ambassadors. They represent the very best of what this nation stands for—honor, loyalty, and a commitment to enhancing freedom and democracy throughout the world. The men and women now serving in Iraq and Afghanistan have the unique opportunity to demonstrate to the world that the United States cannot only win wars, it can help emerging nations become self-governing as well. Maintaining the peace and nation building in these two countries promises to be a lengthy and time-consuming process. I am pleased to offer my support to this resolution and call on my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to reaffirm our commitment to our nation's goals in these two countries.

H. Con. Res. 177 also conveys the deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of service members killed or wounded during these operations, and calls on communities across the country to prepare appropriate ceremonies to commemorate with tributes and days of remembrance their service and sacrifice.

Sixty-seven United States military and civilians lost their lives in Afghanistan and 140 died in Iraq so far. By any measure, their contributions, in terms of human sacrifice, are immense. As a nation we share the sense of loss that their families are experiencing. We must never forget that the peace and prosperity that we enjoy are founded on the ultimate sacrifices made by those who have lost their lives in war throughout our nation's history.

EDUCATION, JOBS, BENEFITS, AND PRESCRIPTIONS FOR OUR NATION'S VETERANS

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 9, 2003

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today to urge support for four bills that I have introduced to address several needs of our veterans and to ensure their well-being.

The first bill (H.R. 1924) deals with education benefits. Last year, one very important piece of the Fiscal Year 2003 National Defense Authorization Act that Congress passed was a provision that extends the time limit for members of the Selected Reserve to use their Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) education benefits from 10 years to 14 years. Prior to the passage of this law, these MGIB participants had only 10 years from their release from military service to use these earned education benefits.

Many times, veterans with families, work commitments, and economic difficulties are unable to fulfill all their requirements to receive a degree or certification within this 10 year pe-

riod. In passing last year's Defense Authorization Act, Congress recognized this difficulty for members of the Selected Reserve. Also recognizing that 10 years may not be long enough for certain individuals, the VA Secretary has limited discretion to grant time extensions to those who are unable to use their benefits due to mental or physical handicaps.

It is clear that life in 2003 can make it difficult to finish an education in the allotted time frame. I believe it is time to extend the time period for *all* the participants of the MGIB. Therefore, I have introduced H.R. 1924, "The Montgomery GI Bill Flexibility Act", which will allow all participants up to 14 years to complete their education. This bill will ensure that more of our veterans are able to avail themselves of the educational opportunity that the MGIB affords them—the educational opportunity that they earned.

A second bill, H.R. 1920, "Let U.S. Veterans Rebuild Iraq Act", does just what the title says. It would guarantee jobs to veterans with companies that are awarded government contracts to rebuild Iraq. We have all rallied to support our troops as they waged Operation: Iraqi Freedom. But often, after the troops come home, our veterans are not treated with the respect that they deserve. It is most important to ensure that there are jobs for our nation's veterans, both new veterans and older. We are still fighting homelessness among veterans, a national disgrace. One way to better the lives of many veterans is to include them in the job of rebuilding Iraq. They fought for freedom for Iraq. Let's get them involved with helping to secure the future for Iraq.

My third bill, H.R. 1347, "The Former Prisoners of War Equitable Dental Benefits Act", is legislation that I introduced in the 107th Congress and that passed the House of Representatives, but not the Senate. This bill is supported by the Department of Veterans Affairs. It would eliminate the "time of internment" requirement for former prisoners-of-war (POWs) in order to be eligible for outpatient dental care benefits at the VA.

No one can deny that former POWs have sacrificed greatly in defense of their country. Unfortunately, their sacrifices continue. Reports have shown that POWs are at higher risk for a number of disabling conditions associated with exposure to infectious disease, inclement weather, and malnutrition.

Currently, the law states that eligibility for outpatient dental care benefits only applies to former POWs with 90 days or more of internment. As you can imagine, this time requirement has been difficult for the VA to administer and to justify to the veterans seeking dental care. Former POWs are often confused about this time requirement. Who could say that our POWs in Iraq did not suffer because they were not imprisoned for 90 days? H.R. 1347 eliminates the arbitrary distinction between former POWs who have all paid dearly for their service.

Fourthly, I have learned that VA doctors are not allowed to prescribe more than a 1 month prescription for controlled drugs, such as pain killers used for chronic conditions. But many veterans who have these prescriptions have been treated with the same medications for years and show no signs of abuse. H.R. 1921, the "Continuity of Care for Veterans with Chronic Conditions Act", would allow VA doctors to write a three-months prescription for these veterans who demonstrate no sign of