

block that he controlled—that of his wife and children—in my Congressional District. Rick worked hard to ensure that my staff and I maintained a thorough understanding of the Impact Aid law, and the issues and challenges facing the program. This program is important to my Congressional District because of the presence of a number of large military installations. Rick's dedication to strengthening and improving this program has improved educational opportunities for military children in my Congressional district, and for military and Indian children all across our country.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to recognize Richard Knott on this occasion of his retirement from the San Diego Unified School District for his dedication to education and his continued role in enriching the lives of students in my district and across the country. I thank him for his service and wish him continued success in the future.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

SPEECH OF

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 25, 2003

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2861) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes:

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the Nadler-Velázquez amendment. The amendment restores \$150 million in funding for the Section 8 voucher program. The underlying bill cuts funding for housing vouchers. If this bill is passed into law in its current form, 85,000 people will lose their vouchers, including over 3,200 families in Illinois. I strongly believe that we should expand, not reduce, funding for the Section 8 voucher program and low-income housing in general. The Nadler-Velázquez amendment would help restore voucher funding for thousands of families in need.

In a letter I received today, several faith-based organizations wrote, "As faith-based organizations, we are committed to strengthening our communities by assisting those who are the most vulnerable, and we believe that our work is not simply a matter of charity, but of responsibility, righteousness, and justice. We urge you to assist us in our work by renewing Congress' commitment to fully fund and expand the Section 8 voucher program." I encourage my colleagues to read the full text of the letter and urge all members to support the amendment.

July 25, 2003.

To: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives

Re: Funding for the Housing Choice ("Section 8") Voucher Program

As members of the faith community, we are writing to express our concern about funding for the Section 8 housing voucher

program. Our organizations serve millions of low-income individuals and families who, despite their best efforts, are struggling to meet their basic needs and to achieve economic stability. To many of those we assist, the lack of affordable housing presents a considerable obstacle, and the Section 8 voucher program offers in turn a critical form of assistance. Through our work, we are witness to the important role that housing vouchers play in preventing homelessness, and in helping low-income individuals and families to make progress towards economic stability.

Congress has for many years expressed a strong commitment to the Section 8 voucher program, consistently voting to increase the number of vouchers authorized and to fully fund all authorized vouchers. This commitment has been important, as the need for housing assistance has continued to expand. In most communities, there are long waiting lists for Section 8 vouchers, and it is estimated that only one third of eligible households receive voucher assistance.

To our disappointment, however, Congress appears to be retreating from this commitment. In the appropriations law for 2003, Congress failed, for the first time in recent memory, to include funding for incremental Section 8 vouchers. This week, the House Appropriations Committee reported out a VA-HUD appropriations bill for 2004 that would, by its own estimate, fund only 96 percent of authorized Section 8 vouchers, and again includes no funding for incremental vouchers.

Moreover, while we appreciate that the House Appropriations Committee has made a sincere effort to improve on the President's budget request for the voucher program, and we recognize that estimating future voucher costs is difficult, there is reason to believe that the Committee's estimate is overly optimistic. Recent analyses performed independently by the Congressional Budget Office and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) suggest that the Committee's estimate is based on voucher cost assumptions that are too low. For example, in an analysis of the most recent voucher cost data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, CBPP estimates that the Section 8 appropriation in the House bill would be sufficient to renew only 91 percent of authorized vouchers, and is approximately \$580 million short of the funding that will be necessary to fully renew vouchers leased in 2004. A shortfall of this magnitude would have a destructive impact on thousands of vulnerable households—85,000 households, by CBPP's estimate—the great majority of which are working families, elderly, or disabled.

We therefore urge you to renew Congress' commitment to fully fund the Section 8 voucher program. Specifically, we ask that you increase the Section 8 appropriation sufficiently to ensure that all authorized vouchers will be funded, and to make certain that no households using vouchers in the coming year will be denied funding.

As faith-based organizations, we are committed to strengthening our communities by assisting those who are the most vulnerable, and we believe that our work is not simply a matter of charity, but of responsibility, righteousness, and justice. We urge you to assist us in our work by renewing Congress' commitment to fully fund and expand the Section 8 voucher program.

Sincerely,

American Baptist Churches USA; Call to Renewal; Catholic Charities USA; The Episcopal Church, USA; McAuley Institute; NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office; United Jewish Communities; Volunteers of America.

HONORING ESPERANZA MARRERO

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 4, 2003

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives to pay tribute to Esperanza Marrero—a resident on the Lower East Side of my New York City Congressional District.

Esperanza is the oldest person in New York State at 110 years old and 4 and ½ months. She has lived through two World Wars, and has seen the changes in culture and life in Puerto Rico—and in New York City—over the decades.

Born in 1893 in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, Esperanza is the proud grandmother of 15 and has dozens of great grandchildren. She credits her long life to getting a strong start growing up in Puerto Rico.

Like her grandmother before her who lived to be 120, Esperanza continues to live a full life, playing bingo at the Lillian Wald Senior Center, shopping on 14th Street, or watching the boats on the East River. Her companion is a dog named Benji, who is said to have saved her life many times.

Esperanza, which means "hope" in Spanish, was named appropriately—her life and her story are truly inspirational.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Esperanza Marrero, and join with my colleagues in the House of Representatives to recognize her extraordinary life.

TRIBUTE TO DR. ROBERT INGRAM

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 4, 2003

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a versatile and committed public servant in my District, the Rev. Dr. Robert Ingram. This honor has long been in coming for his service to our community in various capacities. Among the roles he has held was that of Chief of Police, City Manager and subsequently Mayor of the City of Opa-Locka. His current elected position as Vice-Chairman of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the fourth largest school system in the nation with some 370,000 students, is what occupies his waking hours as he doggedly tackles the awesome task of balancing the learning needs of students amidst the dwindling education dollars that now fund our schools.

In its most recent article entitled: "Robert Ingram: The Ascension of an Ex-Miami Cop," the FLAVOUR Black Florida Life & Style Magazine succinctly quoted the City of Miami's first Black Police Chief Clarence Dickson when he described Dr. Ingram's service record thus: ". . . his life is legend and is about as close to the impossible dream as I have witnessed . . . not in my wildest dreams would I have predicted the accomplishments, the challenges, the risk, the courage, the sacrifices, the victories and the successes this man would achieve though all of the evidence was there in those early days."

He has spoken clearly on such issues as money, reparations, black-on-black crime, affordable housing, civil rights, love, equal rights