

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION  
OF H.R. 1279, GANG DETERRENCE  
AND COMMUNITY PROTECTION  
ACT OF 2005

SPEECH OF

**HON. EARL BLUMENAUER**

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 11, 2005*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 6) to ensure jobs for our future with secure, affordable, and reliable energy:

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I strongly believe that the United States should be doing more to reduce violent crimes, whether they are committed by gangs or individuals. I voted against the "Gang Deterrence and Community Protection Act of 2005" because it fails to address this problem and impairs our judicial system. H.R. 1279 increases penalties for non-violent crimes, while imposing mandatory minimum sentences and expanding the death penalty. These provisions do nothing to detour gang violence and limit judge's ability to impose sentences that fit the offense. Furthermore, the bill does not include early intervention programs or other preventative programs that could be successful in reducing gang violence. I am hopeful that Congress will work to pass legislation that addresses the core issues behind this serious problem.

WE MUST IMPROVE OUTCOMES  
FOR CHILDREN LEAVING FOSTER  
CARE

**HON. GEORGE MILLER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 12, 2005*

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, the circumstances described in the following report from Monday's National Public Radio program clearly indicates the urgent need to overhaul the child welfare system in order to improve outcomes for children aging out of foster care.

A recent study by Harvard Medical School and Casey Family Programs measured some of the aftereffects of foster care. That study concluded that fewer than 27 percent of foster youth who graduated high school went on to college as compared to 52 percent of the general population. And for those who do begin college, the dropout rate for foster youth is extremely high. More than eighty percent of all foster care youth who enroll in college will drop out before graduation.

In addition to lack of funds and the inability to access the limited federal and state funds that are available, foster youth suffer other unique disadvantages. While other students are concerned with academic pressures, foster care youth are worried about housing and being alone during holidays and breaks when dormitories are closed.

Next week I will propose legislation to address the shortcomings of the child welfare system by improving outcomes for children leaving foster care by awarding grants to colleges and universities to recruit foster care students; provide academic counseling; pro-

vide financial aid counseling; and provide other appropriate supportive educational services.

The article follows:

[From the Minnesota Public Radio, May 9, 2005]

FOSTER-CARE SYSTEM OFTEN ENDS UP HURTING THE KIDS IT WAS DESIGNED TO PROTECT  
(By Hilary Wicai)

May is National Foster Care Month. The foster-care system was created to care for children who are abused or neglected or whose parents can't care for them, but a recent study of former foster-care kids finds many end up hurt by the system that was supposed to protect them, and once they turn 18, they're on their own, often without the skills they need to fend for themselves. The damage takes both an emotional and an economic toll as MARKETPLACE's Hilary Wicai reports from the work and family desk.

Jessica Lindsay was 14 when a couple of police officers pulled her out of class.

Ms. JESSICA LINDSAY (Former Foster Child): My mother is—she's a schizophrenic, and she's been that way my whole life.

WICAI: Jessica and her mother had a bad fight the day before and the police told Jessica she couldn't go home again ever.

Ms. LINDSAY: 'Well, why can't I go home?' 'Well, your mother threatened to kill you, so we have to remove you from the home.'

WICAI: That began Jessica's three-year journey through three social workers, two foster families, four group homes and four high schools. Moving around a lot is part of the system. If kids are in care for four years or more, 37 moves are the median.

Ms. MARIAN HERRICK (Former Foster Child): I mean, I have another friend who's lived in over 45 homes when she was in foster care. Yeah.

WICAI: Marian Herrick spent seven years in foster care after her dad went to prison. Herrick says many don't know what foster children go through because they learn not to tell their stories. Her best friend in middle school taught her that.

Ms. HERRICK: Her mom told her that she needed to find a normal friend because I was in foster care. So it's like there's definitely that stigma. Just answering the most basic questions are difficult, like, 'Where are you from?' 'Well, I'm not really from any one city.'

WICAI: Foster children aren't from any one city in large part because the system is out of balance. There are only about a hundred thousand foster families for 600,000 children in care. That's why many, especially teen-agers like Jessica Lindsay, end up in group homes where they're looked after by low-wage shift workers. Care in a group home can cost taxpayers nearly 10 times more than family foster care. At one group home, Jessica had trouble sleeping. The doctor put her on sleeping pills which made her sleep through class but she took them.

Ms. LINDSAY: If you don't comply with what they tell you to do, you can't get any of your rewards that you're supposed to get, like going outside. They reward you for good behavior, but you're not a criminal. You're here because something happened to you, not because you did something.

WICAI: A recent study showed post-traumatic stress disorder rates among foster-care alumni are almost twice as high as in US veterans of war. The study by Harvard Medical School and Casey Family Programs measured some of the aftereffects of foster care. Ruth Massinga is president of Casey. She says the picture is grim for young adults now out of care.

Ms. RUTH MASSINGA (President, Casey Family Programs): Only 80 percent of the

study participants were employed as compared to 95 percent of the general population. One-third of the participants had incomes at or below the poverty level. One-third had no health insurance, and nearly a quarter had experienced homelessness after leaving foster care.

Mr. GARY STANGLER (Co-author, "On Their Own"): At 18, we say, 'Happy birthday. You're on your own.'

WICAI: Gary Stangler used to run Missouri's foster-care system. He recently co-authored a book called "On Their Own."

Mr. STANGLER: There are literally places in the country where young people are emancipated from foster care and they are delivered to a homeless shelter.

WICAI: He says there's nothing magic about turning 18 if you're undereducated, lack job skills and have nowhere to go. He says as they're shuffled around, many foster kids don't learn anything about paying bills, finding an apartment, filing taxes, even tying a tie for a job interview. Now 19, Jessica Lindsay has her own apartment in Michigan but only after a couple of false starts with college and financial aid.

Ms. LINDSAY: This is what I needed and this is what I got, and now look at what I have to deal with.

WICAI: So she works full time, seeing that other foster youth get a better start.

Unidentified Woman: Clap once if you can hear me!

WICAI: She was recently accepted to the Child Welfare League of America's National Foster Youth Advisory Council. The group advocates and lobbies for better foster-care policies.

Unidentified Woman: . . . worked so hard we've already put in a seven-hour day with . . .

WICAI: This month, they met in Washington, DC, to discuss how to promote the idea of more permanent placements for foster children. With groups like this behind her, Jessica is more hopeful that her third attempt at college will be more successful. Jessica's goal is to graduate. That would help increase the number of foster-care alumni with bachelor's degrees. Right now, it's only 2 percent.

IN RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL  
POLICE WEEK

**HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 12, 2005*

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to our fallen heroes and to offer my heartfelt thanks to our brave men and women in blue.

Yesterday, sadly, was an eerily familiar day. Once again, fighter jets circled the bright blue sky and alarms echoed throughout the halls of Congress. As my colleagues and I rushed off the House floor, a police officer exclaimed, "This is not a test! Run!"

Mr. Speaker, there was fear in the officer's eyes, but there was bravery in her voice. This was the moment for which she had trained, and she was determined to shepherd us to safety. I thanked God, once again, for the commitment, courage and competence of the Capitol Police.

Mr. Speaker, it is all too fitting that this week is National Police Week. When an unidentified aircraft entered restricted air space yesterday, Members of Congress witnessed the efficiency and fearlessness of our police force first-hand.

But it should not take an emergency for us to recognize those who risk their lives for our protection. It should not take a tragedy for us to say thank you.

Mr. Speaker, 415 names will be added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial this week. I'd like to speak to you about one of the names that will be written on the Memorial, a name that many from my hometown of Baltimore hold in our hearts.

Almost exactly a year ago, Officer Brian D. Winder was killed in the line of duty as he responded to a 911 call. He was only 36. Mr. Speaker, you need only read the postings on Officer Winder's memorial website to know how much he meant to his wife, children, and fellow officers. In fact, if I may, I would like to read the posting written by Officer Winder's partner, LeTanye.

Hey B., today starts a tough time for me and a lot of others who miss you. I have that task of making sure that your family makes it through all of the ceremonies that are upcoming in honor of Police Memorial Week. There have been so many times, recently, that I just wanted to give up being a peace officer because it has gotten so much more dangerous for us on the streets. The department is falling apart one by one. These are things that you and I spent countless times discussing. But now you are gone and it's hard. My sister was attacked the other day by an unknown male and I told myself that I had to continue this job. I have to continue to see that my family and yours are safe. I know that you would want me to do so. I just ask that you stay by my side and help me continue the fight, even when I feel that I can't do it anymore.

Mr. Speaker, LeTanye has reason to feel lonely and overwhelmed. The President, and yes, this Congress, have abandoned her. The President's budget slashed billions of dollars from essential law enforcement programs like COPS, a program that had added thousands of police officers to our most dangerous neighborhoods. Now law enforcement officers like LeTanye will have to shoulder even more of the burden of our collective safety.

So, I ask you, how many more partners will LeTanye lose as a result of these cutbacks? Deep cuts to the COPS, Byrne grants and HIDTA programs endanger their lives and hinder their ability to protect our communities. How can we say to her, we know it's hard, and it's going to get harder because we aren't willing to give you the support you need? How can we look Capitol Police Officers in the face, knowing they are willing to give their lives for our protection, while we pass legislation that endangers theirs.

Mr. Speaker, we should honor all of our law enforcement officers by giving them the resources they need to do their jobs well and safely. We must do more than etch one more name onto a memorial wall. We must speak truth to power by etching a legacy of respect, gratitude and priority funding into our fiscal policies for our nation's law enforcement forces.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF MR.  
HUGH THOMAS PRAYTOR, JR.

**HON. JO BONNER**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 12, 2005*

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, Mobile County and indeed the entire state of Alabama re-

cently lost a dear friend, and I rise today to honor him and pay tribute to his memory. Mr. Hugh Thomas Praytor, Jr., known as Tommy to his many friends, was a devoted family man and dedicated community leader throughout his life.

A native and lifelong resident of Mobile, Alabama, Tommy Praytor was a graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi and worked as a banker for 48 years. His first job, as a part-time counter at the old Merchants National Bank in Mobile, began during summer breaks during his time in college. Following his graduation, he took a full-time position at Merchants and worked in the bank's computer department. He continued his career with the bank after it became Regions Bank, and spent many years at the end of his career specializing in private lending and in bond issues for municipalities seeking infrastructure and other community improvements.

Even with his numerous professional obligations, Tommy also found time to involve himself in several Mobile community organizations. During his lifetime, he served as a group chairman for Alabama Young Bankers and was treasurer of the Mobile Big Game Fishing Club. Additionally, he served on or was affiliated with the Senior Bowl Committee, the Mobile Sports Hall of Fame, the Alabama Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo, the Mobile Bass Master Club, and several Mardi Gras mystic organizations. He was also a longtime member of All Saints Episcopal Church in Mobile and spent several years as both a Sunday school teacher and a member of the church vestry.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering a dedicated community leader and friend to many throughout south Alabama. Tommy Praytor, Jr., loved life and lived it to the fullest, and his passing marks both a loss for all of south Alabama and a personal loss for me. I was fortunate to call him my friend, and he will be deeply missed by one and all, most especially his family—his wonderful wife of 46 years, Jamie Catlin Praytor, his sons, Hugh Thomas Praytor, III, and Wilson Wrath Praytor, his daughter, Ellen Praytor Wingard, his sister, Carolyn Praytor Smith, and four grandchildren—as well as the countless friends he leaves behind. Our thoughts and prayers are with them all at this difficult time.

RECOGNIZING DAMION DEROBBO

**HON. TIM RYAN**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 12, 2005*

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Damion DeRobbio, whose heroics in the face of a neighbor's house fire saved the life of a 6-year-old girl.

On April 22 of last year, Mr. DeRobbio rushed to the aid of a frantic mother, whose daughter, Mackenzie, was trapped in her bed, blinded and suffocated by smoke. After several attempts to get into the burning house failed, Mr. DeRobbio persevered, smashing the little girl's bedroom window and squeezing through the tiny opening. Mr. DeRobbio crawled over the shards of broken glass, sustaining cuts on his knees and shoulders, and seized Mackenzie from her bed. He then passed her through the window to a waiting police officer before climbing out himself.

For his actions, Mr. DeRobbio was awarded the Carnegie Medal by the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, and deservedly so. However, recognition was certainly not what motivated this hero on that night more than a year ago. Were it not for Mr. DeRobbio's selfless bravery, this inspiring story could have easily been one of tragedy and loss.

So today, on behalf of all of his neighbors in Ohio's 17th District, I honor Mr. DeRobbio for his valor.

IN MEMORY AND HONOR OF  
MIGUEL CONTRERAS

**HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 12, 2005*

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mourn the death and celebrate the life of Miguel Contreras, who died last Friday at the age of 52.

As the leader of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor AFL-CIO, Miguel was a powerful figure in the labor movement.

Miguel spearheaded the effort to get a new contract for janitors in 2000. In the same year, he negotiated a key deal for Metropolitan Transit workers.

He was deeply involved in politics at many levels. There are few politicians in Los Angeles who didn't have to work with him.

And yet, Miguel was a workers' leader, with his focus keenly on the workers he represented and their best interest.

Maybe that's because Miguel had been there himself. He was the son of farmworkers, and he himself started working in the fields at the age of 5. In a way, Miguel never left the field. He carried the struggle with him from the fields of the grape boycott, working with Cesar Chavez, to the streets, rails and hotels of Los Angeles.

The labor movement has lost one of its great leaders. We have lost a great American. And we have lost one of our great friends.

Our hearts go out to Miguel's family, to his wife Maria Elena, and his sons Michael and Mario.

RURAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE  
FAIRNESS ACT OF 2005

**HON. BARBARA CUBIN**

OF WYOMING

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 12, 2005*

Mrs. CUBIN. Mr. Speaker, in the dark of night on August 27, 2002, the town of Kaycee, Wyoming was overwhelmed by a 4-foot surge of water from the Powder River caused by a severe rainstorm—pouring down 2/3 of the town's annual rainfall within a 6-hour period. The damage was disastrous, over 80 percent of Kaycee's businesses and one-third of their residences were damaged or destroyed. But despite Kaycee's massive loss—one that would have cost billions had Manhattan, Los Angeles or Chicago lost 80 percent of their businesses—there was no disaster declaration.

This flood effectively erased the community of Kaycee, and it's absolutely preposterous