

prices for healthcare, gasoline, and other necessities are rising, making it even more urgent that we raise the minimum wage now. The minimum wage has been stuck at \$5.15 per hour since 1997—\$5.15 per hour. These days, a gallon of milk can cost half that much in some parts of the country. Imagine working for the better part of an hour and only being able to afford a gallon of milk—how do you ever make ends meet? The answer is: you don't.

One of the reports issued today, from the Center for Economic and Policy Research, shows that most minimum wage workers make significant contributions to their total family income. Half of them are between the ages of 25 and 54. The report also shows the importance of increasing the minimum wage to prevent families from falling further into poverty. Too often minimum wage jobs are not transitional. As the report makes clear, many workers find themselves trapped in minimum wage jobs; more than one-third of 25- to 54-year-old workers in minimum wage jobs are still earning the minimum wage after three years. The report is entitled "Not Up, Not Out: Few Prime-Age Workers Move Out of Minimum Wage Jobs" and is available at http://www.cepr.net/publications/label_markets_2005_05.pdf.

The other report, from the Children's Defense Fund, shows that importance of increasing the minimum wage for more than 10 million children. The report, entitled "Increasing the Minimum Wage: An Issue of Children's Well-Being," states: "The annual income of an individual working full-time, with two children, at the \$5.15 an hour minimum wage leaves them \$4,500 below the poverty level. An increase in the minimum wage to \$7.25 would benefit many of the 9.7 million children who live in households where at least one worker earns between the current minimum wage and \$7.25 per hour. Furthermore, 1.2 million of these children live in households where two or more workers earned less than the proposed minimum wage." At \$5.15 per hour, a worker who works 40 hours a week for 52 weeks a year earns \$10,712. In 2003, the poverty level for a family of two (a parent and a child) was \$12,682. The Children's Defense Fund report is available at <http://www.childrensdefense.org/familyincome/obs/minimumwagereport2005.pdf>.

Every American deserves a decent wage for the work they do, and most Americans agree that we should raise the minimum wage. Congress disrespects workers and violates the will of the people when it refuses to increase the minimum wage. We ought to respect workers by guaranteeing them a fair wage. Work should be the path out of poverty, but millions of Americans work fulltime and still live in poverty.

The Miller-Kennedy legislation also extends the minimum wage to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. territory in the Pacific Ocean. For years, the Congress has allowed basic labor standards to be denied to workers in the Marianas. We cannot continue to allow workers to be trapped in virtual involuntary servitude under sweatshop working conditions, indebted by usurious recruitment fees, paid inadequate wages and too often cheated out of what little they are owed. I have introduced legislation, H.R. 2298, to protect workers from recruitment abuses and to hold recruiters and employers respon-

sible for the working conditions they have promised. This bill goes a step further to ensure a decent minimum wage.

Among the 7.5 million workers earning between \$5.15 and \$8 an hour—the people this bill is intended to help—84 percent of them are adults over the age of 20. Nearly half of them are married or have children. Over half of them are women; 59 percent are white; 13 percent are black; and 23 percent are Hispanic. Sixty percent of them work full-time.

The inflation-adjusted value of the minimum wage has declined 20 percent since 1997. The legislation we are introducing today, the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2005, increases the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$5.85 within 60 days; then to \$6.55 1 year after the first increase; and finally to \$7.25 1 year after that.

I urge my colleagues to support this vital legislation.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

SPEECH OF

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 17, 2005

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2360) making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes:

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 2360, the Homeland Security Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2006. As a member of the Homeland Security Subcommittee, it has been an honor to work with Chairman HAL ROGERS and our Ranking Member, MARTIN SABO, in drafting this bill. I would like to commend them both, for their efforts to address our Nation's security needs despite the severe budget constraints forced upon them.

Mr. Chairman, this bill provides \$30.85 billion for operations and activities of the Department of Homeland Security, DHS, in fiscal year 2006, an increase of \$1.37 billion above the fiscal year 2005 enacted levels. Although the bill does not fully fund many initiatives critical to securing the homeland, I am pleased that this legislation does provide adequate funding for several programs of importance to urban communities such as my own in Los Angeles.

For instance, State and local emergency managers will be happy to learn that although the President continues to zero out the funding in his budget request for the Emergency Management Performance Grants, the committee has appropriated \$180 million for this grant program. Congress has rightly called this program "the backbone of the Nation's emergency management system." In California, emergency managers use these grants to develop plans to help prepare our residents for disasters such as earthquakes, fires, floods, or terrorist attacks.

The bill also provides \$750 million for Statewide formula grants which are distributed on a per capita basis to first responders. The current population-based formula is under review by the Homeland Security Authorization Com-

mittee which is determining whether or not funds should go to States based solely on population. In lieu of any changes by the authorizing committee to the formula, this bill directs DHS to maintain a minimum allocation of .75 percent per State and to allocate the rest based on threats and need versus population. I strongly agree that targeting funds based on the assessment of actual vulnerability is a much more effective use of limited resources than population alone. Furthermore, the committee recognizes that DHS must still establish a national preparedness goal which will help our States develop appropriate homeland security funding goals.

Our firefighters were among the first to respond to the tragic events of September 11th, and they will likely be the first to respond in the event of a future attack. The fire grant program helps local fire departments deal with these and other needs by allocating funds for equipment and staff. Unfortunately, the President proposed cutting funding for these programs by \$215 million, or 30 percent. This bill restores most of the president's cuts by providing \$600 million for fire grants and \$50 million for firefighter staffing grants. This is critical funding because only 13 percent of fire departments are prepared to respond to a hazardous material incident and an estimated 57,000 firefighter's lack personal protective clothing for a chemical or biological attack. I would hope that by the time this bill goes to the President, these programs will be fully funded at last year's level of \$715 million at a minimum.

In addition, the bill strengthens the committee's direction that port security grants, for the 55 ports of national significance, should be based on vulnerability assessments. This means that limited resources for port grants will be used where they are needed most. While we are dedicating \$150 million to both the port and the transit security programs, the Administration had proposed no funding for these critical programs. This is inexcusable particularly when the Coast Guard and the transit industry have indicated \$7 billion and \$6 billion in security needs in their respective industries to improve security. I am also pleased that Congress dedicated \$50 million for the security of chemical plants.

I thank Chairman ROGERS and Ranking Member SABO for including in the Homeland Security report several items I requested to address serious issues raised during subcommittee hearings with representatives of the Department of Homeland Security.

For example, the report expresses deep concern about reports that children, even as young as nursing infants, apprehended by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are being separated from their parents and placed in shelters operated by the Department of Health and Human Services while parents are held in separate jail-like facilities. The Committee's report language directs DHS to release families or use alternatives to detention whenever possible, and when detention of family units is necessary, the Committee directs DHS to use appropriate detention space to house them together.

The report also addresses the need to expand the use of Legal Orientation Programs to additional ICE detention centers in the country. Legal Orientation Programs consist of legal presentations made by nongovernmental

agencies to all persons in immigration detention prior to their first hearing before an immigration judge. This program saves on the costs of immigration detention, makes Immigration Court more efficient, and facilitates access to justice for detained immigrants in removal proceedings. Immigrants are better prepared to accept their removal earlier in the immigration hearing process when they have learned from organizations not affiliated with the government that they have exhausted their immigration relief options.

I am also pleased that the report contains language I requested to improve the quality assurance standards at our ports of entry. The Committee urges Customs and Border Protection to consider expanding the use of videotape systems to record interactions between potential asylum seekers and border patrol agents at our ports of entry. These tapes should be reviewed and retained for a sufficient period of time to ensure that asylum seekers are treated equally and with fairness at any one of our ports of entry.

The bill once again includes language I drafted to prevent the Department of Homeland Security from moving forward with the unnecessary and potentially dangerous privatization of key immigration officers at the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. These officers are responsible for handling classified information used to prevent fraud and the exploitation of our immigration laws. I am thankful that this inherently governmental work will continue to remain the responsibility of trained and experienced federal employees directly accountable to the Department and not to the bottom line of a private company.

The report also includes language which I requested to address concerns about Customs and Border Protection employees who were required to participate in a six-day twelve week basic training, but who were not fully compensated for all of their days of work. The report directs the Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection to report on the number of employees who were not compensated and also on the steps the department is taking to resolve the problem.

Finally, the report directs the Transportation Security Administration to report on the status of their efforts to issue regulations for basic security training for flight attendants. I am pleased we are keeping TSA accountable to this task, and I look forward to the timely completion of this report.

However, Mr. Chairman, despite the fact that this Homeland Security Appropriations bill addresses several of the issues I raised in hearings and increases funding levels in certain accounts, I am concerned that this year's bill continues the practice of underfunding several homeland security recommendations as well as the initiatives and programs mandated by Congress to ensure our Nation's security.

As one of the largest cities and metropolitan areas in the country, Los Angeles is considered to be one of the most "at risk" areas for terrorist attacks. For this reason, I am disappointed that this bill provides only a slight increase of \$15 million over last year's funding for Urban Area Security Initiative grants compared to the \$405 million increase requested in the President's budget. Protecting our most vulnerable cities and towns is extremely costly and causes tremendous hardship on local governments. We must ensure that they receive the adequate funding to keep our most vulnerable cities secure.

I am further disappointed that the bill appropriates \$5 million for a program which allows States and local jurisdictions to enter into a Memo of Understanding, MOU, with Homeland Security to train local police to enforce limited immigration functions. I believe our limited resources should instead be directed toward identifying and deporting terrorist elements in our country.

In addition, although both the Patriot Act of 2001 and the Intelligence Reform Act of 2004 called for increases in specific areas such as border agents, customs and immigration inspectors, immigration investigators, as well as for additional detention beds, this bill fails to meet the established border enforcement benchmarks—by 500 border patrol agents (25 percent short), 600 immigration investigators (75 percent short), and 4,000 detention beds (50 percent short).

I am also concerned with the decrease in funding that the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services has continued to receive since the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. This bureau is charged with processing thousands of work authorization and citizenship applications for immigrants in our country and yet this bill includes only \$120 million for this important agency. This decrease in resources simply does not make sense given that over the last 4 years, the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services continuously fails to meet its 6 month goal for processing citizenship applications. These backlogs send the wrong message to our Nation's immigrants who are eager to become full participants in our society, but must wait years before their citizenship applications can be reviewed and processed. Mr. Chairman, I hope that before we send this bill to the President we will appropriate the funds necessary to once and for all resolve the backlog problems which have plagued this agency for years.

I am disappointed that this bill's report expresses support for expedited removal and recommends its expansion. Expedited removal means that Customs and Border Protection officers can immediately deport individuals they do not believe have a true case for asylum. This year, a federally funded study issued by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom on the impact of expedited removal on asylum seekers found that expedited removal procedures are not being applied evenly across the country. The report found that where an asylum seeker enters our country, the country they come from, and which officer conducts their brief interview, impacts the decision on whether an individual is allowed to see an asylum officer or is deported without further review. Before expedited removal is expanded, as the bill's report recommends, Congress should require the Department of Homeland Security to provide evidence that Customs and Border Protection is making progress in resolving the current and serious problems associated with expedited removal.

Lastly, I am concerned by the Administration's seeming indifference toward protecting critical infrastructure, such as ports, transit and railroad facilities, and chemical plants. Not only have critical assessments not been completed, but the Administration has consistently underfunded or unfunded important infrastructure security programs.

For example, although Congress continues to fund aviation security and provides \$30 mil-

lion for air cargo screening, the Administration has continued to leave the aviation system's vulnerabilities exposed. Despite Congress' direction to increase the percentage of screened air cargo on passenger aircraft, the Transportation Security Administration has not fully implemented the law.

Additionally, the Administration has proposed no new funding to install inline baggage screening machines beyond the currently approved eight airports, and Congress has again decided to only fund the existing programs at 75 percent, rather than the contractually agreed to amount of 90 percent. This creates an additional burden that our cash-strapped communities can ill-afford.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I will support this bill to provide critical resources to help make our country safer. However, fully addressing these and other critical national security concerns requires resources that the Administration simply did not propose and which the Republican majority did not provide in this bill. While this bill is an improvement over the Administration's request, critical homeland security needs will still go unmet.

U.N. PEACEKEEPING REFORM:
SEEKING GREATER ACCOUNT-
ABILITY, INTEGRITY AND EF-
FECTIVENESS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 18, 2005

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, earlier today I chaired the third in a series of hearings of my Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights, and International Operations, on the topic of reform at the United Nations, and the second hearing we are holding on peacekeeping reform.

On March 1st, just 12 weeks ago, my committee met to examine credible evidence of gross sexual misconduct and exploitation of refugees and vulnerable people by U.N. peacekeepers and civilian personnel assigned to the U.N. peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Human rights groups and the U.N.'s own internal investigations had uncovered over 150 allegations against Mission personnel, typically involving peacekeepers' sexual contact with Congolese women and girls, some as young as 11-14, in exchange for food or small sums of money. Further, the U.N. had struggled to deal with similar sexual exploitation and abuse allegations in recent years in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea, as well as on the European continent in Kosovo and Bosnia. Yet despite many well-meaning gestures, there had not been one successful prosecution of U.N. civilian or military personnel, either in the Congo or elsewhere.

At that hearing, the United Nations made available Assistant Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Dr. Jane Holl Lute to brief the Subcommittee on steps the U.N. Secretariat and Department of Peacekeeping Operations were taking to address the problem. As Members of this Subcommittee may recall, Dr. Lute declared, ". . . The Blue Helmet has become black and blue through self-inflicted wounds of some of our number and we will not sit still until the luster of that Blue