

While these successes are certainly worthy of recognition, we cannot lose sight of the challenges that remain. Despite the reductions in unintended pregnancies we've seen, the U.S. continues to have one of the highest rates of unintended pregnancies among Western nations. Among teenage girls, the rate of unintended pregnancies remains above 75 percent and estimates show that more than one-third will become pregnant before the age of 20. Many barriers to widespread access to and use of contraceptives still exist. For instance, a number of states have enacted laws that allow health care providers and pharmacists to refuse to provide birth control. Unfortunately, under the current administration's "abstinence-only" approach to sex education, millions of children and adolescents each year are deprived of basic facts on contraception, and are instead being taught misleading information about reproductive health.

It is important to honor the 40th anniversary of Griswold not only to recognize the many accomplishments we've made in the 40 years since this landmark case, but also to remind ourselves of the work we have yet to do. We must continue to be unrelenting in our pursuit of the goal of creating unencumbered universal access to and use of contraceptives. Given the numerous successes of the last 40 years, I'm confident we can succeed.

KEEPING THE PROMISE TO OUR  
DISABLED VETERANS

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 7, 2005*

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today to speak about two bills that I have introduced to better the lives of our Nation's disabled veterans. H.R. 1188, the "Disabled Veterans Right to Commissaries and Space Available Travel Act," will extend commissary and exchange store privileges to service-disabled veterans with a rating of 30% or more and to their families. Congress must do all we reasonably can for the men and women who have become disabled in their service to our Nation. Our disabled veterans are important members of the greater military family, and they should be treated as such with every available opportunity.

This bill will also authorize transportation on military aircraft on a space-available basis to service-disabled veterans with a rating of 50% or more. Currently, members and retirees of the uniformed services and the reserves may travel free on Department of Defense (DoD) aircraft when space is available. This benefit is allowed when it does not interfere with military missions, and it recognizes that military careers are filled with rigorous duty.

But present policies do not extend this benefit to our disabled veterans. What more rigorous duty can be imagined than to become disabled in the service of our country? Why has the DoD chosen not to recognize the brave men and women who sacrificed their health and well-being while serving in uniform? This DoD policy needs to be corrected.

Space-available travel for these disabled veterans would cost the Federal government nothing and would not interfere with active-duty personnel. Current military is always

given priority, and H.R. 1188 would do nothing to change that. What my bill will do is allow seats that would otherwise go unused to be occupied by men and women who have been disabled when serving their Nation.

I invite my colleagues to also support a second bill, H.R. 2747, the "Disabled Veterans Life Insurance Enhancement Act." This legislation will make improvements in insurance for veterans who are disabled in their service to our country.

When the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) began in 1951, it was intended to provide service-disabled veterans with the ability to purchase life insurance coverage at "standard" rates. Unfortunately, these life insurance premiums are based upon mortality rates for 1940, while current standard life insurance policies have premiums based upon the 2001 mortality table. This means that service-disabled veterans are being charged high premiums based on a table that is 60 years out of date. The Independent Budget, prepared and endorsed by many veterans service organizations, has recommended that the mortality table be updated so that service-disabled veterans pay lower premiums for insurance. My bill would provide insurance comparable to standard policies, based on 2001 tables. Another change will increase the amount of insurance available to \$50,000, purchased in increments of \$10,000.

Second, the VA provides mortgage life insurance (VMLI) to severely service-disabled veterans who qualify for specially adapted housing grants. Currently, this amount covers only about 55% of the outstanding mortgage balances at the veteran's death because the maximum amount has not been increased since 1992. We know how the cost of houses has skyrocketed since then in many areas of our country. In May, 2001, an evaluation by the Department of Veterans Affairs recommended that the coverage be increased, and The Independent Budget has also recommended that the coverage be increased. H.R. 2747 implements those recommendations by increasing the maximum to \$200,000 to cover 94% of mortgage balances outstanding. Veterans can choose lower coverage, if they wish.

These bills are the right steps to take for our disabled veterans. They have sacrificed their health and well-being for their country, and they have earned the right to these privileges. Please support these bills and work with me for their passage.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006

SPEECH OF

**HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 25, 2005*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1815) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2006 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2006, and for other purposes:

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Chairman, I rise to express my opposition to Mr. Hunter's Manager Amendment to H.R. 1815, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006.

Like so many of my colleagues, I was concerned about the original language in H.R. 1815, language that would have excluded women from 20,000 positions in which they have already served to great acclaim.

However, while the Manager's Amendment is an improvement upon the original language, it is still flawed.

First of all, the Hunter Amendment extends the notification period for changes to women's assignments from thirty to sixty legislative days, a period that could last as long as 4 to 5 months.

Mr. Chairman, I know how long debates on this floor can last, and I guarantee you, an Iraqi insurgent is not going to hold his fire until we have reached agreement on which positions women can fill.

In addition, the Hunter Amendment requires Army commanders to send more detailed reports to Congress about the kinds of enlisted jobs, or Military Occupational Specialties, they would like to open to women. Unfortunately, this will also have the effect, intended or not, of limiting women's roles in the military. Our generals are swimming in paperwork as it is. By burdening them with even more paperwork, the new provisions in the Hunter Amendment create an unnecessary and dangerous delay.

Now is the time to be praising women for their contributions to the war effort, not curtailing their roles. Army spokesperson Elizabeth Robbins recently declared, "Women soldiers are performing magnificently in all formations in which they are permitted to serve."

Mr. Chairman, this is high praise! Why are we trying to fix a problem that does not exist?

Today, women comprise a quarter of our available soldiers. As General Claudia Kennedy, the highest ranking woman ever to serve in the Army said to me, "Numbers matter! Why should we prohibit our brave soldiers from doing their jobs when the Army is having trouble recruiting?"

We should devote our time to enhancing soldiers' protections, not restricting women's roles.

Several months ago we learned that soldiers were digging up rusted scrap metal to protect unarmored vehicles. This is a problem worth fixing! The best way to protect our women and men in uniform is to guarantee them the armor, supplies and resources they need.

In April 2003, a soldier named Jessica Lynch captured our hearts. She also taught us an important lesson. Jessica Lynch was a member of the 507th Maintenance Company. Her convoy, a supply unit, was not supposed to be in the line of fire. But, Mr. Chairman, as Jessica Lynch's terrifying ordeal taught us, everywhere in Iraq is a potential combat zone, and every soldier is serving on the front lines.

I would like to thank Representatives SKELTON and WILSON for their hard work on this issue and for their advocacy for women's rights in the military.

I stand here in support of the military. My husband, brother and father all served with honor on our country's behalf. I am grateful for the sacrifice of each of our service men and women. But I did not come to Congress to restrict the roles of women anywhere.