

workforce skilled in the creative endeavor of problem solving. The education of our engineering workforce must also be a focus of our work for the future of our Nation. We must more fervently welcome into the science and engineering workforce underrepresented groups, for their unique perspectives and diverse background enrich the problem solving environment. We must create an educational system that maintains high expectations and intellectually challenges each student to find their role in solving the problems that we will face as a Nation. This is about our future, our Nation's future, and we must act now.

INTRODUCTION OF THE ETHICS
REFORM ACT OF 2006

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2006

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, hailing from the Oregon climate of a small state legislature where political openness and integrity is highly prized, I have been pained by both the recent revelations in Congress of wrongdoing and the inability of the Congressional ethics process to operate in an effective manner. The House has long been in need of a comprehensive solution to the oversight of Members' ethical conduct. Sadly, it has necessitated a series of egregious violations by Members to bring this issue to the forefront of public attention. The current proposals, however, do not address the core issue behind the ethics problem—oversight.

Today, I am proud to introduce with my colleague and fellow Oregonian, GREG WALDEN, the "Ethics Reform Act of 2006." While it is the responsibility of each and every Member of Congress to adhere to the spirit of the law, as a practical matter, history shows there needs to be additional enforcement and oversight. Unfortunately, history also shows that the expectation for Congress to oversee the conduct of its Members is unrealistic. The "Ethics Reform Act of 2006" would create an independent Ethics Commission, appointed by Congress, that would objectively oversee and bring charges against Members of Congress who violate the rules.

Congress needs an independent ethics review process, similar to that found in many states. We need an independent panel that can make independent decisions without worrying about the effect those decisions will have on its members' political futures. We need an independent panel whose members understand the reality of public service and the need to ensure the integrity of that service through adherence to the rules. We need an independent panel that can meet the test of public scrutiny and restore trust that today is missing.

This bill would replace the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct with an 11-member outside Ethics Commission and a full-time professional staff to provide oversight, investigations and recommendations for ethical enforcement. Each of the members would be former House members—five from each party—who have been out of office at least 2 years and an 11th member appointed by the consensus of the other 10. These Commission members would bring the experience of public

service and the understanding of the complexity of our duties.

Professional staff, headed by an executive director, would serve the Ethics Commission. The Speaker of the House and the Minority Leader of the House would choose the executive director in a manner similar to the appointment of the director of the Congressional Budget Office. The executive director would serve for a seven-year term and could be re-appointed only once.

In addition to taking over the investigation and review functions of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, the Lobbying Disclosure Act would be brought under the Commission's jurisdiction. The new ethics panel would maintain all records and ensure compliance with reporting requirements and rules.

Any recommendations of the ethics panel beyond advisory opinions, letters of reproof and admonishment would go to the full House. Actions that fall short of official discipline would not require action of the House.

In reviewing both lobbyist disclosures and member disclosures, the Commission would review for potential joint financial interests between the two. Additionally, this bill mandates quarterly posting of lobbyist disclosures on the internet for easy public scrutiny.

Current Members of Congress will no longer be obligated with the task of policing their peers—a task which Members do not have the proper amount of time or impartiality to perform. It is time for the American people's faith in Congress to be restored. The "Ethics Reform Act of 2006" has the power to allow the Congressional oversight process to work in the fair, efficient, and transparent manner that many of us seek and our constituents demand.

RECOGNIZING MARCH 8, 2006—
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY—
SPOTLIGHT ON THE PLIGHT OF
MINORITY WOMEN—THE HIDDEN
VICTIMS OF MULTIPLE-DISCRIMI-
NATION

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2006

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to say a few words in recognition of International Women's Day and to enter into the RECORD a very profound statement titled "Meeting the Challenges of Discrimination against Women from Minority Groups," authored by Gay McDougall, a human rights lawyer and a United Nations Independent Expert on Minority Issues. In the country and around the world, holidays and special recognition days come and go every year. We all celebrate and/or reminisce briefly to honor the occasions. Many times there are occasions that deserve more than just a cursory acknowledgement. International Women's Day is one such occasion.

March 8th—International Women's Day is a day marked by women's groups around the world. This date is commemorated at the United Nations and is designated in many countries as a national holiday. The idea of an International Women's Day first came about at the turn of the century during a period of expansion and turbulence, booming population

growth and radical ideologies. Great strides in women's rights have been made since the turn of century and everyone, especially women, can look back to a tradition that represents at least nine decades of struggle for equality, justice, peace and development. In the present day, women on all continents often divided by national boundaries and by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences continue to come together to celebrate International Women's Day.

The United Nations has played a pivotal role in ensuring that International Women's Day continues to receive their support. The growing women's movement has been strengthened by four global United Nations women's conferences which served to make the commemoration a rallying point for coordinated efforts to demand women's rights and participation in the political and economic process.

Few causes promoted by the United Nations have generated more intense and widespread support than the campaign to promote and protect the equal rights of women. The charter of the United Nations, signed in San Francisco in 1945, was the first international agreement to proclaim gender equality as a fundamental human right. Since then, the organization has helped create a historic legacy of internationally agreed strategies, standards, programs and goals to advance the status of women worldwide.

With so much awareness of the issues facing women in this day and time, one would believe that women have come close to reaching the pinnacle of achievement and recognition in today's society. Yes, great strides have been made but the reality is that new and urgent attention must be given to the rights of women facing multiple forms of discrimination, exclusion and violence. Amongst the most disadvantaged and vulnerable are women from minority communities who face problems compounded by their uniquely disadvantaged positions in society. These women face two forms of discrimination—first because they belong to certain minority communities and secondly because they are women.

This article that I enter into the RECORD today thoroughly exposes some of the challenges of discrimination against women—particularly women from minority groups—and clearly brings the unfinished business of equal rights for women to the forefront. Gay McDougall the U.N. Independent Expert on Minority Issues has written this article to remind us that much is left to do to confront the reality of the present unacceptable situation facing millions of women worldwide.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST WOMEN FROM MINORITY GROUPS
(By Gay McDougall)

All women share common bonds in the fight for equal rights. In every region and in every society, women are undervalued, face issues of personal insecurity because of violence in their homes and communities, and must wage a constant struggle for self-determination over their bodies and personal destinies. While some gains have been made in those battles, gender based discrimination remains a persistent and universal problem.

However, some women's problems are compounded by their uniquely disadvantaged position in society as members of national, racial, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities that are targets of discrimination. The damage done to individuals, families, communities and societies by discrimination, exclusion and racism on these grounds is immense. Women from these groups must often