

the remarks I prepared for that landmark occasion:

In his 2001 inaugural address President Bush left us with one profound image: the specter of an "Angel in the Whirlwind" guiding the fate of our nation. Democracy in America has survived and expanded despite the numerous whirlwinds and storms. At several critical periods our ship of state could have been blown off course and been wrecked on the rocks. Always in the past, the churning American political process has produced the leadership capable of conquering crises and opening new vistas.

Representative Carl Elliott and Senator Lister Hill were two leaders who opened new vistas. In the story of the making of America we can find many angels emerging from the whirlwind. Many of our greatest angels are unsung, unknown beyond a small circle. But the abundance of angels, ordinary and everywhere, has created the most fantastic nation on the face of the earth. Not from royal bloodlines or from pampered privileged classes but from the cradles in the tenements, from log cabins and shotgun shacks. Every citizen, all Americans are potential angels called by the voice of Thomas Jefferson to come forward and add your contribution to the ongoing miracle of America. Because we loudly assume that all persons are created equal we automatically break the chains of doubt and set our imaginations and spirits soaring to achieve at higher and higher levels, and to create new institutions.

Lister Hill refused to let his regional origins interfere with his national visions. Carl Elliott did not allow a lack of wealth and high-class status to limit his spirit and ambition. Both men focused intensely and accomplished missions that place them among the legions of great American angels.

Just as school systems for the masses never existed before they emerged in America, so it was with public libraries. Yes, from the time of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome there were libraries, but always they were the closely guarded property of the rich and available only to the elite. From the embryo implanted by Benjamin Franklin to the urban facilities provided by the generosity of Andrew Carnegie to the legislation of enduring federal support for libraries the American angels were in motion.

To achieve the imprimatur of federal sponsorship was a life sustaining development for modern public libraries. Only a fellow legislator can imagine what Representative Elliott had to overcome to realize his dream. Politicians seldom dwell on systems and long-term goals that benefit citizens beyond their political district. Elliott was ridiculed as a man who was tinkering with the impossible. He was strongly advised to do what every other lawmaker was attempting. To get reelected and be celebrated back home, he was told to get himself an appropriation to build a bridge. Get something concrete to show off that could be dedicated with a ribbon cutting and marching bands. If Elliott had accepted that practical but mundane proposition, oh what a devastating gap there would have been in the progress of library service in America. Carl had to be the pitcher in the House of Representatives and Lister had to be the catcher in the Senate in order for the game of public library expansion to go forward.

Across the nation we can now boast of magnificent public libraries and library sys-

tems. The DNA of Elliott and Hill goes marching on. Other great library nurturing angels like Eileen Cooke of the ALA Washington Office boldly forged ahead in their spirit and played a major role in the legislation and administration of the E-Rate providing widespread utilization of computers and the Internet in libraries. A whole new dimension exciting the young and the old has been added to the information and education mission of public libraries.

As a philosophical descendant of Elliott and Hill; and a more immediate child of the LSCA I arrived in Congress determined to raise the profile of libraries of all kinds to a level where they could never be forgotten and neglected again. Certainly I have been frustrated that the higher Federal appropriations have not been gained which I think libraries deserve in order to relieve some of the funding burden on State and local governments. But basically I will be leaving the Congress after 24 years contented that most of my concerns have been fulfilled. There are now many legislative advocates for libraries and they exist in both parties, Republican and Democratic. In politics that pinnacle of bipartisan support is the ultimate goal. The fight is no longer for recognition and survival as a national priority. The fight is for growth and the expansion which will provide opportunities for libraries to meet the new emerging challenges of education located away from campuses and outside of classrooms.

Our libraries are indispensable institutions. President Clinton has described America as an indispensable nation. Carl Elliott and Lister Hill were indispensable great angels for this indispensable nation. Out of the limelight, with no headlines to encourage them they remained steadfast in their unglamorous mission. As early as 1919, the American Library Association was seeking federal support for libraries. But not until 1936 was there a small breakthrough which established the Library Services Division within the Office of Education. Through side doors such as the Tennessee Valley Authority and the WPA more federal support was garnered. But not until 1956 was the great breakthrough achieved; the Library Services Act was passed and later expanded in 1960. In the history of the House and the Senate there are few records of such longevity and perseverance in the unselfish pursuit of uplifting legislation.

The rock-solid basic principle pioneered by Carl Elliott and Lister Hill is the proposition that wealth, financial well being, should not be the deciding factor in determining who has access to information and knowledge. Elliott and Hill understood that the growth and development of the State and region economy were inextricably interwoven with the intellectual growth and development of ordinary residents of the State and region. While public libraries were only a small part of the overall education effort they were the institutions with the greatest cost-benefits ratio. Huge opportunities were provided for large numbers of persons on the roads to upward mobility at the lowest possible costs. Oh, yes the investment in libraries and education pays great dividends.

Long before the military leaders could comprehend it, Elliott and Hill understood that an educated populace was our nation's greatest asset for national security. From what was often labeled as an abstract dream of universal literacy reflected in their concern for rural libraries these two giant angels of American progress leaped to the hard-nosed prep-

arations for a space age national defense system. The massive feats of science and engineering needed to develop the laser, satellites, spacecraft and rockets were made possible as a result of the initiatives of the National Defense Education Act. There is a clear connection between the vision and labor of Elliott and Hill and this nation's landing of a man on the moon.

America, not by accident, is the richest, most powerful nation that the world has ever known. In comparison the great Roman Empire was merely a village. America is great because the unsung heroes, the invisible angels are always at work carrying out the details that make our democracy a success.

There will be in America no aristocracy of the well informed. Know-how shall never be a rare or scarce commodity. The government shall encourage all persons to pursue their fullest development. Beyond universal access to information, libraries will provide assistance with knowledge creation and utilization. In the appreciation and the application of wisdom librarians will continue to play a vital role.

The vision and foresight of Carl Elliott and Lister Hill have been validated by time. Their concerns have become more relevant as we plunge further into the age of information. In America information will never become the weapon of elite dictatorships. Information, knowledge and the records of wisdom must be permanently supplied to the citizens. In many forms this library mission must carry on to maintain the land of the free, home of the brave, and the nation of the most thoroughly informed who are capable of that continuing oversight and vigilance necessary to guarantee that our great democracy will long endure.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL INTEGRATED DROUGHT INFORMATION SYSTEM ACT OF 2006

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 6, 2006

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleague Mr. Hall in introducing the National Integrated Drought Information System Act of 2006. This bill establishes a National Integrated Drought Information System—or NIDIS—within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that will provide early warnings, forecasts, and information about drought conditions to mitigate the impacts of drought.

The western part of our country, including my own state of Colorado, has experienced severe drought conditions in recent years, with adverse consequences that have included severe wildfires that have devastated many homes and businesses.

Droughts are a recurring part of climatic cycles, but that does not make them benign. And because unlike hurricanes or other weather events they develop slowly and their effects are felt over longer periods, there is a danger that efforts to mitigate or reduce the damage will not begin in time.

The direct impacts of drought include reduced crop yields and forest productivity, increased fire hazards, lower water levels, and damage to wildlife habitats. Droughts are costly to our economy as they reduce the incomes

of farmers and increase the prices of foods and agricultural materials such as timber. Drought adversely impacts our environment and wildlife habitats, taking away from our public lands and recreational opportunities, which have become an essential component of the way of life for many western communities.

But while the Department of Homeland Security, is working to prepare for natural disasters such as floods and hurricanes, the federal government is not doing enough to mitigate and reduce the effects of drought.

Currently, NOAA works with several agencies to produce drought forecasts and monitoring. However, a report by the Western Governors' Association found that much of the current drought forecasting information is overly technical and not in a standard format. Many users also are not aware of resources available to reduce the impacts of drought.

The bill that Mr. Hall and I are introducing today responds to those problems by expanding NOAA's efforts in drought monitoring and forecasting, improving the dissemination of data to ensure more informed and effective decisions are made about drought.

Specifically, the bill establishes an early warning system called NIDIS. NIDIS will integrate information from key indicators of drought to provide timely assessments. NIDIS will be used to disseminate a drought forecast on a regular basis to decision makers on the federal, state, local, and tribal levels, as well as to the private and public sectors.

Real-time data is often the most helpful in making decisions about drought; however, data is rarely available to decisions makers until after the fact. Thus, NIDIS will provide real-time data where possible for regional and local drought conditions.

Our bill also calls for the coordination and integration of federal research to support NIDIS, thus ensuring that we continue to understand droughts and their impacts. Lastly, our bill directs NOAA to consult and coordinate with other federal agencies in the development of NIDIS to ensure that all appropriate communities benefit from the system.

I believe that NIDIS will ensure that we are able to proactively reduce the effects of drought and allow decision makers to take advantage of all opportunities to reduce as many impacts as possible. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support the creation of NIDIS and better monitoring and forecasting of drought.

THE CONGRESSIONAL YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL MAKES A DIFFERENCE

HON. SAM JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 6, 2006

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, when you think of the leaders of the future—what qualities come to mind? Civic activism? Community awareness? Personal leadership? Academic excellence? It is a privilege to recognize the members of the 2005—2006 Congressional Youth Advisory Council because they embody these qualities and more.

For the last 2 years, the members of the Congressional Youth Advisory Council have

represented the young people of the Third District well by working as ambassadors of the future. Several times a year the members of the Youth Council would share a valuable youth perspective on the current issues before Congress. This year 42 students from public, private, and home schools in grades 10 through 12 made their voices heard and made a difference to Congress.

For the first time, this year there was a philanthropy element to the Youth Council. For the community service project, the members of the Youth Council reached out to veterans and encouraged them to share their stories. Called the "Preserving History Project," each member had to interview a veteran. Then the student had to submit a lengthy paper detailing the veteran's service and sharing what the student learned from that experience. The students submitted a summary of their work. Today I'm proud to submit the briefs provided so the hard and valuable work of the Youth Council may be preserved for antiquity in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Someday, each member will be able to share with children and grandchildren—"In high school I served my community and my work will always be recognized in the official CONGRESSIONAL RECORD."

A copy of each submitted student summary follows.

To each member of the Congressional Youth Advisory Council, thank you for your time, effort and sacrifice to help make the Congressional Youth Advisory Council a success. You are the voices of the future and I salute you. God bless you and God bless America.

My name is Lauren Huber and I had the great opportunity to interview my grandfather, Second Lieutenant Robert W. Jensen. My grandfather was a bombardier pilot in World War II. He has accomplished a lot in his lifetime and has survived being a prisoner of war, and living on barely anything. He has received many medals for his service in World War II, including: the Oakleaf Medal Cluster, Air Medal, and a Purple Heart. It was a pleasure and an honor to interview my grandfather and listen to what he had to say about his experience as a bombardier in WWII. I have learned a great deal about my grandfather I did not know, such as his strength. I have learned that conditions were horrible during the war and that many innocent people were killed because of WWII. I now have even deeper respect for not only my grandfather, but for all the veterans of every war in the world. I have a deeper gratitude for the soldiers who are currently fighting in Iraq and honor them with all my heart. I am very lucky to have known my grandfather long enough for him to tell his war stories for me, and I will be sure his legacy will live on in me and in the stories that I will tell my children and grandchildren of Robert W. Jensen.—Lauren Huber

Carl Eugene Beck, my grandfather, is an American veteran who relied on determination and dedication as he proudly served in the Navy during the Korean War. Carl finished the Navy as an aviation mechanic third class. Mr. Beck's experience in the Navy greatly allowed him to mature because, as he states, this was his first time to be independent. The Navy also matured Mr. Beck through discipline and hard work, all that he is thankful to have acquired. Finally, in the work field, the Navy provided Carl with a strong work ethic and an education that Carl states allowed him to keep his job. Thanks to the G.I. Bill, Mr. Beck was also able to have financial advantages not

only in his education, but also later in life, such as when he bought his first house. Overall, the Navy taught Carl to be self-sufficient and gave him motivation to work hard in college and in life. Although Carl never actually fought, the very fact that he voluntarily joined the military, to me, is something that anyone should be proud of. Even though he came from a poor family, Carl's dedication and determination ultimately led to his successes in the Navy, as well as later in life.—Patrick Dyer

George William Wallis served during World War II in the 96th, 69th, and 3rd Infantry divisions. The Army gave him a battlefield commission in which he became a Second Lieutenant. Wallis was stationed primarily in Germany where his division gradually moved from town to town across Germany until it was the first to reach the Russians. George Wallis received an Air Medal, a European Theatre Ribbon, and two battle stars for his service. In addition to these tangibles, Wallis gained an increased level of maturity and a greater sense of teamwork and responsibility as a direct result of being in our Armed Forces.

Oftentimes the media, as well as many others, portray the military in a negative light. Because of this, I developed a somewhat faulty image of what life in the military was like. As opposed to hearing horror stories about cruel sergeants, rampant diseases, and lack of food, Wallis told me generally positive accounts of tough but kind sergeants, adequate food, and pretty decent conditions. My discussions with George Wallis helped to change my somewhat myopic view of military life, and it allowed me to gain a greater sense of what it was like to live let alone fight during a war that engulfed the entirety of the world.—Alyssa DeLorenz

I interviewed Private First Class Leo Serian. Leo Serian was drafted from New York into the Army in 1943 as part of the last company of soldiers to be shipped across to Europe where they advanced farther than any other company in WWII and ultimately liberated the concentration camp, Hersbruck. Although not a Christian during the war, Serian now looks back and believes the Lord held him in His hands during his whole enlistment. This includes many miracles like near misses by machine guns, to safe crossings of minefields, and even his placement in his company. For Serian, his experience in World War II was truly unforgettable, and he now resides in Dallas, Texas. Being devoted to Christ, Serian blended his faith with his war experiences in the poems he wrote, which are included in the essay.—Austin Lutz

Tony Brigham attended Sunset High School in South Oak Cliff and graduated in 1969. In 1971, at the young age of 20, he sought a future in the military. Before he got drafted for the Vietnam War, he decided to join the Air Force. He was stationed on the island of Okinawa for the majority of his time in the United States Air Force, and he experienced unforgettable moments while over there. He played a leading role in Operation BabyLift, as he coordinated the special flights coming into Hawaii. He is proud of his role helping infants and newborn children escape the perils of Vietnam. As it happened, many of the soldiers formed anti-Vietnam War opinions. Tony Brigham was one of those soldiers who enlisted with one opinion, which soon changed during his time of service. Seven years later, Tony retired from the Air Force. He decided to attend Eastroadsburg St. Pennsylvania College, Steven F. Austin University, and the University of Texas at Dallas, all on the G.I. Bill. He received two undergraduate degrees, a B.S. in Environmental Science and in Forestry, and one graduate degree in Science