

TRIBUTE TO TUSKEGEE AIRMAN
LEON "WOODIE" SPEARS

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Leon "Woodie" Spears, a Tuskegee Airman whose death on May 12, 2008 saddened an entire community. Mr. Spears, a resident of Hayward, California, was a member of the legendary African American fighter group known as the Tuskegee Airmen, who flew for the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II. Later in life, he traveled all over the country to speak about his life and inspire people with his "Dare to Dream" theme.

Mr. Spears, affectionately known as "Woodie," was born in Colorado in January of 1924. He grew up near the Pueblo Municipal Airport, where he first heard the drone of a plane as a six-year-old and discovered his desire to fly. Overcoming great racial barriers, he gained entry to the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and became a member of the first African American group of pilots in U.S. military history.

In 1943, he succeeded as a student at Tuskegee and received his flight wings. Mr. Spears flew 51 combat missions in World War II and 17 in the Korean War. He retired as an Army captain. During his career he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, a Purple Heart, several Air Medals and was among the Tuskegee Airmen who received the Congressional Gold Medal from President Bush in 2007. He later served as an ambassador for the Tuskegee Airmen, where he made the elite unit come alive again, even for those who knew nothing of its history.

After retirement from the Air Force, Mr. Spears worked for the U.S. Postal Service for 35 years, and later traveled throughout the country talking about his life and experiences. Last year alone he made 44 appearances.

Leon "Woodie" Spears will be long remembered for his patriotism, his enormous courage, his commitment to excellence and his dedicated tours of duty. We owe him a debt of gratitude for being a Tuskegee Airman and for leaving us with a rich history that we shall never forget.

I extend my heartfelt sympathy to Mr. Spears' family. He touched many individuals throughout the country who were fortunate to know him and to learn a vital part of history from his "Dare to Dream" lectures. Countless admirers were inspired by his courage and unwavering commitment to service. He will be missed.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ALBIO SIRES

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Mr. SIRES. Madam Speaker, I would like to state for the record my position on the following votes I missed on July 14, 2008. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes" on Rollcall 486 on H. Res. 1067; "yes" on Rollcall 487 on H. Res. 1080; and "yes" on Rollcall 488 on H. Con. Res. 297.

SUPPORTING THE ORGANIZED
RETAIL CRIME ACT OF 2008

HON. BRAD ELLSWORTH

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Madam Speaker, I am proud to introduce the Organized Retail Crime Act of 2008 today. I would like to thank my colleague Congressman JIM JORDAN of Ohio for joining me in this effort.

This important legislation seeks to address a growing problem in America: organized retail crime—known as ORC. ORC is a criminal enterprise where thieves obtain retail merchandise through fraud and theft and then sell the goods for profit, often to fund other criminal activities. The Federal Bureau of Investigation estimates that organized retail crime currently accounts for \$30 billion in retail losses annually. And the criminals who form and operate these organized crime rings are becoming more sophisticated in the ways they sell their stolen goods to an often unsuspecting public. ORC rings have expanded their base of operation from the streets, flea markets, and pawn shops to the online marketplace where they can break the law with anonymity.

Before I came to Congress, I spent a career fighting crime as a member of the Vanderburgh County Sheriff Department. I arrested two thieves who were running a sophisticated criminal enterprise from the trunk of their car. At a hardware retailer that had several Evansville locations, these two thieves would pay cash for one drill, make copies of the receipt using a copier that they had in the trunk of their car, and then boost the same drills in bulk. Using the fraudulent copied receipts, the thieves would then return the stolen merchandise and receive cash back multiple times over. Today, these thieves may be selling the stolen merchandise online.

This is important because not only does ORC result in substantial losses for retailers, it also has significant consequences for consumers. These criminals often boost products like baby formula, diabetic test strips, and over-the-counter drugs from retailers. Needless to say, they are not interested in the proper storage of these sensitive health products, and as a result, the health and safety of consumers, who unknowingly purchase these products, is often jeopardized. ORC rings also negatively impact the bottom line for consumers because leading American retailers are forced to spend millions of dollars each year conducting loss prevention efforts.

The Organized Retail Crime Act of 2008 is a sensible bill aimed at making ORC a federal crime while establishing common sense disclosure requirements for high-volume sellers on certain online marketplace sites. The online marketplace is a viable place of commerce, and this legislation establishes necessary guidelines on how to thwart illegal activity and protect online consumers.

It is important to note that this legislation contains a specific and narrow definition of the term "online marketplace." An online marketplace will be subject to the bill's requirements only if the site has a contractual right to supervise the activities of its sellers, or if the online site has a financial interest in the sale of goods on its site.

The Organized Retail Crime Act of 2008 requires online auction sites to maintain certain

information—name, telephone number, email address, legitimate physical address, and any user identification—of high-volume sellers for three years. The site must also keep records of all transactions conducted by each high-volume seller for this same three year period. A high-volume seller is defined as someone selling more than \$12,000 in merchandise annually or more than \$5,000 of a specific good. Finally, the high-volume seller is required to conspicuously post its name, telephone number, and legitimate address on the online auction site or instead, may provide this information upon the request of a business that has a reasonable suspicion that goods were acquired through organized retail crime.

These simple and non-intrusive disclosure and recordkeeping requirements make sense. In fact, they are far less intrusive than the information required at pawn shops throughout the country. With over 700,000 people listing online auction sales as their primary or secondary source of income, these basic requirements are critical to ensure that criminals can be brought to justice while preserving the online marketplace for law-abiding citizens.

I look forward to working with Chairman BOBBY SCOTT on this issue, and I commend the Chairman and his colleagues on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security for having the foresight to bring this growing problem to the public's attention through a committee hearing last October.

Madam Speaker, the Organized Retail Crime Act of 2008 is a non-intrusive, common sense bill that aims to dry up avenues for organized retail criminals to sell their stolen merchandise at the expense of retailers and consumers. I urge my colleagues to join Congressman JORDAN and me in supporting this important legislation as a first step toward cracking down on organized retail crime.

TRIBUTE OF LIEUTENANT ROBERT
LYNESS

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Lieutenant Robert Lyness, a Police Officer of Pleasanton, California, who is retiring on August 8th, after thirty years of exemplary and dedicated public service in law enforcement.

Lt. Lyness began his career in 1977 as a Police Reserve and Cadet with the Fortuna, California, Police Department where he worked as a full time officer until 1980. He was hired by the City of Pleasanton in November 1980.

In August 1995, Lt. Lyness was promoted to the rank of Sergeant and then achieved the rank of Lieutenant in January of 2003. His assignments included Detective, Field Training Officer, Investigations Division Supervisor, Arson Response Team Member, Range Master and Canine Manager.

During the span of his career with the Pleasanton Police Department, Lt. Lyness always led by example. He exemplified superior ethical standards, professionalism, and an outstanding work ethic. His organizational skills contributed to the growth of the agency, which