

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

GENERATIONS INVIGORATING VOLUNTEERISM AND EDUCATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 18, 2009

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1388) to reauthorize and reform the national service laws:

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Chair, I rise today to show my support for H.R. 1388, the Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education Act of 2009 or the GIVE Act.

President Obama called on Congress to create new opportunities for Americans to build a stronger country by helping students perform better in school, prepare Americans for green and innovative 21st century jobs, rebuild cities in times of disaster, and improve communities. I am proud to say that through the various programs contained in the GIVE Act—whether new or old but reinvigorated—this bill meets President Obama's call.

Most importantly, I am pleased that this bill encourages our younger generations to engage in volunteerism while allowing them the opportunity to gain real-world experience working in our communities and addressing issues that are sometimes hard to face. During these trying times and with so many individuals losing their jobs, it is important to equip our youth with this type of experience.

I support the programs in the GIVE Act because its goals seek to better not only our future, but the future of generations to come. I urge my colleagues support this bill.

IN SUPPORT OF A BILL TO INCLUDE VETERANS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE CLEAN-UP OF ENIWETOK ATOLL AS A RADIATION-RISK ACTIVITY FOR THE PURPOSES OF LAWS ADMINISTERED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 19, 2009

Ms. BORDALLO. Madam Speaker, today I have reintroduced a bill, along with my colleagues, Congressman NEIL ABERCROMBIE of Hawaii and Congressman ENI FALEOMAVAEGA of American Samoa, to amend Title 38 of the United States Code to explicitly define participation in clean-up operations that were undertaken by the United States Army at Eniwetok Atoll of the Republic of the Marshall Islands as a "radiation-risk activity" for the purposes of qualifying veterans who participated in such operations for service-connected benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Af-

fairs. This bill would correct in statute a long-standing inequity for veterans who participated in clean-up of radioactive materials and debris on Eniwetok Atoll resulting from forty-three atmospheric nuclear detonations that occurred there and that were conducted by the United States Government during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s. Servicemembers were detailed to Eniwetok Atoll during or around the years 1977 through 1982 to confine and cap contaminated soil. Part of the clean-up operations involved the construction of a concrete dome to cover a crater.

The legislation we have reintroduced today would simply allow veterans who participated in any clean-up activity on Eniwetok Atoll during their course of their service to be deemed eligible for Department of Veterans Affairs radiation programs. Such programs provide medical benefits to certain veterans who were exposed to radiation while on Active Duty. Veterans who are currently covered under radiation-risk activities include those who participated on-site in executing the atmospheric tests in the Pacific Basin.

We recognize and commend the atomic veterans who performed clean-up operations on Eniwetok Atoll and thank them for their service to our nation. I introduced the same legislation in the 110th Congress to correct this concern. I hope that our legislation will be given fair consideration by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs in the current Congress. I further hope the Department of Defense makes available to the public, to our veterans and their families, and to the Department of Veterans Affairs all recorded relating to the nature of the tests and clean-up activities that were undertaken on Eniwetok Atoll.

COMMEMORATION OF 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION BEING MADE A CABINET LEVEL DEPARTMENT

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 19, 2009

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Veterans Administration as a Cabinet level Department. For some time members of many communities from across the nation have given their loved ones to defend our freedoms as Americans, yet when they returned there was nothing in place to aid them in their transition to civilian life. All of this changed twenty years ago when the Veterans Administration was officially elevated as a cabinet level agency and renamed as the Department of Veterans Affairs. The intrinsic value of having a department such as this has benefited our nation in innumerable ways and now more than ever we see its particular value.

Changes in battle and warfare tactics have caused evolving consequences. It is essential to have a Department that is especially

equipped to handle the consequences of engagement in combat, especially the impact of grievous physical wounds. I am especially supportive of our Department of Veterans affairs and even more pleased to have a person of character and sense of duty such as Eric Shinseki as the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The challenge of military personnel transitioning into civilian life becomes even more daunting especially during this period of economic downturn facing our nation. The Department of Veterans Affairs will have to be prepared now more than ever for the growth in the number of veterans needing our assistance to establish their lives once again.

I believe it is our duty as a nation to ensure the well-being of those who have so valiantly given of themselves to protect our nation and I commend the values that have been upheld by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I introduce into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD the remarks made by President Obama at the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Department of Veterans Affairs as a Cabinet Agency on March 16, 2009.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY,
Washington, DC, March 16, 2009.

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AS A CABINET AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. To Jim Benson for helping to organize this; to Jim Mahdee for your service to our country—a Pledge of Allegiance that you've shown in your own commitment to protecting this country; and obviously, to Secretary Shinseki. It is an honor to join you and the hardworking public servants here at the Department of Veterans Affairs as we mark a milestone in the distinguished history of this department.

You know, 20 years ago, on the day the Veterans Administration was officially elevated to a Cabinet-level agency and renamed the Department of Veterans Affairs, a ceremony was held to swear in the administrator of the old entity as Secretary of the new one. And in his remarks that day, President George H.W. Bush declared that the mission of this agency is "so vital that there's only one place for the veterans of America: in the Cabinet Room, at the table with the President of the United States of America." I could not agree more.

I could not be more pleased that Eric Shinseki has taken a seat at that table. Throughout his long and distinguished career in the Army, Secretary Shinseki won the respect and admiration of our men and women in uniform because they've always been his highest priority—and he has clearly brought that same sense of duty and commitment to the work of serving our veterans.

As he knows, it's no small task. This department has more than a quarter of a million employees across America, and its services range from providing education and training benefits, health care and home loans, to tending those quiet places that remind me of the great debt we owe—and remind me of the heavy responsibility that I bear. It's a commitment that lasts from the

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