

of all veterans of all eras throughout San Diego County.

One way in which the Veterans Service Center is there for veterans is demonstrated in the following statement by Mr. Sniffen. His statement describes the collaboration of the Service Center with the San Diego Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) in order to provide the VFW-SDVS Claims Service for veterans. I would like to submit Mr. Sniffen's statement into the RECORD.

In February 1996 The San Diego Veterans of Foreign Wars Service Office joined forces with the local non profit veterans group, San Diego Veterans Services, to create the VFW/SDVS Claims Service.

Then Department Service Officer Art Rodrigues LLB-J.D. had long believed that VA Claims outreach to veterans in the North part of San Diego County was a concept long over due. Current demographics indicated that some 150,000 of the county's 371,000 veterans resided in the numerous cities north of San Diego. Because of military downsizing, many discharges from Camp Pendleton, the Marine Corps largest base, have now settled in North County.

The experimental partnership forged by Art Rodrigues and Robert Sniffen, Chairman of San Diego Veterans Services, is now a major unprecedented success beyond anyone's wildest expectations! For the immediate past quarter (Oct, Nov, and Dec. 1997), 73 veterans received VA claims awards totaling \$646,979. This quarterly monetary awards total was achieved in only 30 working days. Also during this quarter, 274 vets were counseled and interviewed with another 80 "new" claims filed.

The SDVS, Veterans Service Center of North County, the home of the VFW/SDVS Claims Service, has become a magnet for those wishing to file or refile VA Claims without a major journey to VA Regional facilities.

Now as the word of success of this one-of-a-kind, claims project spreads, some 10-12 veterans a day are interviewed and counseled as to their potential VA claims benefits and rights.

To illuminate the impact of this innovative program, one just needs to look at the following statistics:

The San Diego Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office serves Imperial, Riverside, and San Diego Counties in regards to processing VA claims entitlement applications. This region provides 12,831 disabled veterans with monthly compensation and pension benefit checks.

Of that number, 315 North County vets and their families now receive such entitlements as a direct of the Veterans Service Center of North County's VFW/SDVS Claims. Since February 21, 1996 through November 30, 1997, this singular outreach program has interviewed and counseled 1817 veterans, spouses, widows and survivors to determine potential eligibility for benefit entitlements. These outstanding results were achieved in just 179 working days. As a result of the VFW/SDVS project, 567 vets have filed their VA claims and 315 vets and their families have already been granted back pay and monthly entitlement awards now topping \$3,000,000.00 million dollars.

That \$3 million dollars improved the quality of life for vets families, homeless vets, surviving children of deceased vets, the totally and permanently disabled vets, and those vets with partial disabilities that impact their lifetime earnings capabilities.

Veterans and their families in a dozen or more Northern San Diego County Cities are now enjoying "new found" disposable income that is rightfully due.

When one considers the round trip distance of a 50 mile plus trip to VA facilities from Escondido, it simply makes common sense that certain subsets of our veterans are precluded from taking this "Magical mystery" tour to VA facilities.

This would include an assortment of every disability for a large number of "graying" senior vets suffering from cataracts to hip replacements, as well as younger vets, disabled as a result of their military experience. Others simply are age-affected with fear of such a long trip. Following are a few other factors that prevent many veterans from filing their VA claims at any place else, other than the Vets Center:

Homeless vets without bus fare, and a 2 or 3 hour journey by bus if bus fare is provided.

The on-going distrust of government among some veterans. These Vets find it emotionally harming having to deal with the government. This skepticism is only sometimes justifiable but is real to the veteran.

Veterans who must be convinced they are not "unworthy" of government assistance or large numbers of vets who feel that "their buddies" deserve it and need it more than they do.

Unemployed Veterans and underemployed vets who are busy with 2-3 menial jobs and cannot afford the necessary cost of gas if they have a car.

Widows of deceased veterans who for similar reasons cannot navigate their way to the regional VA office.

Those veterans who come to the center for other "needs". These vets had no intention to file or were unaware of their rights to file for entitlement benefits. All new Center Clients are automatically funneled into "VFW/SDVS Claims Service" office.

Vets who are referred to the VFW/SDVS Claims Service by "Wildfire" word of mouth from fellow vets whose claims were successfully resolved.

Vets who might have filed ages ago, were initially turned down and/or abandoned their claim in the appeal process, out of frustration, moving, or a variety of other reasons.

Trust and belief in the "veterans helping veterans" all volunteer aspect of all Vet Center programs are also vital components of this One-Of-A-Kind-advocacy outreach effort.

If there is another volunteer, local non-profit effort as wildly successful as the VFW/SDVS Claims Service we have yet to hear about it.

We are so very proud of these contributions of "new disposable" income to our vets which has vastly enhanced the quality of life for them and their families. Such efforts benefit our vets, our local businesses, and the community at large.

These glaring, indisputable, "bottom line" numbers touted by the VFW/SDVS Claims Service has been faithfully assembled by the Number Two man responsible for all VFW Claims Offices throughout the State of California, Art Rodrigues, LL.B.J.D., the Deputy Director of the California VFW Service Department. Mr. Rodrigues has single handedly produced each claim award and has kept such numbers during his 22 years of service at the San Diego Mission Valley VA Regional office as the VFW's National Service Officer.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars on the local, state, and national level have recognized the VFW/SDVS Claims Service as a unique and effective project worthy of replication. The VFW recognizes that this effective new method of dispensing claims services, because of cutbacks of VA personnel and budget constraints, will result in less services at VA regional offices. Outreach, one-stop-center efforts will eventually replace central government services across the nation. All

government services, will, in coming decades, emanate from one-stop, outreach community centers. This was made clear by the 1997 VFW National Commander In Chief, James Neirs in his visitation to the Vets Center in early 1997 when he labeled the VFW/SDVS partnerships as a "Model For The Nation."

The VFW/SDVS partnership continues unabated! While Art Rodrigues has retired as a VFW Department Service Officer, he remains on the job in his capacity as the Deputy Director of the California VFW Service Department. As a volunteer three days a week, Art continues to do wonderful work on behalf of the VFW and on behalf of the veterans he serves.

"There is no question that the VFW/SDVS Claims Service is a smashing success. In my twenty two years as a DSO for the VFW I have not seen anything that compares to this efforts record of success. It is my hope that my counterparts in all veterans organization throughout California and the nation will take a close look at our collaborative outreach project and seek the replicate such an effort in their area", stated Rodrigues.

The team of Rodrigues and Sniffen, representing the good works of the VFW and SDVS, are not done yet with their outreach master plan. The 1997 VFW National Convention allocated a one year \$5,000.00 grant to the state VFW which is intended for increased outreach efforts in North San Diego County.

"It has always been our intention to open another VFW/SDVS claims office in Ocean-side, California to handle the ever-increasing numbers of military discharges from Camp Pendleton, many of whom chose to remain in the beautiful North County's cities where they have put down roots" according to Rodrigues and Sniffen.

While awaiting action from the VFW State level, one thing is certain, Veterans in the Northern environs of San Diego County are receiving more VA entitlement awards than ever imagined or would ever have received if not for the existence of this unique and one of the most, if not the most successful, outreach projects in the nation.

Indeed, the VFW/SDVS Claims Service is A Model for the Nation.

## INTRODUCING THE PRIVACY PROTECTION ACT

**HON. RON PAUL**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 25, 1998*

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Privacy Protection Act of 1998, which forbids the use of the Social Security number for any purpose not directly related to the administration of the Social Security system. The Social Security number was created solely for use in administering the Social Security system. However, today the Social Security number is used as an identifier for numerous federal programs. Unless the use of the Social Security number is restricted, it will soon become a national identification number by which the federal government can easily keep track of all vital information regarding American citizens.

Anyone who doubts that we are well on the way to using the Social Security number as an universal identifier need only consult 1996's welfare reform bill, which forces business to report the Social Security number of every new employee to the federal government so it may be recorded in a national data base.

Another example of the abuse of the Social Security number is a provision in tax law requiring a spouse paying alimony furnish the IRS with the Social Security number of the spouse receiving alimony.

There are not isolated incidents; in fact, since the creation of the Social Security number in 1934 there have been almost 40 congressionally-authorized uses of the Social Security number as an identification number for non-Social Security programs! Abuse of the Social Security system also occurs at the state level. Mr. Speaker, in many states. One cannot get a driver's license, apply for a job, or even receive a birth certificate for one's child, without presenting their Social Security number to a government official, and just X weeks ago 210 of my colleagues voted to allow States to require citizens to show their Social Security number in order to vote. Since the Social Security number is part of a federal program created by Congress, it is Congress' responsibility to ensure it is not used to violate the privacy of America's citizens.

Perhaps the most disturbing abuses of the Social Security number is the Congressionally-authorized rule forcing parents to get a Social Security number for their newborn children in order to claim them as a dependent. Mr. Speaker, forcing parents to register their newborn children with the state is more like something out of the nightmare of George Orwell than the dreams of a free Republic that inspired the nation's founders.

Unless the abuses of the Social Security number is stopped, Americans will soon have a de facto national identification number, which would provide the federal government the ability to track all citizens from cradle to grave. The drafters of the Constitution would be horrified if they knew that the federal government would have the ability to set up a universal identifier and every newborn baby had to be assigned a number by the federal government. I therefore urge my colleagues to protect America's freedom by cosponsoring the Privacy Protection Act of 1998.

#### IN HONOR OF ROCKY RIVER BASKETBALL COURTS

**HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 25, 1998*

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mike McLaren and the players at the Rocky River courts in Rocky River, Ohio.

Chris Ballard, the author of Hoops Nation, recently toured the country looking for the best basketball courts and pickup games around. I am pleased to announce that Ballard features the Rocky River Courts in Rocky River, Ohio among America's top five basketball courts. NBA greats Danny Ferry and John Amaechi must agree since they play there regularly. The following is Ballard's description of the Rocky River Courts:

Take well-organized yuppie ball out of the health clubs, dump it on a court in a wealthy suburb of Cleveland, and you've got Rocky River, a magnet for Ohio's most talented gym rats. Mike McLaren, a local hoops junkie, has been organizing the games for 20 years, setting up teams and court rotations and keeping the slug fests to a minimum. Until City Hall

runs the players out of town, as it's been threatening to do for years, McLaren's legions will be playing in fair and foul weather.

#### CONGRESS AND THE INTERNET

**HON. LEE H. HAMILTON**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 25, 1998*

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, February 18, 1998 into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

#### CONGRESS AND THE INTERNET

The Internet is transforming American society. It is having a profound effect on our government institutions and our economy and how we communicate with each other and with the rest of the world. About 40 million people used the Internet in 1996, and that number is expected to rise to about 200 million by 1999.

The Internet is a global network of computers linked by phone and cable lines. It began in 1969 as a Defense Department initiative to link a handful of universities, research laboratories and military bases, and has now become ubiquitous. Individuals can access the Internet from personal computers at home or at work, at schools or in the library. The Internet is a means of disseminating information and, increasingly, a way to conduct business.

Congress is struggling to define what role government should play in the Internet. The Internet is a wide-open forum with few rules and regulations. It is not owned by anyone, and it is not confined by geographical borders. This very openness is the great strength of the Internet, facilitating the free exchange of information and ideas around the world. It is also a source of concern. For example, some of the most profitable web sites on the Internet are devoted to gambling and pornography. Some in Congress have urged aggressive regulation of the Internet, while others have urged minimal government involvement.

#### GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

The Internet has had a dramatic effect on how the average citizen interacts with the federal government. First, individuals now have greater access to information about government. Federal agencies have web sites which usually describe key programs and initiatives and help citizens get answers to commonly asked questions, such as how to apply for a job or how to get benefits. Second, the Internet has made it easier for citizens to communicate with their elected representatives. About 4000 people have contacted my web site in the last year, and many constituents now send e-mail messages to my office. Third, the Internet provides a wide-range of fora for citizens to debate and discuss political issues, from 3-mails and chat rooms to ideologically-oriented web sites.

The Internet has also revolutionized media coverage of Washington. When I first came to Congress in the mid-1960s, most Americans got their news on current events from the morning paper and the evening news. Today, media coverage is almost non-stop, and the Internet has contributed to this trend. For example, the Monica Lewinsky story first broke on a web site, and several news outlets have provided round-the-clock reporting on the scandal from their web sites. Some would say the Internet is feeding the public's appetite for information. Others

would argue that it has lowered media standards, opening the floodgates to unrestrained speculation.

#### AREAS OF POSSIBLE REGULATION

Congress will focus its legislative efforts on the Internet in four basic areas. First, it will consider various consumer protection bills, including measures to restrict junk e-mail, protect the privacy of personal information in government databases, and, most importantly, limit pornography and gambling on the Internet. Congress passed legislation in 1996 making it a crime to knowingly send or display indecent material over the Internet, but the Supreme Court invalidated the law on free speech grounds. Supporters say restrictions are necessary to limit access by minors to such materials. Opponents respond that parents, not the government, should control what their children see, that most Internet providers, such as America Online and Prodigy, already give parents and schools the tools to screen out offensive materials, and that regulating pornography will be difficult because U.S. laws don't reach web sites established overseas. We want to protect children from inappropriate material, but we also want to protect the exploding commercial potential of the Internet.

Second, Congress will debate measures relating to taxation of Internet commerce. One recent study estimated that the value of goods and services traded over the Internet will grow from \$8 billion in 1997 to \$327 billion in 2002. Those figures do not include consumers who are increasingly shopping on the Internet as they become more comfortable with the technology and more aware of the protections against credit card fraud. Many state and local governments, concerned about the shift of commerce to the Internet, want to impose taxes on Internet transactions. The challenge is determining which jurisdiction should levy the taxes, or whether state and local governments should be allowed to tax Internet commerce at all.

Third, Congress will consider bills involving the export of encryption, which is data scrambling technology used to prevent unauthorized access to electronic data on the Internet. Encryption, for example, may be used to secure credit card purchases over the Internet, or to restrict access to certain government web sites. The encryption issue is very contentious. Bills have been introduced to ease restrictions on the export of encryption products so that U.S. manufacturers are on a level playing field with their overseas competitors. The White House, however, has opposed relaxing export controls because of concerns that widespread use of sophisticated encryption will hamper law enforcement and intelligence gathering.

Fourth, Congress is reviewing the issue of trademark protection. Currently, the government has contracted with a private entity to assign web site names. Problems arise when entrepreneurs grab an address that is clearly identified with a well-known brand name or even with a governmental entity. Some argue the federal government should plan an enhanced role in resolving trademark disputes, while others favor referring such disputes to an international organization because the Internet transcends national boundaries.

#### CONCLUSION

The federal government has a legitimate role to play in Internet governance, particularly where interstate commerce, trade and law enforcement are involved. I do believe, however, that Congress should proceed with caution as it debates measures to regulate the Internet. I favor a minimum of regulation, but there are some things, like child molesters who get information from the Internet, that simply cannot be ignored. The