

acknowledge the many contributions that minority-owned banks have provided to individuals, businesses and communities for generations. I also extend my sincerest congratulations to Citizens Bank for its 100 years of service to the people of my district and offer my best wishes for another prosperous century of service.

AN INSULT TO OUR SOLDIERS

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, earlier this month the New York Times published an opinion piece on payroll system problems in the military—specifically in our National Guard. The piece quoted a letter from a soldier in my district, SGT Daniel Romero, who was killed in an explosion in Kandahar, Afghanistan, nearly two years ago.

In a letter to a fellow sergeant, Sergeant Romero wrote, “Are they really fixing pay issues [or] are they putting them off until we return? If they are waiting, then what happens to those who (God forbid) don’t make it back?”

Sergeant Romero was referring to payment problems that he and his fellow soldiers had experienced. In a November 2003 report that studied the payroll processes of six Army National Guard units called up to active duty, GAO found—among other things—that some soldiers did not receive payments for up to six months after mobilization. Payment problems are not limited to the Guard, but as my colleague Representative SHAYS pointed out, the payroll process is antiquated, designed for a time when members of the Guard were not often called up to active duty.

The following piece asks an important question: “As we mobilize troops from around the country and send them off to fight and possibly die in that crucible of terror known as combat, is it too much to ask that they be paid in a timely way?”

SGT Daniel Romero died for our country. He was a brave and dedicated soldier who proudly served when his nation called on him to fight in the war against terrorism in Afghanistan.

It is the very least we can do to ensure we work as hard for soldiers like SGT Romero as they work for us. That’s why I believe that fixing these payment problems should be an immediate priority for the Department of Defense.

[From the New York Times, Mar. 15, 2004]

AN INSULT TO OUR SOLDIERS

(By Bob Herbert)

Tom Davis, a Virginia Republican, is chairman of the House Committee on Government Reform. He tells a story about Sergeant Daniel Romero of the Colorado Army National Guard, who was sent to fight in Afghanistan.

In a letter dated March 23, 2002, Sergeant Romero asked a fellow sergeant: “Are they really fixing pay issues [or] are they putting them off until we return? If they are waiting, then what happens to those who (God forbid) don’t make it back?”

As Mr. Davis said at a hearing this past January, “Sergeant Romero was killed in action in Afghanistan in April 2002.” The congressman added, “I would really like to hear

today that his family isn’t wasting their time and energy fixing errors in his pay.”

As we mobilize troops from around the country and send them off to fight and possibly die in that crucible of terror known as combat, is it too much to ask that they be paid in a timely way?

Researchers from the General Accounting Office, a nonpartisan investigative arm of Congress, studied the payroll processes of six Army National Guard units that were called up to active duty. What they found wasn’t pretty.

There were significant pay problems in all six units. A report released last November said, “Some soldiers did not receive payments for up to six months after mobilization and others still had not received certain payments by the conclusion of our audit work.”

This is exactly the kind of thing that servicemen and women, especially those dealing with the heightened anxiety of life in a war zone, do not need. Maj. Kenneth Chavez of the Colorado National Guard told a Congressional committee of the problems faced by the unit he commanded:

“All 62 soldiers encountered pay problems. . . . During extremely limited phone contact, soldiers called home only to find families in chaos because of the inability to pay bills due to erroneous military pay.”

These problems are not limited to the National Guard. But one of the reasons the Guard has been especially hard hit is that, in the words of another congressman, Christopher Shays, its payroll system is “old and leaky and antiquated,” designed for an era when the members of the Guard were seen as little more than weekend warriors.

That system has been unable to cope with widespread call-ups to extended periods of active duty and deployment to places in which personnel qualify for a variety of special pay and allowances, particularly in combat zones.

The G.A.O. report said, “Four Virginia Special Forces soldiers who were injured in Afghanistan and unable to resume their civilian jobs experienced problems in receiving entitled active duty pay and related health care.”

The country is asking for extraordinary—in some cases, supreme—sacrifices from the military, and then failing to meet its own responsibility to provide such basic necessities as pay and health care.

“The military knows that it’s really blown it,” said Mr. Shays, who heads a subcommittee of the Government Reform Committee. He noted that National Guard and military reserve units were given enhanced roles in the aftermath of the cold war. But the payroll systems (and some other basic functions) were not upgraded accordingly.

“This is a huge problem,” he said.

And it is not likely to be solved soon.

“Anything that could be done in the short term is kind of like Band-Aids, things that will hopefully result in fewer errors but will not fix the problem,” said Gregory Kutz, who supervised the G.A.O. report.

A lasting solution to the pay problems, he said, will require a completely new system.

Defense Department officials insist they are working simultaneously on short-term fixes and the creation of a brand new system. Patrick Shine, acting director of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, told me that a 49-step “plan of action” has been developed in response to the G.A.O. report.

He said he hoped that a completely new payroll system could be unveiled in the spring of 2005.

I asked how confident he was about the deadline. “Well,” he said, “I’ll be very honest with you. I don’t think we’re all that different from private companies, seeing some-times slippages in schedules.”

But he was optimistic, he said.

HONORING THE STATE CHAMPION LIVINGSTON ACADEMY LADY WILDCATS

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Livingston Academy Lady Wildcats for winning this year’s Tennessee Class AA girls high school basketball championship. The March 13 win earned the Lady Wildcats their fourth state championship.

Such a feat deserves recognition. The team of highly motivated players went 37–3 this year, capping a championship season with a strong 50–38 win over a tough McMinn Central team. This is the fourth state championship in the past 14 years for the Lady Wildcats.

Livingston residents can be proud of the accomplishments of the Lady Wildcats, who won their first championship in 1990 when current head coach Lesley Smith was a player. Assistant coach Elizabeth Woodard was also a member of that first championship team. I commend the team for an outstanding season and a remarkable achievement.

The following are the members of the 2003–04 state champion Lady Wildcats: Katrina Beechboard, Krista Clinard, Ashley Matthews, Megan Thompson, Jada Ledbetter, Megan Brown, Mallie Stephens, Kristin Hoover, Kasey Baltimore, April Handy, Whitney Sells, Brittany McCain, Haley Mullins, Kellie Thurman and team managers Samantha Sidwell, Tiffany Livingston, Blair Hill and Amber Peck.

REMEMBERING MR. ATHAN GIBBS, INNOVATOR AND COMMITTED ADVOCATE OF DEMOCRACY, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS DEATH

HON. JIM COOPER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life of Mr. Athan Gibbs, of Nashville, Tennessee. Mr. Gibbs was a patriot, a pastor, and a visionary entrepreneur who took it upon himself to restore Americans’ faith in the democratic process after the disheartening controversy we experienced in November of 2000. Democracy lost one of its chief champions with Mr. Gibbs’ unexpected death on the morning of Sunday, March 14, and on behalf of Congressman RUSH HOLT and other colleagues, I send his family our heartfelt sympathy for their loss and deepest gratitude for his life.

A Memphis native who came of age in the 1950s and 1960s, Mr. Gibbs experienced first hand the struggle for equality at the voting booth. Four decades later, these seminal experiences informed his observations of the 2000 Florida election controversy, and drove him to invent a technology that would ensure the fair exercise of democracy—the first electronic voting system with a “paper trail” to allow voters to verify that their votes were appropriately logged and counted.

Athan Gibbs' TruVote system was a timely invention, and the product of a unique career. As a student of both business and theology, Mr. Gibbs entered public service in 1970 as a financial analyst with the Tennessee Public Service Commission. But while he pursued this public service career and later his own tax business, he served double duty as a pastor, most recently at the Mount Zion Baptist Church. In the words of a friend, The Reverend Enoch Fuzz, "Athan was consumed by a desire for justice, equality and freedom for all people."

Mr. Gibbs' desire for justice and equality was matched only by his tenacious drive to realize these goals. After reading studies quantifying the unequal treatment of African-American votes in the 2000 Florida election, he saw an opportunity to put his accounting skills to work in pursuing his overall democratic goals. In 2001, he founded TruVote in order to prevent disenfranchisement and restore faith in the democratic system. His invention caught on quickly and earned the backing of state and local officials, the World Conference of Mayors, and Microsoft. Last spring, my colleague Mr. HOLT introduced H.R. 2239, a bill requiring that voting systems provide a verifiable paper receipt, just as Mr. Gibbs had envisioned and invented two years previously. This bill now has bipartisan backing from 128 cosponsors.

While the nation and the democratic world lost a dedicated patriot and talented innovator when it prematurely lost Athan Gibbs, his vision and mission live on through his family and colleagues who pledge to carry on his work. On behalf of the fifth district of Tennessee as well as my colleagues in Congress, I send my deepest condolences to Athan Gibbs' family and loved ones, and celebrate the life of this remarkable American.

REMOVING NAME AS H.R. 1673
COSPONSOR

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I want to explain why I sought and obtained unanimous consent to have my name removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 1673, the bill to establish a Department of Peace.

I joined as a cosponsor of a similar bill in the 107th Congress. That bill was introduced in July 2001, a year after the observance of UNESCO's International Year for the Culture of Peace in 2000 and in the context of a UNESCO resolution declaring an International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children 2001–2010.

I cosponsored H.R. 2459 in the spirit of these events and at the urging of a very persuasive group of young high school students from my district because I wanted to underline the symbolic importance of promoting justice and democratic principles to expand human rights and developing policies that promote the peaceful resolution of conflict. I do not believe these ideas require the establishment of a new bureaucracy.

After careful review, I have determined that while the bill's goals are idealistic and worthy, its specific provisions and practical application

are problematic. In particular, I think that endorsing the establishment of a new bureaucracy—even if only symbolically—would not be appropriate at a time when the federal budget is in deep deficit. The recent recession and the urgent need to spend more for national defense and homeland security, combined with excessively large and unbalanced tax cuts have brought us to the point where both the entire Social Security surplus and massive borrowing—which will have to be repaid with interest—are required to cover the shortfall.

Under these circumstances, I think proposals for further expansion of the federal government must be subject to even more strict scrutiny. In that light, I have reviewed the legislation that I have supported and have concluded that it is no longer appropriate for me to remain as a cosponsor of H.R. 1673.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE OF
SAMUEL AMASA PEER

HON. PAUL RYAN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, it is with profound sadness that I rise today to recognize the life of Samuel Amasa Peer of Beloit, Wisconsin, who passed away on March 7, 2004, at 79 years of age. Sam was a courageous veteran of the Second World War, and his hard work, diligence and willingness to face the most difficult of problems have inspired those who knew him. He will be greatly missed by his family and loved ones, and I ask my colleagues to join me in sharing my thoughts and prayers with them during this difficult time.

I am honored to pay tribute to this outstanding individual and would like to read before the Congress the eloquent eulogy given by his grandson, Adam Peer.

EULOGY OF SAMUEL AMASA PEER, MARCH 13, 2004

My grandfather like all of us was complex, understood only by his Creator. Early on he learned that there was little he could expect from his own parents. Born during the midst of the Great Depression, he was thrust into manhood when duty called him to care for and protect his younger siblings.

It is hard for me to imagine the world he came into. When he answered his second call to duty aboard the USS West Virginia, a question of whether a free world would survive was very real and very unknown. The hardship that was born into and the war that tempered him during his youth is what exemplified him as a self-made American in the very truest sense of the term. And he took great pride in that.

Much of what he did to do his part in making the world safe for democracy will be lost to antiquity. He always kept the most essential parts of himself so private and well-guarded that it put limits on the things he could talk about, even to those that most desperately needing his acknowledgment and love.

But, the unspoken gifts he leaves all of us are very real.

I have never met someone more diligent and hard-working than my grandfather, and that lives on in my father. My grandfather was so proud of the man you became.

I have never met someone who expresses what they feel so passionately and with greater conviction, and that lives on in my

sister. The same passion for right over wrong and freedom over oppression burns in her heart.

And I hope I never lose his optimism for the future; he never met a problem that couldn't be solved.

Today, as another member of the "greatest generation" passes from this life to the next, we inherit what they have instilled in us and the unfinished tasks now left to younger hands.

It is now our charge to leave this world a better place than we found it, and like my grandfather and his generation, inspire another generation to great things.

TRIBUTE TO GRANT MITCHELL
ARMSTRONG

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge and commend Grant Mitchell Armstrong on his retirement that celebrates a career spanning 34 years of steadfastly guarding the ideals of criminal justice at the County of Santa Clara's Office of the Public Defender.

With Mr. Armstrong's assistance, the Santa Clara County Office of the Public Defender was awarded the National Defender Leadership Institute's prestigious Gideon Award of Excellence for 2003. The Office was specifically recognized in areas of accountability, cost-efficiency, innovation and effective representation of clients, and was cited as a "Best Practices" model for public defender offices nationwide.

Mr. Armstrong played a key role in the recruitment and training of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural cadre of attorneys within the Office. In May of 2000, the Office of the Public Defender was awarded the County Executive's Unity in Diversity Achievement Award for the significant staff diversity the Office achieved. While less than 15 percent of the lawyers in California are Black, Hispanic or Asian, 35 percent of the lawyers in the Office are minority group members and 45 percent are women.

Mr. Armstrong also played a vital role in the Juvenile Drug Treatment Court through his leadership roles with the Mentoring Program that pairs young participants with adults committed to the development of healthy, drug-free lifestyles.

I am proud and grateful to thank Grant Mitchell Armstrong for his significant contributions to our criminal justice system.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, earlier this month I was not present for several recorded votes because pressing business required me to remain in Colorado. If I had been present, I would have voted as follows:

Rollcall No. 42—H. Res. 519—Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives with respect to the earthquake that occurred in San Luis Obispo County, California, on December 22, 2003, I would have voted "yes."