in the country. Although the project initially met with delays, California is now on track to compliance by September 2006.

However, rather than reducing the penalties as California makes progress towards its goal, the Federal penalties actually continue to grow, because the penalties are based on the amount the State invests in child support programs for the previous year. Effectively, we are hurting the very children that the program is trying to help by punishing States already doing their best to get each child the support payments they are owed.

My bill, the Child Support Reinvestment Act, will lower the penalties and allow the money levied in penalty to be used for the benefit of the children instead of the Federal Government’s general fund. This is smart regulation for the States.

BORDER PATROL AND ILLEGAL ALIENS

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, multiple news reports claim that the U.S. Border Patrol has been ordered to stop arresting illegal aliens in Arizona where American citizens have been patrolling. And why have the agents been asked to stop these arrests? Because an increase in the arrest rate was proving the effectiveness of the Minuteman volunteers.

I hope our government has not told agents to stop making arrests. I hope that the efforts of concerned citizens were not in vain.

Our government has spent close to $240 million to monitor the Mexican and Canadian borders with the latest technology. The problem? The equipment does not work. What is clear is that there are Border agents credited the Minutemen with cutting the flow of illegal aliens with the number caught dropping from 500 a day to less than 15 per day. Madam Speaker, new solutions are needed; we cannot just throw money at our problems. It is clear that a group of concerned citizens are doing what $240 million could not do, but we need a permanent fix.

Madam Speaker, illegal immigration is not simply going to go away. We know there is a problem, and we must take the initiative and address this problem now.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATION FALLS SHORT

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Madam Speaker, this Homeland Security appropriation falls short in many areas: port security, first responders, interoperable communications, and aviation.

In aviation, recent tests by the Inspector General and the GAO show that there are unacceptable, continuing vulnerabilities to our system of aviation, and their conclusion is simple: the performance of finding explosives and other threat objects will not improve until we give the screeners 21st-century technology to fight 21st-century threats. The junk they are working with was thrown out a decade ago because it was inadequate for the United States Capitol before 9/11, but now we are seeing it in our airports and demanding they find threat objects that the machines simply cannot find. The Subcommittee on Homeland Security of the Committee on Appropriations is failing the test too. They are failing to protect the American traveling public.

JUDICIAL NOMINATION OF PRISCILLA OWEN

(Mr. HENSARLING asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HENSARLING. Madam Speaker, 2 years ago this month, I rose to express my outrage with Democrats over their treatment of my fellow Texan, Supreme Court Justice Priscilla Owen. Today, due to Democrats’ continued obstruction, Justice Owen, a highly qualified nominee from the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, is still being denied a simple up-or-down vote in the Senate.

Madam Speaker, despite unanimously receiving the highest possible rating of the American Bar Association, despite the strong, bipartisan support of several former Texas Supreme Court Justices and 15 past presidents of the State Bar of Texas, Texas Supreme Court Justice Priscilla Owen has still not received a simple up-or-down vote for 4 years. For 4 years, Senate Democrats have worked to obstruct our Constitution.

When Republicans were in power during President Clinton’s term, no judicial nominee was ever deprived of a vote due to a filibuster. Now, after 200 years of American history, Democrats want to unilaterally change the rules.

Madam Speaker, Justice Owen has a right to get a vote on her nomination. Basic fairness dictates it, as does our Constitution.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF VIETNAMESE AMERICANS

(Mr. REICHERT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. REICHERT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary group of people, our Vietnamese Americans.

This month, the gentleman from Virginia (Chairman Tom Davis) introduced, and the House passed, an important resolution honoring the contributions of the Vietnamese Americans over the past 3 decades, enriching our diversity, culture, and strength. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the chairman for his work on this important issue.

Madam Speaker, 27,000 Vietnamese Americans live in my district of Washington State. One of the most remarkable experiences I have had as sheriff of King County in Washington, which I am now lucky enough to continue to represent as Congressman, is attending an annual event, when South Vietnamese Police officers are recognized.

When the United States pulled out of Saigon, many were left behind. Some were executed, some sentenced to prison camps, some starved and beaten to death, all for being friends of the United States. And each year, these Vietnamese, who spent 15 to 20 years in prison camps, stand and salute our flag with tears in their eyes because they know what freedom is. They remind us of how great our country is, and I am privileged and proud to represent them.

JUSTICE OWEN: WELL QUALIFIED

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, yesterday, The Wall Street Journal highlighted the extreme and politically charged use of the Senate Democratic filibuster. Editors at The Wall Street Journal clearly articulated the audacity of the Democrats’ radical claims against nominee Priscilla Owen of Texas. Justice Owen is a well-respected and accomplished nominee who enjoys significant bipartisan support and would be quickly confirmed if given an up-or-down vote. Unfortunately, Democrats are denying her this opportunity in a desperate attempt to hold up the Fed- eral power and legislation through the judicial system. Their agenda is fueled by bitterness and is not in the best interests of the American people.

Majority Leader BILL FRIST is to be commended for maintaining the constitutional case for an up-or-down vote. Democrat obstructionism is a radical deviation from allowing Senators to vote for the nominees who are highly qualified to serve our country. I support Senator Frist’s efforts and urge Senate Democrats to give Justice Owen a fair vote.

In conclusion, God bless our troops and we will never forget September 11.

UP-OR-DOWN VOTE FOR JUSTICE PRISCILLA OWEN

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I too rise this morning, along with my fellow Texans, to recommend to the other body that they have an up-or-
down vote on Justice Priscilla Owen. Justice Owen has been elected by the people of Texas to the State Supreme Court two times, the second time in the year 2000 with an overwhelming popular majority. During her last election, Justice Owen was endorsed by every major newspaper in the State of Texas.

Mr. C. Boyden Gray, writing an article about this, said: “The members of the Texas legal community know Justice Owen to be a jurist of the highest intelligence, one who is committed to following the law, no matter where it leads.”

The Dallas Morning News editorialized after she was nominated 4 years ago that “Justice Owen’s lifelong record is one of accomplishment and integrity. She is one of the few judicial nominees to receive the unanimous ‘well-qualified’ rating from the American Bar Association.”

The chairman of the Texas Commission on Judicial Efficiency, Baylor University President Herbert Reynolds, said, “Based on my knowledge of Justice Owen for the past 30 years, I believe you simply cannot make a more solid choice for the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.”

I urge the other body to have an up-or-down vote.

RECOGNIZING THE 216TH ENGINEER BATTALION OF THE OHIO NATIONAL GUARD

(Mr. NEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 216th Engineer Battalion of the Ohio National Guard stationed in Chillicothe, Ohio, for their exceptional service during the war on terror.

The 216th completed more than 350 successful missions. They played a critical role in the construction of protective barriers to protect soldiers from enemy fire. And in preparation for Iraq’s national election on January 30, the 216th placed concrete barriers at hundreds of voting sites to allow Iraqis to vote in a safe and secure environment. However, their service was not without tragedy. Twenty soldiers of the 216th were awarded Purple Hearts for wounds they received in combat, and three soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice.

In recognition of their exceptionally meritorious conduct, the 216th will be awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation during their Freedom Salute Campaign celebration next month. It is with great honor that I have the privilege of recognizing them today. The willingness to risk one’s life in defense of the ideals our country was built upon is the truest test of one’s strength and character.

These men and women have excelled as patriots, and we are forever in their debt.