

for veterans. Specifically, in some states, QVMBs home loan financing is only available to veterans who signed up for military duty prior to 1977.

It is time we address this inequity. Our veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan deserve the opportunity to purchase a home with QVMBs. Further, in our home state of California, only 4.1 percent of our veterans are eligible for a home loan through QVMB bonds.

Our legislation extends the program and opens it up to new veterans residing in California and Texas. Congress passed legislation in the 109th Congress making the home loan program available to newly discharged veterans in the other states eligible for QVMBs financing.

It is crucial that we act swiftly to give these veterans and their families the ability to purchase and own a home in California and Texas.

This legislation will benefit every state eligible for QVMBs by requiring annual adjustments to the federal bond limit indexed to the Freddie Mac Conventional Mortgage Home Price Index. A higher bond limit means California, Texas, Oregon, Wisconsin, and Alaska—the five eligible states—will have the ability to provide more of their veterans with home loans. We must keep QVMB financing compatible with national housing costs.

The Home Ownership for Veterans Act of 2007 will help our newly discharged heroes purchase homes while ensuring that state veterans' home loan programs remain viable.

Thank you very much Madam Speaker for the opportunity to introduce legislation to help veterans purchase homes and achieve the American Dream for their families.

A TRIBUTE TO AL ECHOLS, ESQ.

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 18, 2007

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor Al Echols, Esq., a Philadelphia legend who after serving 44 years as the executive director of North City Congress has announced his retirement.

Under the leadership of Mr. Echols, North City Congress has remained a valued institution meeting the changing needs of a changing community in North Philadelphia. During its first decade North City Congress represented a federation of neighborhood organizations committed to positive community change.

North City Congress later became a vital social service agency. Today, the agency operates two senior citizens centers that offer meals, social, recreational and cultural activities and in-home management services for the frail and home-bound. It also offers financial management and estate planning for seniors and fiscal management and technical assistance for community-based organizations.

Mr. Echols, a graduate of Virginia Union University and the Howard University Law School, marshaled his considerable acumen in the struggle to gain political power for African Americans in Philadelphia. In 1971, he was a council-at-large candidate on the Thatcher Longstreth Republican ticket in a hard fought race against Democrat Frank Rizzo.

Known for his wit, Mr. Echols is fiercely opinionated and a political sage with whom one cannot have a brief conversation. Not only does he love to explain the nuances of his points of view he punctuates his conversations with a laugh that can shake the grand mansion that houses North City Congress.

As he retires, Al Echols leaves an indelible stamp of good will, principled leadership and service.

A TRIBUTE TO LARRY SHEINGOLD

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 18, 2007

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, we rise today to recognize the retirement of Larry Sheingold after thirty-six years of service as a staff member in the California State Legislature.

Larry's years of service included ten years as an Assembly staff member and twenty-six years working for the State Senate. During his career he worked for Assembly Speakers Bob Moretti and Leo McCarthy and several State Senators including Jim Costa, Betty Kamette, Henry Mello and the current Senate President Pro Tern, Don Perata.

In addition, Larry Sheingold served on the National Conference of State Legislatures' Executive Committee from 2003–06. He is one of only nineteen legislative staff members ever to do so.

Though Larry Sheingold may be on the understated side, he has always possessed a giant intellect and is a master of campaign strategies. His advice to candidates and officeholders alike has always been keen, thoughtful and delivered with a quick wit and much humor. Larry is one of those individuals that combine a rare blend of policy expertise and astute political judgment.

Thirty-six years ago, when Larry started his career as a legislative staff member, Ronald Reagan was governor, legislative committee votes were not public and no woman had ever served in the California State Senate. During his career all that has changed and as the invitation to his retirement event stated, "The system may be working, but Larry won't be."

But to paraphrase the late British politician, Lord Salisbury, Larry Sheingold is not the type of gentleman to retire gracefully into the background.

Today, we take great pleasure in honoring, through these remarks, a good friend, a former staff member and a valued advisor, Larry Sheingold. We wish him and his wife Judy only the best of times in retirement, though that may only last until the next election cycle.

COLLEGE STUDENT RELIEF ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 17, 2007

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, anyone who knows a recent college graduate is well aware of the way many young people struggle to pay

their student loans. By slightly reducing the interest rate on student loans, H.R. 5, while far from perfect, will help ease this burden. A commendable feature of this bill is that, instead of placing new burdens on taxpayers, it pays for the reduction in interest rates by reducing subsidies to financial institutions. Thus, the bill does not increase the deficit, taxes, or the size or scope of government.

All-too-often, government programs, which the taxpaying public believes help lower-income Americans, actually provide government subsidies for politically powerful business interests. For example, in the student loan program under discussion today, taxpayer dollars are provided to financial institutions in return for those institutions agreeing to provide student loans under terms set by the government. By reducing subsidies for financial institutions in order to benefit recent graduates, H.R. 5 takes a step toward ensuring the student loan program actually focuses on helping students and recent graduates, instead of using taxpayer dollars for a disguised form of corporate welfare.

In addition to passing H.R. 5, Congress should also help more Americans afford college by passing my Make College Affordable Act, H.R. 193, that makes college tuition tax deductible. There has been talk of bringing legislation like H.R. 193 to the floor later this year. I hope all my colleagues—regardless of their positions on the bill before us today—can unite behind helping middle- and working-class Americans afford college by supporting my Make College Affordable Act or similar legislation.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. KEN CALVERT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 18, 2007

Mr. CALVERT. Madam Speaker, pursuant to my leave of absence, I am submitting for the RECORD how I would have voted if I had been present earlier today, in addition to comments that I request also be entered into the RECORD.

Rollcall #34, "yea"—Motion to Adjourn, rollcall #35, "no"—Ordering the Previous Question, and rollcall #36, "no"—Agreeing to H. Res. 66.

H. Res. 66 is a closed rule that prohibits any amendments to the bill from being considered by the House. Madam Speaker, on November 14, 2006 you wrote in a Christian Science Monitor op-ed that "Democrats pledge to make this the most honest, ethical, and open Congress in history." I am deeply disappointed that past pledges for an open Congress have been broken so quickly with H. Res. 66 and other closed rules imposed by the majority. I believe the People's House operates best when legislation moves through regular order and uses our Committee process where members from both sides of the aisle have an opportunity to work together to improve legislation. Under the new "Closed-door Congress," the House has yet to consider a bill that was moved through regular order and considered by the Committee of jurisdiction. H. Res. 66 establishes the rules for considering H.R. 6, and, as a senior member of the Natural Resources Committee, I have significant

concerns about some of the provisions in H.R. 6. In particular, there are provisions addressing the 1998–99 Clinton Administration OCS leases that are ambiguous and may result in levies on all oil and natural gas lease holders in the Gulf of Mexico, not just the 1998–99 leaseholders. This and other poorly written provisions in H.R. 6 could have been corrected had the legislation been considered by the Natural Resources Committee or had the majority allowed amendments to be considered on the House floor. Unfortunately, the majority's "Closed-door Congress" chose to break its pledge of an "open Congress" and prevented these opportunities to improve the legislation.

Rollcall #37, "no"—On Consideration of H.R. 6, rollcall #38, "yes"—Motion to Recommit H.R. 6, rollcall #39, "no"—Motion to Table the Appeal of the Ruling of the Chair, rollcall #40, "no"—Final Passage of H.R. 6.

H.R. 6 represents the first vote for a tax increase in more than 13 years. I have repeatedly pledged to oppose any and all efforts to increase the marginal income tax rates for individuals and businesses—and I stand by my pledge. The majority has claimed that passage of H.R. 6 will roll-back subsidies to the oil and natural gas industry that Congress passed in the Energy Policy Act of 2005. However, a Congressional Research Service report released in December of 2006 concluded that, on balance, the bill imposes "a net tax increase on the industry of nearly \$300 million over 11 years." Further raising taxes on the oil and natural gas industry will do nothing to help lower the price of gasoline at the pump Americans are paying and, ultimately, increases our country's dependence on foreign sources of oil. Madam Speaker, I am truly stricken by the fact that the new majority has chosen to bring a bill to the House floor during its highly touted first "100 Hours" that will benefit and strengthen the hands of the likes of Hugo Chavez. I oppose H.R. 6 because it will result in job losses, increase the price of gasoline at the pump, increase the cost of heating homes, and increase dependence on foreign sources of oil. I support an energy policy that takes steps to truly reduce America's dependence on foreign sources of oil while our Nation continues to invest and improve the development of renewable sources of energy and energy efficiency.

Rollcall #41, "yes"—Adoption of H. Res. 62—Congratulating the Grand Valley State University Lakers"

COLLEGE STUDENT RELIEF ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 17, 2007

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5, the College Student Relief Act. This bill is designed to make college more affordable and accessible by cutting the interest rate on subsidized student loans for undergraduates in half over the next 5 years—from 6.8 percent today to 3.4 percent by 2011. This proposal is targeted on assisting the low- and middle-income students with the most financial need: those who receive subsidized student loans.

Over the last 5 years, the cost of attending college has skyrocketed, putting college out of reach for more and more students in my district and across the country. Tuition and fees at public universities have increased by 41 percent since 2001. In addition to rising tuition and fees, over the last 5 years interest rates on student loans have jumped by almost 2 percentage points, further increasing the cost of college.

According to the Congressional Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, financial barriers will prevent 4.4 million high school graduates from attending a 4-year public college over the next decade, and prevent another 2 million high school graduates from attending any college at all. Madam Speaker, the United States is the richest country in the world. We should be able to educate our young people to the full extent of their ability. Anything less fails not only our students, but our entire nation.

More than ever, the health of our economy rests on having a highly-skilled and well-educated workforce. College access is the key to our remaining strong in the face of an increasingly competitive global economy. Without changes, by the year 2020, the United States is projected to face a shortage of up to 12 million college-educated workers, directly threatening America's economic strength.

Once fully phased in, this bill would save the typical borrower, with \$13,800 in subsidized federal student loan debt, approximately \$4,400 over the life of their loan. Cutting student loan interest rates is supported by a large majority of Americans, including majorities of Republicans, Independents, and Democrats. Furthermore, the bill is fully paid for—meeting all pay-as-you-go requirements.

Madam Speaker, you don't need to be a genius to recognize the critical importance of this legislation. This one should be a no-brainer. Let's pass H.R. 5.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION "ELIMINATING MODERN DAY SLAVERY"

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 18, 2007

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, last Thursday, January 11th, along with our civil rights crusader, JOHN LEWIS reintroduced a resolution on the tragedy of modern-day slavery and urging the United States to take immediate steps to end it.

The institution of chattel slavery practiced in the United States for over 200 years was not only a past shame in U.S. history but also world history. Yet, this continues today. Throughout the world, an estimated 27 million people are suffering as slaves including the United States. Each year millions become vulnerable to the resurgence of slavery. People forced to survive with little or no resources fall victim to abuse and exploitation in developing countries whose economies slip further into extreme poverty caused by debt and corruption. Still modern-day slavery is ever more expansive encompassing chattel slavery, human trafficking, indentured or bonded labor, forced labor, forced marriage and the worst forms of child labor.

Slavery is rampant in India, Southeast Asia, Africa, and South America, as well as, once again the United States. In Africa, cash crops such as cotton, sugar, and cocoa are produced by child and bonded labor. The Ivory Coast which supplies over half the world's supply of cocoa utilizes child slave labor in at least 90 percent of the cocoa plantations. Slavery still exists in Sudan, remnants from the North and South civil war. In Myanmar, slave labor harvest agricultural products such as sugarcane. In Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia, human trafficking and forced marriage run unimpeded. Moreover, I am repulsed that an estimated 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders and disturbed that annual global profits on trafficked forced labor total \$44.3 billion.

This is an historic year for many of the victims of slavery and their descendants. 2007 marks the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the transport of Africans as slaves into the British American colonies. Our country can no longer allow the practice of slavery to continue further in the 21st century. We must take action to address this issue. The solution is one of political resolve not capability, for we have at our disposal numerous means that will eliminate these human rights violations.

My resolution expresses the sense of the House that the abolition of modern-day slavery should:

Become a high priority in U.S. foreign and domestic policy to eliminate all forms of modern-day slavery by 2017;

Reflect and advance the commitment of U.S. trade, aid, and investment policies for the freedom for all people;

Expand protection and legal options for victims of modern-day slavery;

Form a comprehensive coalition between governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and individuals to forge a sustained global action plan to fight modern-day slavery; and

Become a priority at the 2007 Group of 8 (G-8) Summit in Germany.

I welcome my colleagues' support and urge the House Leadership to bring it promptly to the House floor for consideration. This year is the time to mark the end of modern-day slavery for victims worldwide.

A TRIBUTE TO SENATOR PAUL TSONGAS

HON. MARTIN T. MEEHAN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 18, 2007

Mr. MEEHAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to remember one of my heroes, Paul Tsongas. Paul Tsongas was a great champion of my hometown of Lowell, Massachusetts and an extraordinary American, whose courage and convictions should inspire us all.

It has been ten years since he lost his battle with cancer and ten years since the American people lost one of their greatest public servants.

Paul was one of my early role models and mentors, and I'm honored to follow in his footsteps as the Congressman for the 5th District of Massachusetts.

Born of Greek immigrants, Paul grew up in our joint hometown of Lowell, Massachusetts.