

years is Erv Witucki, who has been a member of the sponsoring organization, the Munger Volunteer Firemen Corps, for the entire 41 years.

Not only has Erv been a member of the sponsoring organization since the festival's inception, he has also served as the festival's chairman for 20 years, from 1960 to 1981, and its co-chairman or honorary chairman for the remaining 21 years. He nurtured the festival's growth from a small, two day local event, to one which attracted over 30,000 people each year as a major regional 4 day event.

I can personally remember going to this event as a small child, and thinking how grand it was. As I grew, so did this festival, so that the image I had of this wonderful event as a child only grew with me. This is because of the hard work of Erv Witucki during those formative years. The impact this festival has had on other young people has been phenomenal because it isn't just for a 4-day celebration of the importance of the production of a key commodity, potatoes, to this town, but an opportunity to raise funds that have an impact on youth throughout the year. Recreation projects such as softball programs, tennis courts, playground equipment and picnic areas, a pavilion and volleyball courts, and an annual Halloween party for children are all the direct result of this festival.

Erv has given to his community. He and his wife Marie have been blessed with 4 children and now 11 grandchildren. He has served as Merritt Township treasurer for 28 years, and has been extremely active with St. Norbert Church in Munger.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Munger are very grateful to Erv Witucki and the others who have volunteered their time and effort to make their community a better place. I urge you and all of our colleagues in joining me in offering thanks to Erv Witucki.

THE GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 29, 1995

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington report for Wednesday, November 22, 1995, into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

THE BUDGET BATTLE

As the federal government shut down on November 14, many Hoosiers found themselves angry about the dispute that precipitated the shutdown, unsure about how long it would last, and concerned about how it might affect them.

The shutdown occurred because Congress has not completed action on all of the measures to provide funding for the government during the current fiscal year, which began on October 1. A short-term funding measure, called a continuing resolution (CR), was passed in September and gave Congress until November 14 to enact spending bills. But by that date only three of the thirteen appropriations bills had been signed into law.

Congress and the President have not been able to agree to extend the CR. The congressional leadership attached a number of provisions to the second continuing resolution, including an increase in Medicare premiums. President Clinton objected to these provisions, and vetoed the measure. With my sup-

port, Congress then passed a continuing resolution that would keep the government open until December 5 and called for balancing the budget in seven years. However, President Clinton also vetoed this measure.

On November 14, some 800,000 of the federal government's two million civilian employees were furloughed. Many federal government offices were closed, including national parks and museums. New applications for federal benefits, such as Social Security, could not be processed, though payment of Social Security and Medicare benefits continued. The Agriculture and Energy Departments remained open because their funding and been approved. In addition, employees vital to the safety and health of the public, such as air traffic controllers and guards in federal prisons, were kept on duty, as were those on active duty in the military.

A short-term shutdown of the federal government produces plenty of frustration, inconvenience and confusion, but probably little enduring harm. Congress has typically ensured that federal workers receive pay for the time they spend on furlough. However, a longer shutdown could create major problems for many people. Companies with federal contracts, individuals receiving veterans' benefits, and federal employees could see their payments delayed.

In addition, shutting down the government is expensive. Pay for furloughed federal employees is estimated to cost about \$150 million per day. The shutdown process itself—preparing plans, notifying employees, securing property and so forth—also carries a price.

But perhaps the greatest cost of the shutdown is that it simply reinforces the cynicism and bitterness so many Americans feel about the federal government, particularly elected officials. They see the shutdown as the result of the partisan bickering and political posturing, and they place blame on leaders of both parties for gridlock.

Complicating the situation further is disagreement on raising the federal debt limit. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin has taken a number of steps to ensure that the federal government remains below the debt limit, since at that point the government could no longer borrow money to meet its obligations. A default by the federal government could have serious, long-term implications for the American economy, though no one really knows how the markets would react. The big unknown is that much of the debt is held in places abroad where the understanding of American politics is meager. In any event, my view is that we should do everything we can to avoid default. There is no good reason to push the nation to the edge of financial catastrophe.

I agree with those who find the current standoff unnecessary and counterproductive. Both sides are engaging in political theater at the expense of substance. Congress has had several months to complete work on the appropriations bills. Voters expect us to work together to get the government's business done, and we should do so.

The current standoff is essentially not about short-term funding, but about competing views on how to balance the budget. The congressional leadership is trying to use the spending and debt limit legislation, where they have a lot of leverage, to force the President to sign the reconciliation bill—the bigger fight where they have little leverage. This is the most difficult struggle over budget priorities I have seen since I have been in Congress. It is a high-stakes dispute over what the role and the priorities of the federal government should be over the next several years.

The short-term solution to the shutdown of the government may appear manageable, but

it is extremely difficult to see the solution to the long-term division between the President and the congressional leadership. The real fight comes when Congress passes the reconciliation bill and the President vetoes it. What is at stake there is the future of Medicare, Medicaid, the welfare system, rules governing the environment, and federal efforts in education, employment training and technology.

We must take several steps to get beyond the current impasse. I believe that sensible compromises are within reach. First, in my view, Congress should enact a "clean" continuing resolution and debt limit increase, without extraneous policy provisions. Second, we ought to continue negotiations in an effort to enact the rest of the appropriations bills for the current fiscal year. Third, we must to the extent possible seek agreement on policy issues contained in the reconciliation bill.

I suspect in the end we will not be able to resolve all of these major policy differences in 1995. The way out will be to keep the government operating largely under present policies on these unresolved matters and then have a public debate on the budget between now and the 1996 elections. Both sides would then have an opportunity to clarify exactly what they are for. I think this approach would make the voters much more comfortable.

The question with respect to the shutdown is: do we want a battle or a bill? I believe that Hoosiers want the government to get the people's business done. They are tired of this game of political chicken and are not going to view either party in this debate favorably. Both the President and Congress must seek reasonable solutions, not political points.

DEPENDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FEDERAL LIFE INSURANCE PROTECTION ACT

HON. CONSTANCE A. MORELLA

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 29, 1995

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing the Dependents With Disabilities Federal Life Insurance Protection Act of 1995. The bill would permit a Federal retiree over the age of 65 to continue additional optional life insurance coverage when the beneficiary is a person with a disability. In this case, the disability would have to be one which could be expected to last permanently and would prevent an individual from fully providing for himself/herself. The retiree would also be responsible for the total premium, limiting the cost to the Government.

Currently, Federal workers can continue the additional optional life insurance coverage, irrespective of age. However, when these individuals reach age 65 and are retired, the insurance is reduced and then subsequently stopped. There have been cases in which Federal workers have continued working beyond the normal retirement age in an effort to continue this coverage for their dependents with severe disabilities.

Without a provision for a dependent with a disability, upon the retiree's death, the dependent would become a public responsibility, with potential budgetary implications at the national, State, and local levels. This provision would be consistent with the thrust of the 1990 Americans With Disabilities Act [ADA]. The act

encourages persons with disabilities to live in a setting of maximum independence—financially and socially—rather than being relegated to functioning in institutional settings subsidized with public funds.

This bill will help many persons with disabilities continue to have a quality life and will give peace of mind to thousands of Federal retirees, who have dependents with disabilities.

The following are key components of the bill:

The bill amends title 5 to provide that the reduction in additional optional life insurance for Federal retirees shall not apply if the beneficiary is permanently disabled;

The retiree must have designated the person with the disability as the beneficiary prior to retirement;

The payment received can only be used for the care and support of the beneficiary;

The disability of the beneficiary must be one that is expected to last permanently and that would prevent an individual from fully providing for himself/herself;

The retiree is responsible for the full premium;

A payment to the beneficiary will be reduced by the amount of any premiums not paid due to current law;

The Office of Personnel Management will have 1 year from the date of enactment to issue regulations; and

An individual who retired 50 months prior to the enactment of the law can have the additional optional life insurance reinstated at the full percentage.

A TRIBUTE TO MATTHEW J. HAYES

HON. CURT WELDON

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 29, 1995

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to pay tribute to a gentleman who provided great service to his family, his community, and his country. I was greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Matthew J. Hayes, a constituent of my congressional district and someone for whom I had a great deal of admiration.

Matt Hayes began his public-service career with the Delaware County government in 1977 when he became director of budget management. His outstanding abilities were recognized 2 years later when he was appointed executive director of Delaware County, a post he held for 13 years. I worked closely with Matt in my capacity as chairman of the Delaware County Council. No public servant brought more vigor to a position than Matt, nor did anyone more capably protect the interests of taxpayers.

In 1992, Matt became chief executive officer of the Delaware County Solid Waste Authority. Again, he approached his position with commitment and determination. His knowledge and negotiating skills helped save the county millions of dollars.

Matt was a certified public accountant and a graduate of Villanova University, where he

also served as an adjunct professor of accounting for 8 years. Before joining county government, he had 20 years experience in the private sector in accounting and management, including international financing with a major accounting firm.

Matt was also dedicated to serving his community. He served as treasurer of the Haverford Township Republican Party and was a member of the Haverford Township Parks and Recreation Board. He also served on the finance committee of St. Denis Roman Catholic Church, his home parish in Havertown. He was a board member of the Ardmore Manor Civic Association and a member of the Merwood Civic Association. He was a U.S. Army veteran.

Matt was devoted to his family. He cared deeply about his wife, Marie Purcell Hayes; his children, Matthew, Marie, James, William, and Joseph; and his three grandchildren. I offer my condolences to each to them. Matt will be greatly missed by all of us.

HONG REFUGEES OF THAILAND

HON. JACK REED

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 29, 1995

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to submit for the record a letter I have sent to Secretary of State Christopher on behalf of the Hmong refugees in Thailand. Incidents of human rights abuses, forced repatriation, and retaliation upon their return to Laos continue to be reported. The Hmong community in Rhode Island remains very concerned about this situation, and I believe it is time we work to resolve it. I will be certain to submit for the record any response I receive from the State Department on this urgent matter:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, November 28, 1995.
Secretary WARREN CHRISTOPHER,
Secretary of State, Department of State, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: I write to express my concern about the status of Hmong combat veterans and refugees in Thailand.

You may recall that I wrote last year regarding the plight of the Hmong refugees. At that time, I was assured that additional resources had been committed to UNHCR to provide assistance to and monitor the safety of Hmong refugees, and that the State Department was working with the Thai government to resolve the question of repatriation to non-communist third countries. Thus, I have supported efforts to maintain a fair and responsible U.S. refugee policy that would prevent further persecution of Hmong refugees.

However, I am distressed that this situation has not yet been resolved. The Hmong people were our loyal allies and have been a great asset to our nation. Yet, thousands of Hmong remain in Thailand in refugee camps and continue to be persecuted because of their relationship with the U.S. While I recognize the difficulties in administering a refugee program, cases of forced repatriation, disappearances, and human rights abuses continue to be reported.

I would sincerely appreciate an update on the current status of the Hmong refugees.

Specifically, I would like to know: what progress has been made to resettle the remaining Hmong combat veterans and refugees in safe, third countries; what efforts are being made to assist and monitor the safety and welfare of those refugees who have been voluntarily repatriated; have all means of forced repatriation ceased; are there currently immigration slots available for these refugees to come to the United States; is the Thai government cooperating with these efforts; and if not, what action will the State Department take to help the remaining Hmong refugees and ensure that they are not forcibly repatriated?

This issue is of great importance to the Hmong community in Rhode Island. Thank you in advance for your attention to this urgent issue, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

JACK REED,
Member of Congress.

20TH ANNIVERSARY OF NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
k you in advance for your attention to this urgent issue, and I

HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 29, 1995

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to have this opportunity to commend the South Side's Milwaukee Christian Center Neighborhood Improvement Project [NIP] on its 20th anniversary.

The South Side's NIP was founded in 1975 as a collaboration of South Side agencies seeking to provide summer jobs for youth under a community development block grant. The organization was formed to harness the considerable energy of area youth in an endeavor that would teach them valuable skills and contribute to the surrounding community.

In 1994, the South Side NIP employed 44 young adults in housing rehabilitation projects. Participants remove unsightly graffiti, paint, provide carpentry services, and roof homes for low-income homeowners. South Side neighborhoods receive a facelift, while youth gain a work ethic and marketable skills.

Sixty-seven homes benefited from no-cost renovations last year. Meanwhile, the 38 young offenders served their community service sentences as graffiti removal team members, cleaning up at over 2,300 dwellings throughout the year.

Young people learn about the real work world through the NIP. They work on a time-clock and are responsible for their tools. Some programs operate based on piecework, which rewards higher productivity with higher pay. Many summer program participants have moved up through the program to become team supervisors. Mentors are drawn from local community centers to provide technical expertise and role models for the youth.

Over the past two decades, the South Side NIP has provided invaluable services to local residents. It truly represents an exemplary investment of CDBG funds. The program benefits not only participants, but also homeowners and neighborhoods. I am pleased to congratulate the Milwaukee Christian Center Neighborhood Improvement Project on its 20th anniversary and wish it continued success in the future.