

If you glance at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial you will be surprised to see many last names and first names in Spanish that are carved on the wall. You will find Diaz, Rodriguez, Gonzalez, Cruz and many other names. These are the Hispanic soldiers, thousands of them Puerto Ricans, that gave their lives without hesitation in defense of what this Nation stands for.

No one asked if these Puerto Rican soldiers who were drafted had a proficient knowledge of English. They were sent to South Vietnam along with other Americans to fight.

Among the many who fought in Vietnam we know the story of U.S. Army Capt. Euripides Rubio. He was born in Ponce, PR and entered service at Fort Buchanan. While in Vietnam, Capt. Rubio left a safe position to aid the wounded during a massive attack. He had been wounded several times when he noticed a grenade which had fallen dangerously close. As he ran to throw the grenade back to the enemy he was killed.

Another Puerto Rican hero, Hector Santiago-Colon entered service in New York as a specialist fourth class in the U.S. Army. While serving in Vietnam, Santiago alerted his comrades to an approaching attack by the enemy. Suddenly fire broke out and his comrades tried to defend their position. An enemy soldier crawled close to Santiago's foxhole and dropped a grenade. Knowing that there was no time to throw the grenade, Santiago tucked it in close to his stomach and took the full impact of the blast.

These courageous Puerto Rican men fought at the risk of their own lives above and beyond the call of duty in defense of this Nation.

More than 200,000 Puerto Ricans have served in U.S. foreign wars and thousands have died fighting. Many made it back home but have lived their lives scarred from wounds and from the brutal images that are intrinsic to any military aggression.

We gather here today in front of this memorial to honor the men and women who at a given moment in the history of this Nation have worn the uniform of military service, whether in peace time or during war. On a peace keeping mission, or in wars, or in so-called police actions they served with courage, honor, and distinction.

The emotional stress of the military has affected all of our soldiers, and more intensely Puerto Rican soldiers from rural areas. Puerto Rican soldiers had to cope with military training, discrimination in the military, often not understanding the English language, being away from the familiar, and lastly the brutal experience of the battlefield.

In addition, a disproportionate number of Puerto Rican soldiers were exposed to the violence of war and still suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. This long-term mental illness has prevented them from being able to hold jobs, acquire housing, and live normal lives.

Puerto Rican veterans have been advocating their needs in the public arena for more than 20 years, but not much has been accomplished. They need the help of Congress and the White House to improve their lives. On this National Puerto Rican Affirmation Day, they will make their voices heard and we will try to find solutions to their health and socioeconomic problems.

Despite the existence of current veteran programs, many of them have failed to provide

adequate health services and employment opportunities. In addition, lack of information, often unavailable in Spanish, has prevented Puerto Rican veterans from participating in these programs.

Puerto Rican veterans need access to a health care system that is culturally sensitive and appropriate to their needs. They also need job training programs that would successfully prepare them to hold a job in the workplace and to develop their careers.

Many Puerto Rican veterans have expressed their desire to buy homes and to own businesses. We need to expand the availability of low interest loans for small businesses and home ownership to minority veterans. We also need to develop programs that would effectively incorporate health, housing, and employment services to assist homeless veterans.

Puerto Rican veterans are eager to enjoy healthy and productive lives with their loved ones. We owe our veterans the opportunity to participate fully in society and to successfully reestablish their lives. United we can bring about positive change through social and economic justice.

We live in a society that has always honored those who have served this country. It is for that reason that today we will recognize the contributions of Puerto Rican men and women who have served in our Armed Forces. In whatever capacity they served, let us today reaffirm our desire never to forget their contributions to this country's military agenda and the missions that were assigned to them.

Puerto Ricans have contributed to the fabric of this Nation in all areas, from science and the military, to the arts and public policy. I would like to ask you to join me in thanking in particular the veterans that have come from all parts of the country and from Puerto Rico to be here with us, reaffirm our rights as Puerto Ricans and to show their support to this National Puerto Rican Reaffirmation Day.

PROFESSOR DONALD E. PIENKOS
1996 POLISH HERITAGE AWARD
RECIPIENT

HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 24, 1996

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my friend Prof. Donald Pienkos on receiving the Pulaski Council of Milwaukee's 1996 Polish Heritage Award.

I can think of few people who have dedicated so much of their time, talents, and energy to the study and promotion of our Polish-American heritage. Professor Pienkos, through his outstanding work as a scholar, educator, author, and activist has done much to ensure that the life-long efforts of those members of our Polish-American community who have gone before us will be long remembered.

Professor Pienkos is the author of several books including "PNA: Centennial History of the Polish National Alliance," "One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons of America," and "For Your Efforts on Poland's Behalf." These outstanding works provide us with a detailed and lasting account of the Polish-American peoples' ongoing efforts

to improve the quality of life for Poles in the United States and in Poland.

As a professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Donald Pienkos has dedicated his professional career to the study and teaching of Eastern European politics and government. Throughout the whirlwind of change which has taken place in Eastern Europe during recent years, Professor Pienkos has served as an invaluable source of information and insight not only to the students of UWM, but to our entire community.

Donald Pienkos also plays an active and leading role in a number of Polish-American organizations and has helped to shape the course and direction which these organizations have taken. Don has served as a national director of the Polish National Alliance and is also past president of the Wisconsin State Division of the Polish American Congress. Through his involvement in organizations such as these, Professor Pienkos has worked hard to ensure that our Nation's rich Polish-American heritage will remain alive and vibrant for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Don Pienkos on his worthwhile and outstanding work and congratulate him on receiving the 1996 Polish Heritage Award. I wish him continued success for years to come. Sto Lat!

HONORING THE EAST SIDE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 24, 1996

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I am taking this opportunity to applaud the invaluable services provided by the East Side Volunteer Fire Department. These brave, civic-minded people give freely of their time so that we may all feel safer at night.

Few realize the depth of training and hard work that goes into being a volunteer firefighter. To quote one of my local volunteers, "These firemen must have an overwhelming desire to do for others while expecting nothing in return."

Preparation includes twice-monthly training programs in which they have live drills, study the latest videos featuring the latest in firefighting tactics, as well as attend seminars where they can obtain the knowledge they need to save lives. Within a year of becoming a volunteer firefighter, most attend the Tennessee Fire Training School in Murfreesboro where they undergo further, intensified training.

When the residents of my district go to bed at night, they know that should disaster strike and their home catch fire, well-trained and qualified volunteer fire departments are ready and willing to give so graciously and generously of themselves. This peace of mind should not be taken for granted.

By selflessly giving of themselves, they ensure a safer future for us all. We owe these volunteer fire departments a debt of gratitude for their service and sacrifice.

TRIBUTE TO LINDA MARIE JONES

HON. ANDREW JACOBS, JR.

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 24, 1996

Mr. JACOBS. Mr. Speaker, this is the Indianapolis Star obituary of Linda Marie Jones who left this world on the 13th day of April last—at least for her. The world should know why she lead the effort for racial integration of a swimming club in Indianapolis.

Linda Jones was Africa-American. Her son and his friends were thoroughly racially integrated.

Years ago her son's friend who was of European descent took her son as a guest to the swimming club. Her son was refused admittance because he was an American of African descent. So the boys went to the nearby river to swim and her son drowned. "All these things she kept within her heart." And on that thirteenth day of April 1996, in the words of my wife, "Linda Marie Jones died of and with a broken heart." She was our loving neighbor. Our hearts go out to her husband, Don, one of the most remarkably successful businessmen of our era. May God have mercy on those who perpetrated this egregious and un-American wrong.

[The Star, Apr. 16, 1996]

LINDA MARIE JONES HELPED INTEGRATE RIVIERA CLUB, BOOSTED CHESS TEAM

Services for Linda Marie Young Jones, 56, Indianapolis, event coordinator for the Indiana Regional Minority Supplier Development Council [IRMSDC], will be at noon April 17 in Witherspoon Presbyterian Church, of which she was a member, with calling there from 10 a.m.

She died April 13.

Most recently, Mrs. Jones worked with her husband, Donald E. Jones, who survives, as event coordinator for IRMSDC. Previously, she founded and co-owned Systems Consultants, and worked for M. W. Jones and Sons Realty Co.

She headed a successful effort to integrate the Riviera Club in 1980 and was instrumental in organizing a rally on Monument Circle in celebration of apartheid opponent Nelson Mandela's release from a South African prison in 1990.

In 1984, Mrs. Jones received recognition from then-Mayor William H. Hudnut III for her leadership in securing sponsorship for the Masters of Disaster grade school chess team.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Dwight Jones Memorial Fund in care of Tabernacle Presbyterian Church, Tabernacle Recreation Fund.

She was a 1983 graduate of Butler University.

Other survivors: grandmother Marie Suggs. Stuart Mortuary is handling arrangements.

YELLOWSTONE RIVER VALLEY AND SOUTHWEST MONTANA HERITAGE AND RECREATION AREA

HON. PAT WILLIAMS

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 24, 1996

Mr. WILLIAMS. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing two legislative initiatives to designate

locations in Montana as National Heritage areas under the National Heritage Area Partnership Program.

The first bill proposes to establish the Yellowstone River Valley National Heritage Area which will encompass the Yellowstone region from the headwaters of the Yellowstone River in Yellowstone National Park to the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri River in North Dakota. As the last major free-flowing river in the United States, the Yellowstone River Valley is a region steeped in history, rich in cultural diversity and patterned with a western landscape of fertile valleys, high plains and the Rocky Mountains.

The Yellowstone River Valley includes Yellowstone National Park, a United Nations Education and Scientific Organization World Heritage site due to its importance as a resource with global significance—Fort Union Trading Post, Pompeys Pillar the Lewis and Clark Expedition Trail, the Battle of the Little Big Horn, Northern Pacific Railway Company Line, the Lower Yellowstone Irrigation Project, the Huntley Irrigation Project Chief Joseph Trail, the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations and finally the Yellowstone Dam.

The National Heritage Partnership Program will provide a framework which will enable local communities to capitalize on their heritage and expand their economic base. Through collaboration with interpretation, preservation and marketing, communities in the Yellowstone Valley they will have opportunities to form alliances and partnerships among local, State, Federal and private entities. By sharing resources, transcending political boundaries and establishing creative initiatives, citizens in the Yellowstone Valley will have the ability to develop positive social and economic benefits of cultural and recreational tourism.

The second bill proposes to establish the Southwest Montana Heritage and Recreation Area which encompasses the area located along the Continental divide in Southwest Montana and is traversed by Interstates 90 and 15, one of Montana's most important tourism routes. In 1993 this constituted some 3 million vacationers indicating the potential economic impact of tourism of the region. The region is further characterized by a variety of tourism based activities including museums, historic sites, resorts and four season recreation opportunities. Small communities and towns under 5,000 predominantly serve both residents and visitors to this region. The city of Butte is the largest city—35,000—in the corridor.

The concept for the Southwest Montana Heritage and Recreation Area anticipates capital improvements of approximately \$40 million to \$60 million in interpretive and recreation infrastructure and \$20 million to \$30 million in tour routes, byways and trailways. At maturity in 10 to 15 years, the Southwest Montana Heritage and Recreation Area could be generating approximately \$8 to \$13 million in direct program maintenance and operating expenditures annually.

The Southwest Montana Heritage and Recreation Area creates a tourism infrastructure that will foster increased visitation while addressing the objectives, needs and concerns of local communities. Area businesses and residents would be encouraged to provide attractions and services to visitors through technical assistance and incentive programs.

The economic impact on the region could be substantial. When the Southwest Montana

Heritage and Recreation Area reaches maturity in 15 years, an estimated 2.7 million additional travelers will be visiting sites, recreating and using services. Based on visitor expenditure estimates it can be estimated that direct annual visitor expenditure's could total an additional \$170 million at project maturity. Combined with indirect expenditures a total economic impact of \$260 million annually.

INTRODUCTION OF THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SECURITY ACT OF 1996

HON. BRUCE F. VENTO

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 24, 1996

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, workers in all sectors of the economy are feeling the pressure of economic changes and the concerns associated with planning for retirement. I am introducing legislation, The Public Employee Retirement Security Act of 1996, to update the retirement plans for public sector workers, giving them improved options and more security for their pensions.

Private sector 401(k) plans have benefited from improvements and updates over the years. The equivalent public sector plans, called 457 plans, have not kept pace with the necessary changes to such retirement-savings vehicles. My bill improves the public-sector plans and the rules that govern them.

Currently these 457 plans cap annual employee contributions to a set maximum limit of \$7,500. My legislation would index this limit to inflation, as it is for 401(k) plans, increasing the ability of these workers to meet their retirement needs.

The bill also increases the flexibility of these governmental plans by allowing accounts that are inactive for at least 2 years and contain less than \$3,500 to be cashed-out by the employee. Such a distribution would allow the employee with a changed life situation to access the funds, subject to normal taxation, and reduce the employer's costs of maintaining these dormant accounts. As employee could also alter the time when retirement benefits should begin. This provision recognizes that some public-sector employees, life firefighters and police officers, may retire early and move on to different careers. Altering the date when benefit distributions must occur gives these workers flexibility in their retirement.

The safety of governmental plans is also strengthened by this legislation. Currently employee accounts under 457 plans are the property of the employer and therefore subject to claims by creditors. The financial crisis in Orange County, CA highlighted this risk to governmental pensions. My bill would rectify this situation by placing 457 accounts into trusts, like 401(k) plans, maintaining them for the benefit of the employees. The accounts would be shielded from claims by an employer's creditors and others.

The bill improves the operation of government plans by enhancing their ability to maintain tax-exempt status. The rules governing pension plans limit the amounts paid out to prevent taxpayer subsidy of overly generous benefits. While geared toward benefits paid to top corporate executives, these limitations are