

Mr. Speaker, this program has since its inception received broad bipartisan support in both Houses of Congress. It does what we want most Federal programs to do: runs on a shoestring, produces concrete results, reaches and benefits a wide array of individuals, involves only a small amount of Federal financial aid to any one recipient location, and requires no bureaucracy to run it. This program works and it puts people to work. I urge all Members to support this bill and I look forward to its quick passage.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL J. KOVACS

HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 1997

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the work and dedication of Michael J. Kovacs. Mr. Kovacs has worked tirelessly for over 15 years to educate the people in the south suburban communities of Chicago.

Mr. Kovacs has chosen to give back to his community by volunteering his time and valuable skills to the local cable industry. Over the years, in cooperation with Steve Klinherth and Kenny White of Continental Cablevision, Kovacs has reached out to local schools, churches, VFW's, chambers of commerce, and local elected officials with his film-making skills in an effort to keep the community informed on important issues in their area.

Michael Kovacs's commitment to providing service to his community deserves the highest commendation. His impact on Chicago's south suburban community is not only deserving of congressional recognition, but should also serve as a model for others to follow.

At a time when our Nation's leaders are asking the people of this country to make serving their community a core value of citizenship, honoring Michael Kovacs is both timely and appropriate.

I urge this body to identify and recognize others in their communities whose actions have so greatly benefited and enlightened America's communities.

NATIONAL WRITE YOUR CONGRESSMAN

HON. JIM RAMSTAD

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 1997

Mr. RAMSTAD. Mr. Speaker, new technologies like electronic mail and the Internet have helped bring people closer than ever to the events in Congress. But one of the most instrumental groups in keeping people in touch with their representative, National Write Your Congressman, relies on technology that is as old as this country itself—the U.S. Postal Service.

National Write Your Congressman was founded in Dallas, TX, in 1958. For nearly 40 years, this important organization has helped constituents voice their opinions with monthly mailings that present both sides of controversial issues. Constituents are then asked to mark a ballot in favor of or against a legislative proposal, and return the ballot to their

Representative. National Write Your Congressman conducts frequent polls of its membership and informs Representatives of their results. They also keep Representatives' voting records on file, and frequently update their membership on the performance of the men and women who represent them.

I am particularly grateful to LeRoy and Erika Larson of Burnsville, MN, in my congressional district, who visited my office this week.

LeRoy and Erika's tireless efforts on behalf of National Write Your Congressman have enabled my Minnesota constituents to voice their opinion on legislation that directly affects their lives. At the same time, they have been proactive participants in the education of our citizenry, which helps build a more responsible America.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank National Write Your Congressman for their ongoing efforts to inform citizens of our activities in Washington and to inform us of our constituents' concerns. They are truly helping empower the people of this country and returning the government to the people it was created to serve.

MAJORITY OF HOUSE DEMOCRATS URGE INCLUSION OF MILITARY SPENDING IN BUDGET CUTS

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 1997

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, with the budget negotiations going forward, many of us are disturbed by the apparent assumption that military spending should be continued at its current level while significant reductions are imposed on a wide range of important nonmilitary programs. Health care, environmental cleanup, education, job training, community development, transportation, international economic assistance—all of these are put seriously at risk by a decision to exempt military spending from any significant budget discipline.

While Democratic Members are naturally interested in supporting the President at this critical time, significantly more than half of the Democratic Caucus recently agreed to a letter which we sent to the President last Friday voicing our strong objections to important aspects of the budget negotiations as they have been reported.

To date, 111 of the Democratic Members of the House, along with our Independent colleague, have signed on to the letter in which we have told the President that "we strongly believe that a budget compromise must begin seriously the process of moving funds from the Pentagon and related agencies to the civilian side if we are to balance the budget while avoiding devastating cuts over the next 5 years in important nonmilitary programs."

The goal of reducing the deficit to zero by the year 2002 is very widely shared. The debate is not over whether or not to balance the budget, but whether to do so in a socially responsible way, which meets our obligation to deal with important social and economic problems to the extent that we can, or whether to do it in a way that will exacerbate these problems. Members of the House do not casually write to the President to voice strong objections to efforts to resolve our budget difficulty,

and I believe that the fact that so many of us have felt compelled to do so at this time is a point that should be noted here. It is precisely because many of us hope to see a budget compromise reached that we can support that we are making clear what we believe to be the essential elements of such a compromise in this way. Mr. Speaker, I ask that the text of the letter and the list of signers as of noon on Monday be printed here.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 25, 1997.

Hon. WILLIAM J. CLINTON,
President, *The White House*,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: We wish to make clear our strong objections to any budget proposal which would maintain the current high level of military spending while reducing severely in real terms both discretionary spending on all non-military functions, and funding for Medicare and Medicaid. You have correctly noted the importance of adequate funding support for education, the environment and job training. We believe that there are other important priorities that must receive adequate funding support in the years ahead as well. Unfortunately, the action of the Republican majority in adding \$17 billion to the Pentagon's budget over the past two years has already greatly exacerbated the difficulties we face in providing adequate funds for many of these programs, within the context of a balanced budget by the year 2002. And we are concerned that current proposals from the Republican leadership seek to make this bad situation even worse.

Many of us have been active in past years in seeking significantly greater contributions from our wealthy European, Asian and Middle Eastern allies in contributing to common defense concerns. We have also opposed the development or procurement of extremely expensive weapons which had originally been designed for use in the context of the military competition with a heavily armed Soviet Union. And we believe that there has been an unwillingness on the part of the congressional majority to hold the military and intelligence agencies to the same level of scrutiny as is applied to domestic agencies when it comes to insisting on efficiency and accurate accounting.

We therefore strongly urge you to resist efforts to continue to the pattern of a higher than necessary level of military spending at the expense of the non-military functions of the federal government, including those aspects of foreign policy which have also suffered from inadequate funding in past years. It is our responsibility to inform you that we strongly believe that a budget compromise must begin seriously the process of moving funds from the Pentagon and related agencies to the civilian side if we are to balance the budget while avoiding devastating cuts over the next five years in important non-military programs.

We of course share your view that America must remain the strongest nation in the world, and be well able within a significant margin of safety to meet genuine national security needs. But we believe that the current military budget significantly exceeds what is required in this regard, while important health, public safety, environmental, educational and other functions of the federal government will suffer greatly if Republican priorities are followed. And of course the suffering in this case does not fall abstractly on "programs", but rather on the American people who are the intended beneficiaries of this programmatic activity.

The following Members have signed onto the letter to the President.

Gary Ackerman, Tom Barrett, Xavier Becerra, Howard Berman, Rod Blagojevich, Earl Blumenauer, David Bonior, George Brown, Sherrod Brown, Walter Capps, Julia Carson, Donna Christian-Green, William Clay, Eva Clayton, John Conyers, Elijah Cummings, Danny Davis, Jim Davis, Peter DeFazio, Diana DeGette, William Delahunt, Ronald Dellums, Peter Deutsch, Julian Dixon, Lloyd Doggett, Eliot Engel, Anna Eshoo, Lane Evans, Sam Farr, Chakah Fattah, Bob Filner, Floyd Flake, Thomas Foglietta, Harold Ford, Jr., Barney Frank, Elizabeth Furse, Gene Green, Luis Gutierrez, Maurice Hinchey, Darlene Hooley, Jesse Jackson, Jr., Sheila Jackson-Lee, Marcy Kaptur, Joseph P. Kennedy, II, Dale Kildee, Carolyn Kilpatrick, Ron Kind, Dennis Kucinich, John LaFalce, Nick Lampson, Tom Lantos, Sander Levin, John Lewis, William Lipinski, Zoe Lofgren, Nita Lowey, Bill Luther, Carolyn Maloney, Thomas Manton, Edward Markey, Matthew Martinez, Carolyn McCarthy, Karen McCarthy, Jim McDermott, James P. McGovern, Cynthia McKinney, Martin Meehan, Juanita Millender-McDonald, George Miller, David Minge, Patsy Mink, John Joseph Moakley, Jim Moran, Jerrold Nadler, Richard Neal, Eleanor Holmes Norton, James Oberstar, David Obey, John Olver, Major Owens, Frank Pallone, Bill Pascrell, Jr., Ed Pastor, Donald Payne, Nancy Pelosi, Charles Rangel, Lynn Rivers, Steven Rothman, Lucille Roybal-Allard, Bobby L. Rush, Loretta Sanchez, Bernard Sanders, Charles Schumer, Jose Serrano, David Skaggs, Louise Slaughter, Deborah Stabenow, Fortney "Pete" Stark, Louis Stokes, Ted Strickland, Bart Stupak, John Tierney, Esteban Torres, Edolphus Towns, Nydia Velázquez, Bruce Vento, Maxine Waters, Melvin Watt, Henry Waxman, Robert Wexler, Bob Wise, Lynn Woolsey, Albert Wynn, Sidney Yates.

225TH ANNIVERSARY OF ALL SAINTS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH

HON. ROBERT A. BORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 1997

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the 225th anniversary of All Saints' Episcopal Church. All Saints' Church was founded in 1772, in the rural area of Torresdale, now known as Northeast Philadelphia. Dr. William Smith, the church's first rector, cooperated with previously established Swedish missionaries to organize All Saints'.

As we honor the anniversary of All Saints' Church, it also serves as a reminder of the history of our Nation. The congregation of All Saints' has been a part of that great history. This parish has seen and experienced all of the great and troubled moments that have made this Nation what it is today. The members of this church have been participants in the very events that have shaped this country.

This past weekend the city of Philadelphia was the forum for a national summit on volunteerism, and the central role that it plays in the success of our nation. All Saints' is an example of the virtues discussed at this summit, and should be commended for its efforts. The early precedent of cooperation and involve-

ment set in place by its founders, has continued throughout the history of the church. A spirit of warmth and service emanates from this group of parishioners. All Saints' is an example of community goodwill, and has served as a unifying force for members of the district.

Under the direction of Dr. Chinn, the current pastor, the church has developed programs to help those less fortunate. Members of the congregation prepare and deliver meals for the elderly and families who are struggling in their current situations. In times of crisis and need, help is always forthcoming in family oriented programs of service and volunteerism. Through the donation of hymnals and vestments, All Saints' also serves those churches within the religious community who are less fortunate.

All Saints' Episcopal Church should be a reminder to us that history and good will isn't just what we read in textbooks or hear about in other areas. It is evident in our communities and neighborhoods. It is living and breathing right in our midst. All Saints' has a place in the great past of the city of Philadelphia, and it will continue to shape and mold both the neighborhood and the people who reside there.

On their 225th anniversary, I would like to congratulate All Saints' Episcopal Church on a long standing ideal of service and community centered action. I wish them luck in their future endeavors, and thank them for 225 years of unwavering commitment to the people of Philadelphia.

DRIVE TO RATIFY FLAG PROTECTION AMENDMENT CONTINUES

HON. GERALD B.H. SOLOMON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 1997

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, earlier today, I testified before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution in support of House Joint Resolution 54, the flag protection amendment. As of today, this joint resolution has 274 cosponsors, two dozen more than we had in the 104th Congress when we overwhelmingly approved similar proposal by a vote of 312 to 120. It is my fervent hope and expectation that this amendment will come to the House floor for a vote before Flag Day, June 14. I urge any supporters who have not yet cosponsored the joint resolution, to do so now, and I respectfully request that my remarks from the subcommittee hearing be printed here.

Thank you very much Chairman Canady and panel members for inviting me here today to testify on the Flag Protection Amendment.

I also want to commend Mr. Canady and the over 270 other cosponsors of this joint resolution. And let me add this: with such good people on my side, I cannot wait to represent this amendment, first on the House floor, and then to the states for ratification.

But first, with your indulgence Mr. Chairman, I would like to tell you why I think this amendment is so important.

It is important for many reasons. First of all, the overwhelming majority of Americans support this amendment.

In Congress, it has won the support of members from both sides of the aisle, in both chambers. The presence of my good friend Bill Lipinski next to me today is proof of that.

And finally, and this may be even more important, I am joined by constitutional scholars in saying this amendment actually strengthens our First Amendment freedoms.

I emphasize that, Mr. Chairman because some Americans have raised questions about our fundamental freedoms of speech and expression. I have the same concerns they do, and they deserve some straight answers.

Now, I am not going to spend too much time paying tribute to the flag. I am sure it's safe to say that respect for the flag is something everyone in this room shares.

Americans have always felt that way about their flag, and that's why there is so much precedent for what we're doing here today.

Some critics might say that the Supreme Court has spoken on this matter, and that's that! Well, not quite.

In the history of the Supreme Court, few members guarded the First Amendment so jealously as Justice Hugo Black and Chief Justice Earl Warren. Both stated forcefully that there is no First Amendment problem with banning flag desecration.

And they also believed that nothing in the Constitution prevented individual states from enacting laws to prohibit the physical desecration of the American flag!

What we seek today is not an amendment to ban flag desecration but an amendment to allow Congress to make that decision.

Some of you may point out that this amendment differs from the one I offered in the last Congress. You are right. In the 104th Congress, the House overwhelmingly voted 312 to 120 to allow Congress and the States to prohibit the physical desecration of the American flag.

Unfortunately, that amendment fell three votes short in the Senate. While I support enabling both Congress and the States to prohibit flag desecration, a few members expressed their concern that giving the States this power could lead to 50 very diverse laws on the topic. While I do not have those concerns myself, I worked with this amendment's cosponsors and the members of the Citizens Flag Alliance to rewrite the Amendment to address those concerns and only empower Congress to prohibit flag desecration.

It is entirely appropriate to draft the amendment in this way. It is after all, the American flag—our nation's flag—that we are discussing. The federal government should be the one to make laws protecting it. I know this will relieve many of those who raised this concern in the past.

And physical desecration does not only include flag burning, it also includes the outrageous acts of people defecating on the flag—that's right, actually treating our flag like it was nothing more than toilet paper. You will hear a witness testify more about that later.

One vote—I repeat, one vote—in a 5 to 4 decision turned the Court's back on the tradition of Justice Black and Chief Justice Warren, and all of a sudden flag-burning became "expression" protected by the First Amendment. But the very analysis of that slim majority did not support that conclusion.

The Court said that the government cannot prohibit the expression of any idea just because society finds that idea offensive or disagreeable.

But the Texas state law overturned in that 1989 decision did not suppress any idea at all.

Look at it this way. What idea does burning a flag communicate? What idea does defecating on the flag communicate? What thought does it express? Obviously, none!

Under that Texas statute, and others like it, no one was required to worship the flag or was prevented from speaking about the flag, or even prevented from insulting the flag verbally. It only said they could not physically desecrate the flag.