

TRIBUTE TO MANA, A NATIONAL LATINA ORGANIZATION

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 21, 1999

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, it is a great honor to stand before you today to pay tribute to the members of MANA, a national Latina organization whose members are in our Nation's Capital to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the founding of this organization.

MANA, a national Latina organization, was founded in 1977 as a Mexican American Women's National Association. Its mission is to strengthen Latina community leaders; cultivate vital and prosperous Latino communities and advance public policy for an equal and just society. MANA is a membership-based organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. and has chapters across the country.

For over 25 years, MANA has been the voice for Latinas in the Nation's Capital and across the country—from the statehouse to the White House. They have shared the national and international concerns of Hispanics with Presidents of the United States and Mexico and consulted with cabinet-level leaders on a range of domestic issues. Through its chapters, MANA has duplicated a strong advocacy role at the community level.

Throughout its rich history, MANA has established a number of programs which have been replicated at the local level through their chapters. From the outset, MANA viewed leadership development as the key to achieve a dream of "full empowerment of Latinas." To that end, the organization holds annual training conferences on public policy issues and the legislative process. MANA also provides scholarships specifically targeting Latinas. Concerned with the high dropout rate, MANA developed its youth stay-in-school program, Las herMANITAS. This program has been duplicated at the chapter level. Through role models, success stories, personal triumphs, encouragement and leadership training, MANA has developed, inspired, motivated and mobilized self-reliant, determined and courageous women to become community leaders.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not mention the women who led the organization the last 25 years. Through their efforts they demonstrated how a totally volunteer organization of more than 1,000 women across the country can make a difference in creating a better future for Hispanic women, their families and their communities. Past National Presidents include: Blandina (Bambi) Cárdenas, Founder, 1974; Bettie Baca, Organizing Chair 1974–75; Evangeline (Vangie) Elizondo, President 1975–76; Gloria López Hernández, President 1976–77; Elisa Sánchez, President 1977–79 and 1995–1999; Wilma Espinoza, President 1979–81; Raydean Acavedo, President 1981–83; Veronica (Ronni) Collazo, President 1983–85; Gloria Barajas, President 1985–86; María Rita Jaramillo, President 1986–88; Irma Maldonado, President 1988–90; Judy Canales, President 1990–92 and Elvira Valenzuela Crocker, President 1992–94.

On behalf of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, we applaud you for your contributions, and we thank you for your leadership on behalf of Latinas and Latinos throughout the country. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the years to come.

JACOB'S HOPE

HON. JIM RAMSTAD

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 21, 1999

Mr. RAMSTAD. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks the tenth anniversary of a tragic event in my home state of Minnesota. On October 22, 1989, an eleven-year-old boy named Jacob Wetterling was stolen from his family in the small community of St. Joseph, Minnesota. Since then, no one has heard from Jacob or the masked gunman who stole him that day.

This tragedy shook the community, our state and the nation. If a child could be taken from a closely-knit, small community like St. Joseph, Minnesota, what child in America was truly safe?

Jacob's parents, Jerry and Patty Wetterling, have made it their crusade to make America a safer place for our children. They turned an unthinkable horror in their own lives into an opportunity to bring hope to other families. Over the last 10 years, they have kept the hope of Jacob's return alive, and, at the same time, created the Jacob Wetterling Foundation to promote child safety.

Today, the Jacob Wetterling Foundation is an invaluable, nationally recognized resource for families with missing children and the law enforcement officials searching for them. The Foundation has helped 1,500 families with missing or exploited children and processed 1,000 leads on missing children.

Patty Wetterling has been a tireless crusader, traveling around the country to educate children and families about preventing child abduction and abuse.

The Jacob Wetterling Foundation has reached 160,000 people at 500 events and has distributed more than 1.2 million safety brochures across the nation.

The Jacob Wetterling Foundation has been instrumental in shaping our nation's laws to protect children. Working with Patty Wetterling, I introduced legislation to protect communities from the criminals who prey on children. This landmark legislation—the Jacob Wetterling Act—became the law of the land in 1994. Because of it, released criminals who are convicted of crimes against children must register with law enforcement, and communities are notified when dangerous offenders move into the neighborhood.

Several events are taking place in Minnesota and across the country this weekend to mark the tragic anniversary of Jacob's abduction and make America aware of the need for child protection. At 6:00 p.m. tomorrow in St. Joseph, Minnesota, there will be a balloon launch from Kennedy Elementary School. Also tomorrow on television, "Dateline NBC" will carry a report on the Wetterling case.

On Saturday, a safety fair for children and parents will be held at the Rainbow Foods store in St. Cloud, Minnesota. There will also be a local broadcast on KARE-TV at 10:00 a.m. with a behind-the-scenes look at a public service announcement by Jacob's friends and classmates.

On Sunday, a "Hope Service" will be held at St. Joseph's Catholic Church. In addition, the November issue of "Reader's Digest" currently on newsstands carries a cover story about Jacob.

Mr. Speaker, there are few people who have touched my own life like Jacob

Wetterling, a boy I have never met. Because of Jacob, America's children are better protected from those who would steal their childhood. Because of Jacob, more and more children will have the opportunity to grow up safe and secure.

I ask my colleagues and fellow Americans to remember Jacob and his wonderful family. We owe Patty and Jerry Wetterling and the Jacob Wetterling Foundation a great debt of gratitude for their ten years of work protecting America's most precious gift—our children.

PRAY FOR THE CHILDREN WEEKEND

HON. JUDY BIGGERT

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 21, 1999

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize an effort sponsored by the Illinois Drug Education Alliance and others to raise awareness of and unite people against the dangers of illegal drug use. This effort, known as *Pray for the Children*, is a grassroots movement to keep children drug-free and safe through faith and community involvement.

The second annual "Pray for the Children Weekend" is this weekend, October 22, 23, and 24. This is a time for people all across the world to take a moment to reflect and pray for children to avoid the pitfalls of illegal drug use. It is also a time for families, religious institutions and political leaders to come together to keep children drug free and safe.

We are all aware of the devastating impact illicit drug use has on our society, particularly on young people. Illicit drug use is something we all understand must be addressed and overcome. While saying a prayer is not the sole answer to the drug problem, it is part of a larger solution that demands community involvement and responsibility for one's own actions.

I encourage those listening to participate in this effort and urge my colleagues to wear the red "Pray for the Children" ribbons that have been sent to their offices. The Ribbons and this campaign symbolize what members of this body and those around the world should be promoting—a zero tolerance for illegal drug use and a commitment to a drug-free lifestyle.

IN HONOR OF THE STATEWIDE HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF NEW JERSEY ON ITS "DECADE OF SUCCESS"

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 21, 1999

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey on a "Decade of Success" in the State of New Jersey on this occasion, its 9th Annual Convention and Expo.

Starting out with just a handful of volunteers in 1989, the Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey has become the flagship organization for New Jersey's small business community. Today, the SHCC is an organization committed to serving the needs

of the Hispanic business community, while working closely with the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to provide leadership and to promote the continued growth and development of New Jersey's economy.

Championing the needs of Hispanic businesses in the State of New Jersey, the SHCC is a voluntary network of individuals, businesses, Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, and regional professional associations. The network is responsible for expanding business opportunities, forging a mutually beneficial relationship between the public and private sectors, advocating businesses in the political arena, and promoting trade between New Jersey businesses and their national and international counterparts.

The SHCC encourages growth through technical assistance and regional conferences for area businesses, professional associations, and entrepreneurs. Also, the SHCC provides strong leadership for New Jersey in the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, as well as in programs such as Education NOW for future business leaders.

Nationwide, Hispanic businesses are thriving. With 30,000 Hispanic-owned businesses supporting 128,000 jobs and generating \$7.5 billion in sales nationwide, the Hispanic market is the fastest growing sector in the United States. In the State of New Jersey alone, this booming market has experienced an 87% increase in less than ten years. The efforts of groups such as the SHCC have been instrumental in fostering this growth.

For its commitment to the survival and prosperity of Hispanic-owned businesses, as well as its unwavering leadership, I ask my colleagues to join me in commanding the Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey.

MONTGOMERY GI BILL NEEDS A BOOST

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 21, 1999

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I want to submit an article by my colleague, the distinguished Ranking Member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Mr. Lane Evans. This article, about needed changes in the Montgomery GI Bill, appeared in the November 1999 issue of the Association of the United States Army's AUSA News.

MONTGOMERY GI BILL NEEDS A BOOST

We are enjoying a balanced budget for the first time in a generation. Now is the pru-

dent time to make badly-needed changes in the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB).

Army and other service recruiters and the commanders of the Armed Services' Recruiting Commands see the MGIB as the most important recruiting incentive for the Armed Services. Yet congressional leaders have refused to fund an upgrade, despite a recruiting crisis today that will be tomorrow's manpower crisis.

The House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Benefits held hearings this year on the Montgomery GI Bill Improvements Act of 1999, H.R. 1071, which I introduced, and the Servicemembers Educational Opportunity Act of 1999, H.R. 1182, introduced by Chairman BOB STUMP. Both bills would appreciably increase benefits provided by the Montgomery GI Bill. The testimony we received during those hearings was far-reaching, and it confirmed two things:

1. GI Bill enhancements are sorely needed, and

2. My H.R. 1071 is a significantly stronger bill.

Commanders and recruiters from all of the Armed Services told the Benefits Subcommittee that they face brutal recruiting challenges this year which will continue into the future.

Vice Adm. Patricia A. Tracey, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy, said that it is a buyer's market out there. What most young Americans are not buying is military service.

As a result, the military has become increasingly unable to compete with colleges for the caliber of high school graduates it needs to operate today's complex weapon systems and equipment.

The Army missed its recruitment goal of 48,700 during the first half of 1999 by more than 7,300. Its "write-rate" is the worst in the history of the all-volunteer force, and the annual goal will be missed by ten times last year's figure.

Admiral Tracey told us that "money for college" is consistently the primary reason young men and women give for enlisting. All the recruiters backed her up.

To my mind the recruiting problems we see now reflect the diminished buying power of the Montgomery GI Bill. College costs have quadrupled in the last 20 years. The basic GI Bill benefit, however, has increased only 76 percent since the program was enacted.

No wonder America's young people aren't buying military service. The 21st century job market will demand a college degree—but they have a great many opportunities to pay for a college education without facing the rigors, the risks and the sacrifices of serving their country in the Armed Forces. Most of us who are veterans today grew up looking for ways to serve our country—and wearing the uniform was a good career move, too—whether for a few years before going on to a civilian job, or as a life's work. That ethic is dying, and Congress is doing nothing to reinforce it.

The GI Bill today simply does not provide enough education assistance to attract the numbers of high quality high school graduates the Army and the other services need. Today, potential recruits see the Montgomery GI Bill as an inadequate educational benefits package compared to the commitment required by the Armed Services.

As a result, the military has become increasingly unable to compete with colleges. The Armed Forces are accepting lower-ability recruits in an effort to meet recruiting goals.

Recently Patrick T. Henry, Army Assistant Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs said America has to understand that the Army is not an employer of last resort. I agree, but if we experience continuing recruiting shortfalls, our military may soon become just that.

The Armed Forces must have high quality recruits, defined as those who have a high school diploma and who have at least average scores on tests measuring math and verbal skills.

The Department of Defense says about 80 percent of high quality recruits will complete their first 3 years of active duty, while only 50 percent of recruits with only a GED will finish basic training successfully and complete their enlistment. The General Accounting Office notes that it costs at least \$35,000 to replace every recruit who leaves the service prematurely.

We must restore MGIB's effectiveness in recruiting the number of high quality young men and women the Armed Forces need and providing a competitive readjustment educational benefit for veterans.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated the 10-year cost of enhancing the Montgomery GI Bill (H.R. 1071) to be \$5 billion over 10 years. This \$5 billion 10-year cost to recruit the high quality young men and women required to maintain our national defense and provide these veterans the opportunity to obtain the best education for which they can qualify after their military service is one-half of 1 percent (.005) of the 10-year nearly \$800 billion tax cut congressional leaders are trying to enact.

A single tax break—such as the five-year extension of a temporary tax deferral on income life insurance companies, banks and securities firms earn abroad—will cost the government that much in lost revenues, according to congressional calculations.

Shame on Congress and its Republican leaders if, in their lock-step march to give tax relief to those who need it least, they pass national security by.

Shame on Congress and its leaders, too, if they fail to find the relatively smaller amount we need to attract the new soldiers—and sailors, airmen and marines—this country needs to remain strong and free.