

HONORING BARBARA WHEELER FOR HER SERVICE TO PUBLIC EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN DOWNSERS GROVE, ILLINOIS

**HON. JUDY BIGGERT**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 2, 1999*

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Barbara Wheeler for her invaluable contributions to the children of DuPage County and the State of Illinois over the past 25 years.

Since 1974, Ms. Wheeler has been a dedicated member of the Community High School District Board of Education, DuPage County. She served in leadership roles as president of the school board for 15 years and vice president for 5 years. Throughout her career, she has made it a priority to ensure that the school board sets attainable goals to raise student achievement and to build a consensus among business, educators, and the community at large.

Ms. Wheeler is an active board member of the National School Boards Association (NSBA), serving as chair of the NSBA Central Region, a member of the Policies and Resolutions Committee, Secretary-Treasurer and President Elect. She served as President of the NSBA in 1998, when she championed a nationwide campaign to make our schools safer.

Besides her extensive work in the educational field, Ms. Wheeler is an energetic and committed community leader. She is a volunteer for the Illinois Department on Aging, George Williams College, the Downers Grove Chamber of Commerce, and the Downers Grove YMCA.

An Illinois native, Ms. Wheeler attended St. Dominic College, Northern Illinois University and the DePaul University College of Law. She is an active member of the Chicago and Illinois State Bar Associations and the American Bar Association. She has served as Assistant State's Attorney, Cook County, Illinois, and is in private law practice with the firm Wheeler, Wheeler and Wheeler in Westmont, Illinois.

I have had the privilege to know Barbara Wheeler for many years, and greatly respect her for the unwavering commitment she has made to excellence in education. While I can confidently say that the citizens of DuPage County wish her much success in her future endeavors, we must recognize that her wisdom and years of experience will be sorely missed by the school board, as well as by parents and students. DuPage County, the State of Illinois, and our nation are better places because Ms. Barbara Wheeler dedicated a portion of her life to the education of our children.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3064, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

SPEECH OF

**HON. LANE EVANS**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 28, 1999*

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the DC/Labor-HHS Appropriations

conference report. There are many reasons to oppose this measure. Among the worst of the provisions contained in this conference report is the irresponsible across-the-board 1-percent cut in discretionary spending fashioned by the House Republican leadership.

It is the worst kind of cynicism to claim that a 1-percent across-the-board cut will correct waste and fraud in government programs. I'm strongly opposed to cutting the funding for veterans' medical care just approved by Congress. The majority whip has issued a press release that claims the cut in Veterans' medical care funding he is recommending would not affect health care for America's veterans. Veterans know better. You can't cut health care funding without cutting health care.

Congressman DELAY sent a press release to the leadership of major veterans service organizations defending the 1.4-percent cut in appropriations he originally supported, which affected veterans, among other discretionary programs. Let me state that three years of straight-line funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has left the agency struggling to meet the increasing costs of medical care for the growing number of enrolled veterans it treats.

Now the Republican leadership claims a \$190 million cut in veterans' medical care funding would do no harm. They maintain these funds can be squeezed out of the budget and be found in "mismanagement and waste." What the Republican leadership fails to acknowledge is the tremendous changes VA has already made to be more efficient. In the last few years, VA has closed thousands of beds, eliminated thousands of staff positions, and strengthened many of their auditing systems.

House Democrats have strongly supported proposals all year that would have added sums ranging from \$2 to \$3 billion to the President's initial proposal for veterans' medical care. Indeed we have all worked hard to improve funding for veterans. Veterans service organizations have called on Congress to appropriate up to \$3 billion more than the administration's original budget proposal for veterans' health care. Now many veterans services organizations have vehemently denounced the Republican leadership's proposed across-the-board cut. I quote from a letter signed by the executive directors of AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. regarding these cuts: "It seems disingenuous at best for Congress to recognize a problem in funding for veterans health care, provide the dollars with one hand to help solve that problem, and then take dollars away with the other. No one is fooled by this budget sleight-of-hand."

Mr. Speaker, no one is going to be fooled by this belated and disingenuous concern about government inefficiency. I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on this abrogation of responsibility. Vote "no" on this conference report.

It is already evident VA will struggle, even to deal with the unprecedented increase Congress has enacted and the President has signed into law. How will this affect the VA health care system? In many parts of the country, veterans must wait up to six months just to see a primary care doctor. VA has also unraveled mental health and long-term care programs which were once hallmarks of the

VA system. There are now even complaints that VA's highly-regarded special emphasis programs for which there is supposedly congressional protection—such as spinal cord injury and blind rehabilitation—are under attack.

VA has done much to streamline its services in recent years. Over five years, VA has reduced its workforce by almost 10 percent, closed hundreds of beds throughout the system, reduced its inpatient census by almost 30 percent and eliminated 37 percent of its inpatient treatments per year. It has integrated or consolidated 50 medical centers. In testimony before the Veterans' Affairs Committee this April, four Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) directors, commenting on the proposed future efficiency-derived savings, concurred that "all the low-hanging fruit has been picked." Savings available to the system in the future, the directors said, will be harder fought and more elusive.

The Republican leadership has contended that VA could absorb further cuts "without having any effect on health care to veterans," citing figures from studies that were challenged earlier this year. For example, the majority whip's release contended VA could save a million dollars a day by eliminating some of its overhead in capital assets. But whether savings of this magnitude could be realized in the immediate future with significantly uprooting current VA programs is highly questionable. Even without the Republican budget cuts, "there isn't enough money in the budget now to tear down or renovate underutilized buildings, let alone to replace them with new, modern, smaller clinics. Any savings here will require investment, not magic, and will not come quickly."

Likewise, DELAY's release pointed to a report suggesting \$17 million is lost each year in fraudulent or improper workers compensation claims. Actually, testimony at the March 24 Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations hearing demonstrated that VA's workers compensation costs are not unusual, and that the answer is in heading off injuries and helping employees with rehabilitation. In fact, VA has been cutting these costs since 1994, and is completing automation of its claims system for better management, but savings are already part of the FY 2000 budget.

The DeLay release also noted his plan would not affect benefits checks. Of course, it wouldn't. That, at least, is still out of Mr. DELAY's reach. It's troubling that he would even mention compensation for service-connected disabilities and his restraint with regard to compensation for service-connected disabilities.

ON WALTER PAYTON'S PASSING

**HON. BOBBY L. RUSH**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 2, 1999*

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join in remembering an extraordinary athlete and person, Mr. Walter Payton.

Walter Payton was a hero on and off the football field. Throughout his life, he epitomized courage, determination and dignity. Self-motivated by a standard of excellence, he used his intelligence and God-given ability to excel in his professional and personal life. As

you know, this standard of excellence is detailed in the numerous stats, and records he accumulated throughout his football career.

In thirteen years of playing professional football, Walter set 28 Bears records and 7 NFL records. The All time NFL leader in total rushing yards (16,726) and combined net yardage (21,803), Payton was truly one of the greatest running backs who ever played the game. He rushed for 1,000 yards in 10 of his seasons, and set the longstanding record for most rushing yards gained in a single game. I still recall Walter's historic performance against the Minnesota Vikings, where he rushed for 275 yards, and carried the ball 40 times. Furthermore, I am sure that if a record existed for endurance, Walter would have set that as well. Payton only missed one game in his entire career, which spanned 13 seasons and 190 games.

I recall many moments watching Walter and being in awe of his numerous athletic feats. His sheer will, determination and courage will forever be a measure for athletic and personal excellence. Throughout his thirteen stellar years with the Chicago Bears, I cannot recall a single time when Walter chose to run the ball into the sidelines, rather than run straight into an opposing defender or group of defenders. He displayed courage when confronted with any obstacle. Even while facing the toughest obstacle in his life, Walter bravely announced to the world his battle with the liver disorder and cancer, that would claim his life.

On occasions that Walter visited me in my office, his humility and down to earth approach always impressed me. It was refreshing. It was those qualities that became even more evident during these last few months.

"Sweetness," graceful, courageous, electrifying and charming are just a few of the characteristics that Walter embodied throughout his life. I am deeply saddened by Walter Payton's passing. My prayers are with his loving wife and children. In closing, I will forever treasure the many memories Walter Payton has left behind, and I hope his family and his many friends rest assured knowing that he has found comfort in God's hands.

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INTRODUCTION OF THE CARTER G. WOODSON HOME NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE STUDY ACT OF 1999

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**HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON**

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 2, 1999*

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site Study Act of 1999. The legislation would honor the great American historian, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, by authorizing the Department of the Interior to study the feasibility and suitability of designating his home at 1538 Ninth Street, NW., Washington, DC, as a national historic site within the National Park Service.

Carter G. Woodson was born on December 19, 1875, in New Canton, VA. Public education was not available to blacks in New Canton, and the young Woodson did not begin his formal education until 1895, after he had relocated to Huntington, West Virginia. Dr. Woodson obtained his high school diploma in 1895 and then entered Berea College in Ken-

tucky, where he received his B.L. degree in 1897. Woodson continued his education at the University of Chicago, where he earned his A.B. and M.A. degrees. In 1912, Woodson earned a Ph.D. degree from Harvard University, following W.E.B. Du Bois as the second black American to receive a doctorate from that institution. During the period between entering Berea College and his Harvard graduation in 1912, Woodson also held several teaching positions in the United States and abroad.

Woodson took a special interest in the widespread ignorance and scanty information concerning African American life and history during his extensive studies. He saw the great need to educate the American public about the contributions of black Americans in the formation of the nation's history and culture, and he especially perceived that a concerted effort was needed to counter the extensive influence of Jim Crow and the pervasively negative portrayals of African Americans prevalent at the time. To correct this situation, on September 9, 1915, Dr. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), since renamed the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History. Through ASNLH, Dr. Woodson would dedicate his life to educating the American public about the contributions of black Americans in the formation of the nation's history and culture.

Among its enduring accomplishments, ASNLH instituted Negro History Week in 1926 to enlighten all levels of the general populace regarding the contributions of black Americans to society. Celebrated annually during the second week of February, this weeklong observance gradually gained national support and participation of schools, colleges, and other organizations across the country. Eventually, Negro History Week evolved into Black History Month and is widely celebrated and used to educate Americans about African American life, history, and achievement.

Under Dr. Woodson's stewardship, ASNLH in 1920 also founded the Associated Publishers, Inc. to handle the publication of research on African American history. Dr. Woodson published his seminal work *The Negro in Our History* (1922) and many others under Associated Publishers, and the publishing company provided an outlet for scholarly works by numerous other black scholars. ASNLH also circulated two periodicals: the *Negro History Bulletin*, designed for mass consumption, and the *Journal of Negro History*, which was primarily directed to the academic community.

Dr. Woodson directed ASNLH's operations out of his home at 1538 Ninth Street, NW., Washington, DC. From there, he trained researchers and staff and managed the organization's budget and fundraising efforts, while at the same time pursuing his own study of African American history. This Victorian style house, built in 1890, is already listed as a National Historic Landmark. I am now introducing a bill which I hope will lead to the Woodson home achieving national historic site designation so that the resources of the National Park Service will be available to preserve and maintain this national treasure.

FEMA AND CIVIL DEFENSE MONUMENT ACT

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SPEECH OF

**HON. SILVESTRE REYES**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, November 1, 1999*

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this bill authorizing the construction of a monument honoring those hard-working individuals who have served the nation's civil defense and emergency management programs.

I personally understand their sacrifice and the sacrifice of the thousands of similar individuals who rise to the occasion when called upon by disaster. In my family, there are 16 firefighters. My cousins, uncles, and in-laws who have dedicated their lives to responding to emergencies have set a standard not met by many today.

FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has played a key role in assisting Americans in their time of need. Many of us can hardly imagine the emotional and physical devastation a natural disaster reaps upon a community. When we see a news story on television or in the paper, we might pause and feel sorry for the unknown victims who have had their lives ripped apart. But then we move on with our daily lives, never giving a second thought to what these poor individuals and families must go through after we have moved on. There are notable exceptions, of course: the most recent and continuing efforts to help North Carolina flood victims; the outpouring of assistance for the victims of the F-5 tornado that ripped through a small town in central Texas called Jarrell in 1997.

We have memorials that honor a host of wars and conflicts and those men and women who sacrificed their lives for these world-changing events. But there are other individuals, our civil defense and emergency personnel, who make an equally large contribution. These honorable citizens deserve to be recognized, too, for the day-to-day "battles" for which they risk their lives.

H.R. 348 proposes such a monument to be situated upon land owned by FEMA. I think it is appropriate and timely that we authorize this monument as we head into the 21st century. I therefore urge all my colleagues to support this bill.

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HONORING DR. GEORGE RIEVESCHL, JR. AS THE CINCINNATI ART MUSEUM INAUGURATES THE GEORGE RIEVESCHL MEDAL FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

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**HON. ROB PORTMAN**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 2, 1999*

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to my friend and distinguished constituent, Dr. George Rieveschl, Jr., as he receives the first George Rieveschl Medal for Distinguished Service from the Cincinnati Art Museum. This important new award will recognize individuals who demonstrate unselfish