

OPEN LETTER IN HONOR OF OUR
NATION'S VETERANS**HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, on Veterans Day, America honors those men and women who have served to keep this nation free and bring the world peace. Not only have these generations of veterans waged war and destroyed totalitarian threats, but they have engaged in the peacekeeping missions that strengthen democracy worldwide.

As I pay tribute to these worthy citizens tomorrow, Veterans Day, I am deeply troubled by the irresponsible across-the-board 1 percent cut in discretionary spending recently proposed by the House Republican leadership. A 1 percent cut from the total FY2000 Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) appropriation would reduce available funding for veterans programs, including veterans health care services. The adverse impact this reduction would have on the health and lives of our nation's veterans is significant.

For the past three years, the VA has endured straight-line funding which was left the agency struggling to meet the increasing costs of medical care for the growing number of enrolled veterans it treats. As such, veterans and veterans service organizations called on Congress to appropriate up to \$3 billion more in health care funding than the Administration's original budget and have denounced these Republican cuts. I, along with my Democratic Colleagues, have strongly supported proposals throughout the year that would have actually added from \$2 to \$3 billion to the President's initial proposal for veterans' medical care. On October 20, the President signed into law a \$1.7 billion increase.

Now, the Republican leadership claims that their 1 percent reduction in funding would have no effect on health care to veterans because the VA could save millions by eliminating overhead in capital assets and other "government waste." What the Republican leadership fails to acknowledge are the tremendous changes the VA has already made, such as closing thousands of beds, eliminating thousands of staff positions, and strengthening auditing systems. Moreover, whether savings of this magnitude could be realized in the immediate future without significantly uprooting current VA programs is highly questionable. Even without cuts, currently approved funding is less than required to fulfill our nation's duty to adequately care for veterans.

I believe that providing a \$1.7 billion increase for veterans health care and then turning around a few weeks later and taking dollars away is Republican budget gimmickry. The bottom line is clear. Our nation's veterans have sacrificed life and limb in protection of our constitutional rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." I submit to my Republican colleagues in Congress that, in turn, our veterans deserve our commitment to fund veterans programs and services to ensure that they are themselves able to enjoy these same rights.

THE ATLANTIC HIGHLY MIGRA-
TORY SPECIES CONSERVATION
ACT**HON. JIM SAXTON**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Conservation Act. I believe this bill represents a good first step to "Right-Size" the U.S. Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico pelagic longline fleet. Senator BREAUX is expected to also introduce a similar measure in the Senate today or later this week.

Specifically, my bill would: (1) Establish three time-area closures for highly migratory species—one permanent area in the south Atlantic and two time-area closures in the Gulf of Mexico; (2) establish and authorize funding for two buyout programs for approximately 75 eligible vessels; (3) Establish a highly migratory species bycatch reduction research program within the Southeast Fisheries Service Center of the National Marine Fisheries Service to identify and test fishing gear configurations and uses to determine the most effective way to reduce billfish bycatch mortality in pelagic fisheries; and (4) attempt to address fishery related concerns in the area known as the mid Atlantic bight.

The proposed closures represent historic "Hot spots" for bycatch of undersized swordfish and billfish by catch based on available science from the National Marine Fisheries Service. These closed areas would help to rebuild and protect swordfish populations as well as other highly migratory species and prohibit pelagic longline fishing during these closed periods.

The bill includes a compensation package that authorizes specific congressionally appropriated funds that will be combined with a direct loan to be repaid by both commercial and recreational fishermen.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a long and difficult road to get this bill ready for introduction.

What started as an introductory meeting just before the August recess with representatives of the pelagic longline industry and several recreational fishing organizations gradually turned into hundreds of telephone calls the next several months. Many conversations with recreational and commercial fisherman and their organizational representatives from all over the country took place which lead to concepts—then proposed legislative language—and finally a bill for introduction today.

I would like to thank members of the Blue Water Fishermen's Association located in my district for their leadership on this initiative, the Billfish Foundation, the Coastal Conservation Association, the American Sportsfishing Association and many other recreational fishermen in my district, in the State of New Jersey and throughout the country who have worked with me to develop this bill.

While not all of these groups are entirely happy with this bill, we hope we can continue to dialog and continue to work together. I would also like to thank the National Marine Fisheries Service for starting this process by establishing a limited entry program for the pelagic longline fishery in the highly migratory species fishery management plan.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that this bill is not perfect. I realize that there is much that remains

unresolved, particularly in the waters of the mid Atlantic. I look forward to productive and spirited hearings over the coming months that will take place before the subcommittee in Washington, New Jersey, and perhaps Florida as well.

I believe it is very important that all interested fishermen and their supportive organizations realize this is the beginning of a process, and that much lies ahead.

In the end, I am confident that the final bill will include conservation measures designed to protect these important and impressive migratory marine species, will compensate the fishermen who decide to leave the fishery, will help to maintain a viable U.S. pelagic longline fishery for the future, and will send a strong message to our fellow fishing nations that greater conservation measures need to be enacted to protect and rebuild swordfish populations and reduce unnecessary billfish bycatch.

H.R. , ATLANTIC HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES
CONSERVATION ACT OF 1999

CONSERVATION BENEFITS

(1) Highly Migratory Species Conservation Zones: The Act creates one permanent closure and two time-area closures:

Pelagic Longline fishing prohibited within zones during closed time period/season.

The three zones represent "hot spots" for bycatch of undersized swordfish & billfish based on available science from the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Atlantic swordfish conservation zone

Extends from the North Carolina/South Carolina border south through to Key West, Florida, to reduce high mortality rates of juvenile swordfish and high rates of billfish bycatch.

Covers 80,000 square nautical miles.

Closed indefinitely year-around to pelagic longline vessels but not recreation or charter vessels.

Gulf of Mexico swordfish conservation zone

Extends from North Eastern Gulf of Mexico/DeSoto Canyon region (Mobile, AL to Panama City, FL), to help build swordfish stocks.

Covers 5,400 square nautical miles.

Time-area closure from January 1 through Memorial Day each year indefinitely to pelagic longline vessels but not recreation or charter vessels.

Gulf of Mexico billfish conservation zone

Extends from the Gulf of Mexico from the U.S./Mexico border to Cape San Blas, Florida, out to the 500 fathom line, to reduce billfish bycatch.

Covers 82,000 square nautical miles.

Time-area closure from Memorial Day to Labor Day each year for four years from date of enactment to pelagic longline vessels but not to recreation or charter vessels.

(2) Establishes the Highly Migratory Species Bycatch Reduction Research Program: The Act establishes within the Southeast Fisheries Service Center (SFSC), NMFS, a three year Pelagic Longline Billfish Bycatch and Mortality Reduction Research Program to identify and test a variety of pelagic longline fishing gear configurations and uses to determine which configurations and uses are the most effective in reducing billfish bycatch mortality in pelagic longline fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico and throughout the exclusive economic zone, specifically the Mid Atlantic Bight. In addition, an observer program for the Mid Atlantic Bight will be established and required for vessels operating during the period of June through September to monitor any net increase impacting billfish bycatch and bycatch mortality as well

as any substantial net increase in the number of vessels or effort from the remaining pelagic longline vessels.

The Secretary shall submit a report to Congress three years following the time-area closures in the Gulf of Mexico evaluating the conservation effectiveness of the closures.

Within one year of enactment, all U.S. pelagic longline vessel covered under the HMS FMP shall be required to install Vessel Monitoring System equipment.

(3) Establishes Restrictions on Pelagic Longline Vessels in Mid Atlantic Bight: Permitted pelagic longline vessels fishing in the Mid Atlantic Bight from June through August shall not (1) increase their total effort by more than ten percent based on their total effort in the Mid Atlantic Bight from 1992 to 1997, and (2) increase days at sea in the Mid Atlantic Bight by more than ten percent based on average days at sea from 1992 through 1997.

(4) Pelagic Longline Vessel Permit Holder Compensation Program: The Act establishes voluntary pelagic longline vessel permit holder compensation program for 68 eligible vessels that fished at least 35% of their time in the Atlantic Swordfish Conservation Zone. Upon accepting the buyout, the permit holder surrenders all commercial fishing permits and licenses that apply to the eligible vessels, including any permits or licenses issued by the Federal Government or a State government or political subdivision. The bill authorizes \$15 million to be covered by appropriations as the Federal share and \$10 million for the direct loan program to be paid back by a 50-50 split between the commercial and recreational fishing sectors. The compensation will be a combination of a flat dollar amount plus the value of the highest landings in any one year between 1992 and 1998, defines landings, and requires documentation of landings value.

The Act also establishes a second voluntary buyout program called the Mid Atlantic Buyout Program. Permitted pelagic longline vessels that have landings of at least 40 percent in the Mid Atlantic Bight from the period of 1992 through 1997 would qualify. The compensation program shall be fair and equitable and shall be based on the compensation formula for the primary buyout program. The bill authorizes \$5 million for the buyout program.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise and have spread on the pages of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, an article on Mr. Lloyd Collier of Dyersburg, Tennessee. The article adequately describes Mr. Collier's work at the Social Security Administration, as well as his outstanding service to his community.

Over the years, Mr. Collier has been of tremendous service to our office. His vast knowledge, and his willingness to share it with our staff, has been a valuable asset to the residents of the Eighth Congressional District. Just yesterday, he was instrumental in helping a constituent, who is stricken with cancer, obtain the benefits that are rightfully his. This is just one of the thousands of examples of the

dedicated service he has aptly demonstrated during his 38 years of public service.

So, it is with appreciation for his service that I include the text of an article published in the Dyersburg State-Gazette under the headline, "He's making a difference."

[From the Dyersburg State-Gazette, Oct. 17, 1999]

At 60, most people are thinking about retirement and how big their Social Security checks might be.

Not Lloyd Collier.

He's more interested in making sure other people get all of the Social Security benefits they're entitled to receive. It's a job he's loved for more than 38 years.

Working first as a claims representative and now as the Northwest Tennessee district manager with the Social Security Administration, Collier said he's had countless opportunities to help people. One of his most memorable cases happened 33 years ago while he was a field representative in Florence, Ala.

"I'll never forget taking a survivor claim from a 13-year-old widow with one child less than 1 year of age," he said. The girl had become pregnant when she was 11, married at 12 and a widow at 13. Her 22-year-old husband, who had no life insurance, was killed in a motorcycle wreck.

"Social Security played a big part in the financial picture of that family," he said. "It's something that you don't forget. It's a rare case, but things like this happen all over the nation."

Ironically, Collier will never receive the same benefits he has helped to disburse over the years. A long-time federal employee, Collier is covered by a civil service retirement plan instead of Social Security.

Still, he's earnestly trying to help in his characteristically quiet way.

"I categorize him as being a quiet, dynamic person," friend Wendell West said. "He's not a flamboyant toastmaster-type person. (But) when you need a job to be done, he's going to do it efficiently and without a drum roll."

That description applies not only to Collier's job but also to the volunteer work he does with the Boy Scouts, the Civitan Club and his church.

Collier, who was hired by the Social Security Administration the day before his 22nd birthday, looks at his career as a wonderful birthday present.

"It's been a good opportunity, and I like working with people, trying to help them resolve problems," Collier said. "I love my job."

The career was happenstance. Collier—a man with a mechanical mind, a knack for math and a sharp attention to details—originally wanted to be a civil engineer.

Unfortunately, he couldn't afford to go to an engineering college. Instead, he pursued a bachelor's degree at his hometown college: Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, where he majored in math and minored in physics. Although his college advisor encouraged him to get a teaching certificate, Collier wasn't too excited about being a teacher. He also opted to take the civil service exam.

The Social Security Administration called him in September 1961, just a few months after he graduated.

Even with the government job, Collier couldn't escape teaching. When he served as the assistant district manager in Dyersburg (a job he held from 1972-87), he was responsible for training new and promoted employees.

"He has always gotten strong, rave reviews on his ability to teach," said Bill McClure,

deputy regional commissioner for the Social Security Administration's office in Atlanta. Collier's students reported being "very impressed with his overall knowledge of the program and his ability to communicate and effectively transfer that knowledge."

Collier also received high marks for his willingness to assist students on an individual basis, McClure said. Collier was asked to teach classes not only in Dyersburg but in other cities, as well.

It was Collier's attention to detail that helped make him a good teacher, an alert claims representative and now an outstanding district manager. "That's a lot of what makes him so successful, because so much of the (Social Security) law is detailed," McClure said.

Collier's cordial, gentle manner also has contributed to his success. McClure said Collier often shares information with fellow Social Security managers in Memphis, Jackson and Nashville and he works closely with other retirement-related agencies, such as a railroad retirement system.

"He is very professional in his approach to the public and he represents us very effectively in the community," McClure said.

Collier puts his teaching skills to work on a regular basis as a volunteer with the Boy Scouts.

"He's just as tolerant and patient of the boys as you can get." Troop 87 assistant scoutmaster Franklin Robertson said. "One of the major things is at the times you prepare meals. He assists, directs and encourages the Scouts to prepare their meals. I've never seen anything but patience."

"He works with the Scouts until they develop the skills they need."

Edgar Shults, also a leader in the local Boy Scout program agreed with Robertson. He said Collier is "real good with the boys. If he weren't, he wouldn't be in it. He's a good, easy-going person and he enjoys working with people."

While Collier still attends Troop 87's weekly meetings and joins them on camping trips, he also shares his knowledge with Scouts from all over West Tennessee.

Collier holds knot-tying classes each year during the Cub Scout day camp at Dyersburg State Community College and started the sailing program at Camp Mack Morris, a residential Scout camp near Kentucky Lake.

For one week each summer between 1989 and 1995, Collier introduced young boys to the thrills and quiet pleasures of sailing. Using his own 17-foot O'Day Sailor II, Collier taught the boys to hoist sails, to maneuver the boat and to turn the boat right-side-up if it ever turned over.

The last lesson proved quite important one summer. A crosswind caught the boat's sails and tipped it over. Collier said he and the five Scouts on board knew what they needed to do. They crawled on top of the keel and pulled. Ideally, the sailors' weight would push the keel down into the water while they pulled the mast back up. They had one small problem.

"It's just that the six of us didn't weigh enough to get the job done," Collier said.

A road crew working on the lake shore saw the struggling Scouts and called a nearby marina for help. The sailboat was towed into shallow water, where it was easier for the Scouts to right the boat.

Today, Camp Mack Morris has a fleet of six sailboats. The instructors are graduates of Collier's first sailing course.

Instead of attending Camp Mack Morris for the last four summers, Collier and his wife have traveled to Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico and participated in training programs for adult leaders.

Collier has served as a Webelos leader, a cubmaster, an assistant scoutmaster and district commissioner in the past. This year,