

proportional amount for less than full-time enrollment), and (d) repeal the current \$1,200 reduction-in-pay to be eligible for the benefit. Each individual would be eligible for 36 months (4 academic years) of benefits.

Our goal in introducing H.R. 1182 is twofold. First, when high school students consider their post-high school plans, we want them to consider military service as their first option, not their last. It is no wonder the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard are experiencing major recruitment problems. Most college-bound youth and their parents see a tour of military service as a detour from their college plans, not as a way to achieve that goal. We want to reverse that way of thinking.

Second, we want to empower the youth of America—our future veterans—with a GI Bill that would be limited only by their aspirations, initiative, and abilities. We want a GI Bill that would allow a young person to be able to afford any educational institution in America to which that individual could competitively gain admittance.

Our legislation is inspired by, and is substantively very similar to, a recommendation made in the comprehensive January 14, 1999, report of the Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, chaired by Anthony J. Principi.

As we look to the future, I believe it's instructive to glance at our past. As my colleagues are aware, 55 years ago the Congress sent to President Roosevelt's desk a piece of legislation that truly transformed our Nation—arguably the greatest domestic legislation since the Homestead Act. Legislation that is popularly known as the GI Bill of Rights. The World War II GI Bill was one of the boldest investments our Nation has ever made. It was certainly one of Congress' finest hours, because World War II veteran-students did not just pass through the American system of higher education, they transformed it. That legislation, and those veteran-students, created today's leaders and the modern middle class.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot recount how many times in my 22 years here that a Member of this body has said he probably would not be here today if it were not for the World War II GI Bill. Our proposal to return to a World War II-type GI Bill is not about a program of the past, it's about empowerment for the future. Has society, and our values, changed so dramatically that a revered education program that was so successful 55 years ago no longer applies to today's servicemembers?

For 223 years, military service has been our Nation's most fundamental form of National Service. When we talk about education policy in this country, I think our starting point is that we owe more to those who voluntarily have worn the uniform because they have earned more by virtue of their years of service. The fundamental difference between the GI Bill that we propose and other meritorious Federal student financial aid programs is that ours is truly earned.

About 60 percent of active duty servicemembers are married when they separate from the military, and many have children. They find out quickly that the gulf between the purchasing power under the Montgomery GI Bill and current education costs is indeed a large one. Today's Montgomery GI Bill, properly named for our distinguished former colleague who worked indefatigably on the legis-

lation for almost 7 years prior to its enactment, unfortunately falls short by \$6,007 annually in paying tuition, room and board, fees, books, and transportation at public institutions, and \$15,251 at private institutions. Veterans deserve better. And I note the cost figures I cite are for 1996—the most recent data available.

Through fiscal year 1997, some 13 years after the enactment of the Montgomery GI Bill test program, only 48.7 percent of veterans have utilized it. Conversely, between 1966 and 1976, 63.6 percent of Vietnam-era veterans used their education benefits.

We need a GI Bill that harnesses the unique resource that veterans represent. We want to accelerate, not delay, their entry into the civilian work force. We need a GI Bill that rewards veterans for faithful service and that makes it more likely that they will serve among the ranks of the country's future leaders and opinion shapers.

What better investment can we make in the youth of this country? A GI Bill that would be limited only by the aspirations, initiative, and abilities of the young man or woman involved. A GI Bill that largely would allow a young person to afford any educational institution in America to which that individual could competitively gain admittance. What a powerful message to send across America. What an emphatic statement to send to working and middle class families who go into great debt to finance their children's higher education because they are told they make too much money to qualify for Federal or State grants.

In closing, I submit to my colleagues that why my cosponsors and I are proposing is not just about an education program that we believe would serve as our best military recruitment incentive ever for the All-Volunteer Force; or after their service provide unfettered access to higher education at the best schools; or provide unbounded opportunity for our youth that cuts across social, economic, ethnic, and racial lines. What we have proposed is what is best for America.

I believe the notion of service to our Nation, service in an All-Volunteer Force, and the corresponding opportunity for all of us to participate in our great economic system sustained by that service, is a core value we simply must pass on to the next generation. It is a core value we can neglect, but only at our peril.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members of the House to join me in support of H.R. 1182.

THE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER EQUIPMENT ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 1999

HON. SAM GEJDENSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 1999

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise, along with Mr. ENGLISH from Pennsylvania, to introduce the Volunteer Firefighter Equipment Enhancement Act of 1999.

Communities in my district and around the nation rely on volunteer firefighters to protect lives and property day in and day out. My district includes 54 towns, and there are 91 volunteer fire departments. These brave men and women leave their jobs and get up in the middle of the night to battle fires, respond to auto

accidents, and provide a wide range of other emergency services. These services would not be available without these volunteers. We must do as much as we can to help our firefighters as they put their lives at risk to help people in their communities.

Many of our nation's volunteer firefighters companies have taken on tasks far beyond firefighting. Years ago, volunteer companies could fulfill their mission with one pumper truck and a few ladders. Today, as we ask our volunteers to take on more and more tasks, they need much more equipment. However, our tax laws have not kept up with the changing demands.

Section 150 (e)(1) of the tax code states: "A bond of a volunteer fire department shall be treated as a bond of a political subdivision of a state if * * * such bond is issued as part of an issue 95 percent or more of the net proceeds of which are to be used for the acquisition construction, reconstruction, or improvement of a firehouse * * * or firetruck used or to be used by such department."

The law only allows volunteer fire departments to use the benefits of municipal bonding if the department is building a fire station or buying a firetruck. They cannot issue bonds to buy ambulances, rescue trucks or other emergency response vehicles which are critical to protecting citizens across our nation.

The legislation that Representative ENGLISH and I are introducing today would simply change this provision by striking the phrase "or firetruck" and inserting "firetruck, ambulance or other emergency response vehicle." It is a simple change in law that will help volunteer fire companies acquire the tools they need to carry out their expanded mission. The bill would also extend the tax treatment that volunteer fire companies receive to volunteer ambulance companies.

I believe that if we are going to ask our volunteers to take on these additional burdens, we must help them obtain the equipment they need.

This is a small first step in the United States recognizing volunteer firefighters as the heroes that they are. Unpaid, but not underappreciated, we have much more to do to help firefighters, but this will be a good first step.

COLUMNIST DENNIS ROGERS ON
THE PLIGHT OF TOBACCO FARMERS

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 1999

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I grew up on a tobacco farm, and I continue to grow tobacco today. Higher federal taxes and litigation by the states have severely altered the market for tobacco and have led to income losses of thirty five percent for tobacco farmers in the past two years alone. The actions that have led to this point have been taken in retaliation against the industry and its practices, but the harm has been felt on the farm. Tobacco farmers need help.

Since coming to the House two years ago, I have tried to articulate to Congress the plight tobacco farmers are in as a result the ongoing tobacco wars. Earlier this month, Dennis Rogers, a columnist with The News and Observer

daily newspaper in Raleigh, North Carolina, wrote an excellent essay on the position to-bacco farmers find themselves in 1999. Mr. Speaker, I request that Mr. Rogers' article be placed at this point in the RECORD, and I hope it will provide guidance to us all as we debate issues related to tobacco in the future. Congress can benefit greatly from the clear-eyed perspective of this insightful North Carolinian whose feet are planted firmly on the ground.

[From the *News & Observer*, Mar. 3, 1999]

IT'S NOT GREED, BUT DESPERATION

(By Dennis Rogers)

The numbers are so obscenely large as to be meaningless: There is \$4.6 billion to be paid by the tobacco industry to the state of North Carolina over 25 years. There is \$1.97 billion for a trust fund to be spread among the state's tobacco farmers over the next 12 years.

But regardless of how much money tobacco farmers eventually get, if any, what are they supposed to do then?

Unless you're a farmer, you probably don't care. You've made it clear in your e-mails and phone calls that many of you think tobacco farmers are whiners trying to hang on to a dying business. Nobody guarantees me a living, you've cynically said, so why should we do it for them?

But unlike you, I've heard from the farmers, too, strong men and women who are scared about their futures. It is enough to break your heart.

What they talk about most is not the money, but losing their souls, their culture, their foundation and their heritage. They talk about the land their ancestors entrusted to their care and the shame they would feel in losing it.

They talk about wanting to give their children the chance they had, to stand under a hot Carolina sun and feel your own land beneath your feet, the same land that once nurtured the old folks buried in the church cemetery just down the road.

"What am I going to do if I stop farming?" asked Johnston County's John Talbot as we rode in Monday's protest through the streets of Raleigh. "I'm 45 years old. Who is going to hire me?"

Who, indeed? If the tobacco farmers of Eastern North Carolina stop farming, what will become of them? A rootless corporate culture is all a lot of city folks around here know. They do not understand or feel sympathy for the middle-aged farmer who senses that the very ground beneath his feet is moving away.

A country family's desperate need for independence may not mean much to those of us who have never had it. There are a lot of us who have never known anything but the slavery of working for a paycheck. We might even resent a farmer's plea that he should be helped to maintain a way of life that seems so alien to us.

But what option do they have? There are few good jobs in the tobacco country where they live? We've kept most of the good jobs for ourselves and left country folks who live a long way from town with precious little to turn to now that their lives and times have gotten tough.

But before you turn your back on them, ask yourself whether they helped make your good job possible. Farmers have long seen their tax dollars pay corporations to bring jobs to the state that they, because of where they live and the skills they don't have, can never hope to get.

Now, they say, that same government is reluctant to give them what they see as their fair share of the money from tobacco companies they have depended on for their livelihood.

There was a sign on a tractor driven by a woman in Monday's protest that read, "We are not greedy. We are desperate."

We may yet succeed in forcing our farmers from their fields, and contrary to their hollow threats, no, we will not go hungry.

But they will. Their souls will wither just as surely as a spring daffodil fades away when it is picked and brought indoors.

IN RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL EMPLOY THE OLDER WORKER WEEK AND GREEN THUMB OF NEW ENGLAND

HON. JAMES P. McGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 1999

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of National Employ the Older Worker Week and Green Thumb, Inc. of New England. National Employ the Older Worker Week (March 14–20) recognizes the contribution that older workers make in America and encourages participation in the Green Thumb program. It celebrates the unique skills, and talents that are gained through years of experience and hard work. It also brings attention to one of the greatest resources in America: the older worker.

Green Thumb is a non-profit organization that aims to strengthen our families and communities, as well as our nation, by equipping older and disadvantaged individuals with opportunities to learn, work, and serve the community. Founded in 1965, Green Thumb has helped over 500,000 seniors. The services are provided to numerous older citizens. Some are retirees who have not yet begun collecting Social Security and require additional income from full or part-time employment. Other recipients take part in the program in order to develop new skills, pursue individual interests, or utilize their time in a productive manner. It benefits the older worker's well-being and enhances the community. Green Thumb will recognize America's Oldest Worker as well as 52 Outstanding Older Workers from each state following National Employ the Older Worker Week.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join me in recognition of National Employ the Older Worker Week. I also applaud Green Thumb of New England and wish them continued success in improving the lives of our senior citizens.

HONORING PETER R. VILLEGAS

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 1999

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to congratulate Peter R. Villegas, president of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Orange County for 1998.

During his presidency, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce accomplished many goals. The Chamber increased its membership and corporate sponsors, produced many successful events such as the "Estrella Awards and Installation Dinner," Job and Career Fair, Business Finance Forum, Business Without

Borders International Conference, and the Business Development Conference.

Mr. Villegas has also represented the chamber in many official capacities. He has met with Vice President AL GORE, officials of the Department of State, Members of Congress, State, county, and local officials, as well as leaders of enterprise and industry.

Mr. Villegas has provided leadership locally and nationally, by serving on the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute based in Washington, DC, as a board member of the University of Southern California—M.A.A., the corporate advisory board of the Latin Business Association, and as a board member for the Puente Learning Center. Other memberships include the Challengers Boys and Girls Club, board member of the Chicano Federation of San Diego, and committee member of the Martin Luther King Legacy Association. He is the recipient of the 1997 Minorities in Business Magazines Latin American Corporate Prism Award, and the City of Santa Ana Exceptional Volunteer Award.

Mr. Villegas manages regional relationships with key community coalitions, including the WaMu Community Council and regional WaMu Diversity Advisory Group. He is responsible for managing the Corporate Giving Program with a focus on the Community Reinvestment Act qualified grants. He also serves as the regional contact for governmental officials, provides corporate representation in the regional market, and provides leadership in the ethnic market. In addition, Mr. Villegas is the regional manager of Washington Mutuals \$120 billion commitment to the community.

Colleagues, please join with me today in saluting Peter R. Villegas, an individual who has dedicated his knowledge and expertise to the betterment of the Hispanic community and business relations on every level.

CONDEMNING THE MURDER OF ROSEMARY NELSON AND URGING PROTECTION OF DEFENSE ATTORNEYS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 1999

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a bipartisan resolution which condemns the brutal murder of Northern Ireland defense attorney Rosemary Nelson and calls on the British Government to launch an independent inquiry into Rosemary's killing.

The resolution also calls for an independent judicial inquiry into the possibility of official collusion in the 1989 murder of defense attorney Patrick Finucane and an independent investigation into the general allegations of harassment of defense attorneys by Northern Ireland's police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). I am pleased that Mr. GILMAN, Mr. KING, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. PAYNE, and Mr. MENENDEZ are original sponsors of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, Rosemary Nelson was a champion of due process rights and a conscientious and courageous attorney in Northern Ireland. She was the wife of Paul Nelson and the mother of three young children: Christopher (13), Gavin (11), and Sarah (8). Her murder was a cowardly act by those who are