

Her coach, Kenny Carter, told the Greensboro News & Record, that Lee was part of a very special group of seniors. "I can't describe it," Coach Carter told the newspaper. "I had the seniors write a paper about what it's like to be there. And they each used the word 'in-describable.' I know this, they gave me a rebirth of energy. They've been with me for four years, and I wouldn't trade them for any team or any players I've ever had."

Joining Culp in the total team effort were Katie Copeland, Kanecia Obie, Leslie Olson, Elizabeth Redpath, Laura Kirby, Velinda Vucannon, Shonda Brown, Leslie Cook, Erica Green, Shemeka Leach, Krystion Obie, and Nasheena Quick.

Coach Carter will be the first to tell you that the Bison win was thanks to the players, coaches and staff working together to achieve a common goal. In addition to Coach Carter, congratulations are due to his assistants Jetanna McClain, April Rose, Scottie Carter, Eugene Love, Kim Liptrap, and Chris Martin. Also helping in many ways were the team managers Chasity Brown, Jessica Allen, and Serenity Klump.

So, while everyone watches the Final Four this weekend, fans of the High Point Central Bison are already celebrating the "Final Three"—the third state championship in seven years. On behalf of the citizens of the Sixth District of North Carolina, we congratulate High Point Central for winning the state's 2-A girls basketball championship.

A TRIBUTE TO SHASHUNNA WILLIAMS, AUGUSTINE WASHINGTON, AND BESSIE DEANS

HON. JIM McCRERY

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 1999

Mr. McCRERY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer a tribute to three constituents, Shashunna Williams, Augustine Washington, and Bessie Deans, who were tragically killed in an automobile accident on their way back from a home health care training seminar. These three caring women are remembered by their family, friends, colleagues, and by their patients.

Shashunna was 22 years old, the youngest staff member in the agency, and engaged to be married this summer. She was an observant health aide, attentive to her patients' needs, and determined to overcome any obstacles she encountered. She brought to her job a vibrant energy and genuine concern for others that was often displayed with a humorous twist.

Bessie was 39 years old, and a certified nurse's aide since 1987. She was married and a devoted mother of two sons, whose sporting activities she regularly attended. Bessie was well known in the community and her caring spirit manifested itself in kindness above and beyond the call of duty. Bessie's dependability, loyalty to her patients, and her unflinching energy earned her the gratitude of all those to whom she came in contact.

Augustine was 42, a mother of four, a grandmother, and a certified nurse's aide for over ten years. She excelled in caring for the elderly, who always praised her for her kindness and generosity. Augustine visited home

health patients during the day and had a second full time job at a nursing home in the evening. Augustine was a team player, most dependable, and a fine example of a hard working, caring employee.

Mr. Speaker, these three women exemplified the very best in their chosen field. We, in the Fourth District of Louisiana, share their families', colleagues', and patients' grief over their loss. I know they all will miss them terribly.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO IMPOSE STRICTER MANDATORY PRISON TERMS FOR CRIMINALS USING FIREARMS

HON. SUE W. KELLY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 1999

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today for the purpose of introducing legislation to impose tougher mandatory jail sentences on criminals who use guns.

It is well understood by my colleagues that gun control is an issue over which reasonable people will often disagree. The bill I am introducing today, however, is reflective of an idea about which we can all agree—criminals who use firearms deserve tough sentences. This legislation seeks to increase the mandatory minimum penalties for individuals who possess, brandish, or discharge a firearm during the commission of a federal crime which is violent or involves drug-trafficking.

For possession of a firearm during such a crime, this bill would increase the minimum mandatory sentence from 5 years to 10. For brandishing a firearm, the minimum sentence would be raised from 7 years to 15. If the firearms is discharged during the crime, this bill would set the mandatory minimum sentence at 20 years, a substantial increase from the current 10 year minimum.

Tough sentences work. Just ask the people of Richmond, Virginia. The city's Chief of Police, Jerry Oliver, testified before Congress just this week about Project Exile, a program by which individuals who use a firearm during the commission of a crime are prosecuted in federal court rather than state court, making them subject to stiffer penalties. These tougher sentences, accompanied by a public campaign to tout them, have been a central cause for the city's significantly diminished homicide rate. We need to draw from Richmond's example.

I urge my colleagues to join me in the effort to enact a law which makes it perfectly clear that profound punitive consequences await those criminals who use deadly firearms.

HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR TAX RELIEF ACT

HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 1999

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, today, after years of arduous effort, survivors of the Holocaust who had their assets withheld from them by Swiss banks and others have finally received justice in the form of a settlement be-

tween the banks and the survivors' attorneys achieved last year. Under the settlement, survivors around the globe will receive \$1.25 billion. This settlement will finally return the assets to survivors more than 50 years after they were entrusted to these banks.

In addition to the survivors who are party to this historic settlement, there are survivors who are needy and have received one-time payments from the Swiss government through the Swiss Humanitarian Fund. Payments from this fund to needy Holocaust survivors in the United States have totaled \$31.4 million. Banks and corporations in France, Austria, Italy and Germany are establishing similar funds to compensate claimants for bank accounts, insurance policies, slave labor and other assets. Whether the payments are from the banks, the Swiss government or other sources, they should be excluded from taxation because the survivors are receiving back what was rightfully theirs to begin with.

Survivors who sued banks, insurance companies and manufacturers who profited from slave labor during the Holocaust did so because there was no other avenue for them to seek justice. Deprived of their assets, or those of their families, these brave souls fought unsuccessfully for fifty years until now to regain what belonged to them.

I rise today, joined by my colleague, Representative ROBERT MATSUI, to introduce H.R. 1292, the Holocaust Survivor Tax Relief Act of 1999. Senators FITZGERALD, MOYNIHAN and ABRAHAM are also introducing companion legislation in the Senate. Our legislation will exclude these payments from federal income tax.

There is little time to debate over these payments when the average Holocaust survivor is 80 years old. We must do everything we can to ease the lives in their final years, and therefore it would be wrong and immoral to tax them on the long overdue receipt of the assets. What these survivors are receiving from the various funds is money that is rightly theirs in the first place.

These survivors of the Holocaust deserve justice. Having escaped death at the hands of the Nazis, they were subjected to victimization by European banks and insurers. Those who endured the tortures of slave labor have never been compensated for their servitude to the Nazis. Now that they have begun to receive some measure of justice let us not add insult to their injury by taxing these long overdue payments to which they are entitled.

VETERANS HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENTS LEGISLATION

HON. CHARLES W. "CHIP" PICKERING

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 1999

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Speaker, Abraham Lincoln once said "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphan . . ." Today, we must follow his counsel.

When veterans joined the military, they were promised "free" health care for life. There are some who would like to see the commitments this Nation made to our veterans just fade away—not to honor the promise that this Nation made to them. I do not believe we can allow that to happen.

For that reason, Congressman JERRY MORAN and I are introducing the Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 1999. This legislation will enable us to deliver on the promises our country made to its veterans who answered the call to duty.

The men and women of America's Armed Forces have been faithful in their service. They have not asked much—just what they were promised. Our Nation pledged to provide these veterans quality health care.

We have fallen short on that promise. The Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 1999 will make health care for our veterans better and more accessible. First, the bill establishes a voluntary Medicare subvention demonstration project that allows Medicare to reimburse the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for Medicare health care services furnished to certain veterans at VA medical facilities. This will give veterans more flexibility in choosing their health care providers.

The bill directs the administering Secretaries to select up to ten demonstration sites in geographically dispersed locations for program participation. Of these ten sites, one must be in an area near a base closed by the base re-

alignment and closure law and one must be a predominantly rural area. None of the demonstration project funds may be used to build new buildings or expand existing ones. This 3-year program begins on January 1, 2000. The bill also authorizes the Secretary of the VA to establish and operate four managed health care plans at demonstration sites.

Tricare, the health care program for all branches of the military must be reformed. Many veterans are refused by physicians because Tricare is notorious for delinquent reimbursements and because the reimbursement rates often fall below those allowed by Medicare. This bill takes a big step toward leveling the playing field for our veterans.

The bill directs the Secretary to ensure that health care coverage available through the Tricare program is substantially similar to the health care coverage available to Federal employees; makes benefits portable; minimizes the certification requirements for access to the extent possible; and requires that claims be processed and payed in a simplified and expedited manner. These changes will begin to eliminate the bureaucratic red tape and improve access and payments for beneficiaries.

The bill also allows the Secretary of Defense to increase the reimbursement rate for Tricare if it is necessary to ensure quality health care for veterans.

The bill includes a sense of Congress urging the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to "review their policies and procedures to identify areas in which the administration does not currently process claims for veterans in a manner consistent with the objectives set forth in the national performance review, and to initiate the necessary actions to process such claims in such manner and report to Congress on measures taken to improve the processing time of claims."

In summary, this bill will do much to improve the quality of health care for our Nation's veterans. The heart-wrenching film "Saving Private Ryan" portrayed the enormous dedication and sacrifice our veterans endured on behalf of this Nation. As the number of elderly veterans continues to increase, it is imperative that we take the necessary steps to protect them—and to honor our commitment to them. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting our veterans by improving their health care system