

This legislation will assist States and school districts in their efforts to fund alternative education programs and services for students who have been suspended or expelled from school and reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions. This legislation will provide our schools with an important tool in their efforts to ensure safer schools and safer communities while providing vital educational opportunity.

Presently, numerous students are suspended or expelled from school annually. Regardless of the reason these students received a suspension or expulsion—disruptive behavior, verbal abuse, a violent act—they are often left to fend for themselves without any educational services, or worse yet no supervision or guidance. The loss of educational services for these students is a destructive force to their chances to advance academically, be promoted from grade to grade, or to resist the temptation to dropout of school. In addition, students not in school and without any supervision can bring the problems which necessitated their suspension or expulsion to the community—increasing juvenile delinquency and possibly other violence and crime.

Under the Gun-Free Schools Act, schools are required to expel a student for one-year if they bring a firearm to school. In school year 1997–1998, that amounted to 3,507 expulsions. Unfortunately, fewer than half of these students were referred for alternative education placements. In fact, students expelled for firearm violations often do not receive educational services through alternative programs or schools. This lack of continuing education and supervision may put the community at risk of gun violence from these children.

While there are times when students may need to be removed from their school due to behavior, whether violent or non-violent, little is accomplished by risking their academic future through a lack of educational services. This legislation will promote alternative placements for suspended or expelled students so the problems they brought to school do not become problems of the community. The legislation would also require school districts to reduce the numbers of suspensions or expulsions of students. I would like to make it clear that this program's funding should not make it easier to remove students from the classroom in greater numbers, but rather should enhance the ability of school districts to provide continuing educational services for the students they do remove from the classroom.

Specifically, the Alternative Education for Safe Schools and Safe Communities Act of 2000 would authorize \$200 million to assist school districts in reducing the number of suspensions and expulsions and establishing or improving programs of alternative education for students who have been suspended or expelled from school. Additional specifics of the program include:

States would receive allocations based on the amount of Title I, Part A dollars they receive. States would then distribute 95 percent of this funding to local school districts.

School districts would use funding to both reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions and establish or develop alternative education programs.

Students participating in alternative education programs would be taught to challenging State academic standards.

Students would be provided with necessary mental health, counseling services and other necessary supports.

States and school districts would be required to coordinate efforts with other service providers including public mental health providers and juvenile justice agencies.

School districts would have to plan for the return of students participating in alternative education programs to the regular educational setting, if it is appropriate, to meet the needs of the child and his or her prospective classmates.

School districts would have to meet continually increasing performance goals to maintain funding. These performance goals include: reductions in the number of suspensions and expulsions, reduction in the number of incidents of violent and disruptive behavior, and others.

The Department of Education would be required to identify or design model alternative education programs for use by school districts and then disseminate these examples of "best practices."

The future of all our children is too critical to allow those who have been suspended or expelled from school to become the future burdens on our social welfare system, or to have the disruptive and unsafe acts they did in schools take place in the greater community. I urge Members to cosponsor this legislation.

GRANNY D'S CROSS-COUNTRY WALK IN SUPPORT OF CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

HON. CHRISTOPHER SHAYS

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, my colleague MARTY MEEHAN of Massachusetts and I rise to commend 91 year old Doris Haddock—known throughout the country as Granny D—for her cross-country trek in support of campaign finance reform. Granny D began her crusade on January 1, 1999 in Pasadena, California and walked 3,200 miles across the country until she arrived at the Capitol on February 29, 2000.

She traveled through the snow in Maryland, dust storms in California's Mojave Desert, and heat of a Texas summer—all the way to Washington, DC. We are happy to place the attached statement into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, which in Doris' own words, describes how she chose to undertake such an amazing feat.

A native of Dublin, New Hampshire and an activist since the 1960s, Granny D felt compelled to push for campaign finance reform—and thus began her idea for walking cross-country. She has walked 10 miles a day, six days a week and stayed with people she met on "the road." Granny D inspired citizens from around the nation to walk with her for a day or so as she helped raise awareness of such an important issue—campaign finance reform.

In an age where cynicism and low voter turnout has become a norm, Granny D has demonstrated that civil activism is alive and well in America. We join Granny D in support of reforming our campaign finance system by eliminating the unregulated, unlimited campaign gifts known as soft money, applying our campaign laws to sham issue ads, and increasing disclosure. Combined together, these reforms will slam shut the open door that cur-

rently allows anyone—corporations, labor unions, wealthy individuals, even foreign nationals—to purchase limitless influence in our political system.

We believe this is a crucial first step to protect our democracy and thank Granny D for raising awareness of this issue by courageously walking across our nation in support of campaign finance reform. As Helen Keller stated: "I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; I will not refuse to do something I can do."

STATEMENT OF GRANNY D

I have been asked to speak briefly this morning about the spiritual side of my journey across the United States.

I would like to share three brief thoughts.

The first thought is that God often speaks to us with crazy ideas. He is full of them, I think.

When I first received the thought of walking across America for campaign finance reform, I knew it was a rather crazy idea. It would have been easy to brush it off as such, and to change the subject as my son and I drove along that Florida highway where the thought first came.

What is calling, anyway? It is a picture window that suddenly appears, revealing a possible alternative life.

Possible, yes. I indeed might be able to walk the country—as I have kept up my physical conditioning with cross-country skiing and walking. Possible, yes—for such an undertaking (if it were not in fact an undertaking!) might bring some needed attention to the issue. And possible, yes—it might in fact be more interesting than staying at home in my regular routine. One could imagine it working out and doing some good. But a crazy notion!

If God sends us a crazy idea and we toss it off as such, I think He understands. He will be happy to send it along to someone else, or try some other ideas on us later.

If it keeps coming back, slightly revised, earmarked, highlighted, perhaps it is a calling. So we consider it more seriously.

If it seems immediately appealing, however, and we jump for it, is there some test to know if it is a proper calling and not just our own harebrained senility?

Well, I think there may indeed be a test, and that is the second spiritual aspect of my journey that I would like to share.

Despite all my best efforts before I left on my walk to arrange help along the way, I got almost no response from the churches or police departments along the way to whom I sent a thousand letters of self-introduction.

So my first steps were little leaps of faith into the kind heart and soul of America, and my faith was of course rewarded. Most remarkably, though there were troubles along the way, and a hospital stay and so many breakdowns of my support van and so many little traumas and troubles, what I saw on the whole was an opening up of heaven, and a flowing down of all the resources and all the right people I needed.

After my difficult crossing of the Mojave Desert in California, I crossed the bridge into Parker, Arizona on my 89th birthday. The Marine Corps Marching Band was at the bridge, playing Happy Birthday to me. The remarkable part of that story is that they just happened to be there on other business. It also happened to be Parker Days, and they were delighted to have me lead the parade and tell the whole city about campaign finance reform, which I did. When, some days later I walked into Wickenburg, Arizona, it happened to be Wickenburg Days and again I found myself in a parade and telling everyone about campaign reform.

Now, the parade organizers did not know me or care about this issue, but the family who kindly put me up there, after my stay in the hospital for dehydration, happened to be good friends of the parade chairman. It was like that every step of the way—always just the right person at just the right moment.

It continued across the country. Let me remind you that last Sunday it rained heavily in Washington, and last Monday it was very cold and windy, and Tuesday, when a nice day would be good for the big march across town to the Capitol steps, why, the weather here was a perfect springlike day.

The blessings have been uncountable.

I do not mean to suggest that the Lord makes doing the right thing easy. My walk was not easy. But he seems to clear the field for you when you are ready to do serious battle. He does appreciate, I think, our moments of courage and He does not mind showing His hand at such times.

Finally, let me make a spiritual note regarding the issue itself.

Is it not so that we are charged in this life with doing God's work where we might? Are we not the keepers of our brothers and sisters? Are we not to be agents for justice and equality and kindness? Surely we cannot fulfill our high role if we do not have the power to manage our collective resources. Surely, only a free and empowered people can properly take care of one another. If we allow ourselves to lose our ability to manage our considerable common wealth to best address the great needs of our people, we abdicate our earthly responsibilities to our God, do we not?

If we allow the greedy and the inhuman elements to steal away from us our self-government, because we did not have the energy or the courage to fight for it and to use it as a tool of our love and our wisdom, how shall we answer for that?

Is campaign finance reform a religious issue? It is one of the central religious issues of our times, and I of course speak to the condition of the entire world, not just our few states. If we are to do the right things for our people and for the lovely home given us by God, then we must, as free adults, have the power to do what is right. I do not mean that churches and states should mix: it is enough that our civic values, which we all share with only a few arguments around the edges, are informed by our deeper beliefs in the equality of people and basic rights of all God's creations.

PENSION COVERAGE

HON. SAM GEJDENSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, America's workers have made the record 107 month economic expansion possible. They deserve to reap the rewards of our national prosperity. They deserve income security, and in particular, they deserve to have a pension and the ability to save for retirement. Approximately 51 million workers—about half the workforce—lack pension coverage of any kind. For these workers, retirement security is very precarious and their economic future more uncertain.

This Congress has an obligation to expand pension coverage to boost retirement security for all Americans. We know what will make a difference to millions of workers. We should, for example, increase the portability of dif-

ferent types of pensions by allowing employees to more easily roll-over these assets when they change jobs. We should provide tax relief to help small businesses starting a pension plan. We should reduce vesting periods. These are common-sense steps, and steps that we are all ready and willing to take. In fact, more than 100 members of this body have joined me sponsoring the Retirement Security Act, which would implement each of these options, and more.

The bill before us today, H.R. 3932, takes some steps in the right direction on pensions. Regrettably, it shortchanges average working men and women who need the most help in saving for retirement. Instead, it sweetens the pension pot for the wealthiest employees, those who have little to worry about with respect to their own retirement. The implicit, unsubstantiated promise of H.R. 3832 is that highly-compensated employees, who presumably have decision-making authority about pension coverage, will expand pension coverage for lower-wage employees as they attempt to take advantage of the bill's enhanced contribution and disbursement features for themselves. It is an \$18 billion gamble that may not pay off for most workers. The only certainty is that the highly compensated will benefit.

According to an analysis prepared by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, of the \$18 billion in pension benefits in H.R. 3832, 91.5% would accrue to the top 10 percent of earners, those with annual incomes above \$89,000. At the same time, the lowest 60% of earners would receive less than 1% of the benefits in the package. To make matters worse, the Center's analysis shows that the increasing income thresholds for determining contributions to pension plans from \$170,000 to \$200,000, employers can save money by reducing pension coverage for lower wage employees. Indeed, if an employer contributes a flat percentage of each employee's pay to a pension, he can continue to reward the highest paid workers with the same dollar contribution while reducing the percentage of pay contributed to each worker at the lower end of the pay-scale.

I believe that we would better direct these resources toward middle- and lower-income workers and toward small business that want to provide retirement security to their employees. My bill accomplishes these goals by shortening vesting periods, providing credits to small businesses that start plans, and boosting pension equity for women. The President has proposed a series of pension and savings initiatives that would enhance retirement savings. He proposes tax credits that would encourage small businesses to establish a pension plan and to match employee contributions. He also proposes tax credits for financial institutions that establish retirement savings accounts for lower-income workers who do not have pension coverage at work.

Some in this body think passing these pension provisions today gets Congress off the hook in terms of real reform. It does not. I stand here to say that our job is far from finished when it comes to helping middle- and low-income workers save for retirement. I hope that we can all continue to work on this issue and pass comprehensive legislation expanding size pension coverage to every American.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH HONOREES

HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor local citizens from the 9th District of Texas who were chosen during Black History Month for their work. While the dedication of African-American leaders is well-known throughout the United States, local citizens, right here in the Southeast Gulf Coast region, are just as important to ensuring equal rights for all Texans. Last month I asked members of the communities in the 9th District to nominate individuals for my "Unsung Heroes" award that gives special recognition to those unsung heroes, willing workers, and individuals who are so much a part of our nation's rich history. Recipients were chosen because they embodied a giving and sharing spirit, and had made a contribution to our nation.

These individuals have not only talked the talk, but they have walked the walk. They have worked long and hard for equal rights in their churches, schools, and in their communities. While their efforts may not make the headlines every day, their pioneering struggle for equality and justice is nevertheless vital to our entire region. This region of Southeast Texas is not successful in spite of our diversity; we are successful because of it.

Please join me in recognizing and congratulating these community leaders for their support of bringing justice and equality to Southeast Texas. It is leaders like these men and women that continue to be a source of pride not only during Black History Month, but all year long. The winners of this years "Unsung Heroes" award are:

Ms. Sharon Lewis, Mrs. Eslen Brown Love, Constable Terry Petteway, Mr. Alex Pratt, Miss June Pinckney Ross, Ms. Ann Simmons, Mr. James Steadham, Mrs. Maggie Williams, Mrs. Valencia Huff Arceneaux, Mr. T.D. Armstrong, Mr. Melton Bell, Mr. Craig Bowie, Ms. Linda Brooks, Dr. Lisa Cain, Mrs. Izola Collins, Mr. Paul A. Cox, Pastor Marvin C. Delaney, Mrs. Idella Duncan, Mrs. Gloria Ellisor, Mayor Leon Evans, Ms. Vera Bell Gary, Ms. Wilina Gatson, Mrs. Ann Grant, Mr. Deyossie Harris, Mrs. Edna Jensen, Mr. Cleveland Nisby, Mr. Collis Cannon, Reverend Ransom Howard, Mrs. Hargie Faye Savoy, Judge Theodore Johns, Mr. Eddie Seniguar, Mrs. Marie Hubbard, Judge Paul Brown, Mr. Lewis Hodge, Mrs. Mandy Plummer, Mrs. Fabiola B. Small, Dr. Rosa Smith-Williams, Mr. Tobe Duhon, Rev. Isaiah Washington, Sr., Mrs. Barbara Hannah-Keys, Ms. Nina Gail Stelley, Mr. Herman Hudson, Mrs. Lillian M. LeBlanc, Dr. Carroll Thomas, Dr. William T.B. Lewis, Mr. Raymond Johnson, Mr. Amos Evans, State Rep. Al Price, and Rev. G.W. Daniels.

Mr. Speaker, the recipients of the "Unsung Heroes" award are dedicated and hardworking individuals who have done so much for their neighbors and for this nation as a whole. Today, I stand to recognize their spirit and to say that I am honored to be their Representative.