

LIVING AMERICAN HERO
APPRECIATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2001

Mr. EVANS. Madam Speaker, the remarks that I made in support of H.R. 2561 were made in the context of the measure as it was originally introduced by my colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania, CURT WELDON. The measure passed by the House under suspension of the rules, however, was an amended version of H.R. 2561. As amended, H.R. 2561 did not embody certain provisions that had been included in the original bill.

With regard to H.R. 2561 as amended, I want to express my strong support for this legislation that demonstrates our continued commitment to recipients of the Medal of Honor. In the name of the Congress, the President presents the Medal of Honor. It is the highest honor that can be bestowed upon any American citizen. Only 3,455 Americans have been awarded Medals of Honor, and today only 149 of them are living.

As the Ranking Democrat on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, as a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, and as a United States Marine, I feel strongly that these heroes deserve special recognition and consideration. Their valiant contributions must be honored and supported by all Americans.

Accordingly, I am pleased that H.R. 2561 would increase from \$600 to \$1,000 the monthly amount paid to recipients of the Medal of Honor and provide for retroactive, lump-sum payments to such recipients to reflect this increase. In addition, the bill would provide an additional medal for use in display or exhibits to those recipients who desire one, and increase the criminal penalties associated with the unauthorized purchase or possession of a Medal, or with the false representation of its awarding.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to be an original cosponsor of H.R. 2561 and I strongly urge my colleagues to join me in supporting our Medal of Honor recipients.

NURSE REINVESTMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. MARK FOLEY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2001

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the members of this chamber for passing H.R. 3487, the Nurse Reinvestment Act. This bill will provide immediate relief to a sector of the healthcare industry in desperate need of our support. The nursing shortage is approaching critical levels and it is clearly affecting patients throughout our Nation.

These men and women who work on the front lines of our healthcare system everyday face tremendous hurdles. I have met with nurses and their representatives who have thoroughly explained the problems with mandatory overtime, the need for staffing standards, and protection for those employees who report unsafe conditions or practices in the facilities in which they work.

H.R. 3487 is a step in the right direction. It will provide for funding public service announcements to recruit nurses, loan repayment programs, and scholarship programs. It also requires the GAO to report to Congress on several key issues in the nursing arena—including nursing faculty shortages and disparities among hiring practices of nurses between not for profit and for profit entities.

Again, I thank my colleagues for their support of this very important piece of legislation.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3061,
DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR,
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,
AND EDUCATION AND RELATED
AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS
ACT, 2002

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2001

Ms. JACKSON-LEE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased with the bipartisan bill passed out of the House Labor-HHS-Education subcommittee and brought to the floor by unanimous consent. The bill generally makes sure that we continue our commitment to education and health care, preserves our most important worker protection programs, and includes the largest increase in new educational investment in a decade. This is good news for the American people.

However, I am extremely disappointed that this \$123.8 billion appropriation does not include a greatly needed provision to expand insurance coverage for mental illness. This provision, known as "mental health parity" would have required group health plans offering mental health coverage to make that coverage available at the same level as insurance coverage for physical illness.

This was a crucial social issues issue that was included in the Senate version of the spending bill (H.R. 3061) that should have been adopted by the conferees. The adoption by the conferees of an amendment offered by Representative RANDY "DUKE" CUNNINGHAM that would keep the Wellstone-Domenici Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-204) in effect for another year is notable, but should not replace the responsibility of the conferees to address this important issue to protect all Americans from disparities in insurance coverage.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the cost to American businesses of untreated mental illnesses is \$70 billion per year, and the National Institute of Mental Health estimates that the cost to society is \$300 billion per year. These costs are reflective of the 23% unemployment rate among American adults who suffer from depression, and the fact that four of the ten leading causes of disability in America are mental disorders.

The mental health parity provision would have addressed these issues while increasing the levels of productivity in the American workforce. It is a seriously missed opportunity that this provision was not included in this appropriation.

Having said that, I am pleased that this appropriation includes \$48.9 billion for the Department of Education, roughly \$4.4 billion

more than President Bush originally requested. However, as Chair of the Congressional Children's Caucus, I am disappointed that funding for elementary and secondary education programs fell short of the levels in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; H.R. 1) which would authorize \$26.5 billion for elementary and secondary education programs, and which awaits the President's signature.

I am also disappointed that the conferees failed to keep in the bill \$925 for elementary and secondary school renovation, particularly in light of the current state of disrepair that we find our schools in.

I am pleased with the large increase to \$7.5 billion in special education funding, raising spending roughly 19 percent higher than the \$6.8 billion in fiscal 2001. I am also pleased with the increases in spending for Pell Grants to \$10.3 billion from roughly \$8.8 billion in fiscal 2001, raising grants from \$3,750 to \$4,000.

Americans will also be well-served by the other increases such as: the 18% increase to \$1 billion for after school centers, the \$1.6 billion (18%) increase to \$10.35 billion for Title 1 grants, the 45% increase to \$665 million for Bilingual Education, the 31% increase to \$2.85 billion for Teacher Quality grants, and the 15% increase to \$1.1 billion for Impact Aid.

This appropriation also increases funding to the Department of Labor by 3%, or about \$12 billion, rather than cut by 3% as proposed by the President. This is a \$310 million increase over fiscal 2001 spending and provides growth in the major employment, training and worker protection programs. It also targets \$54.2 billion to the Department of Health and Human Services, increasing \$5 billion over fiscal 2001 and \$2.5 billion over the President's initial request.

However, much more should have been done to help displaced workers, particularly in light of those recently displaced by the September 11 attacks on America, including more than 100,000 airline employees have lost their jobs. These attacks radically altered the prospects of workers and business in every community in America.

Unfortunately, by all indicators, the recession is upon us and it seems clear that we have not yet hit bottom. So while hard working Americans continue to lose their jobs through no fault of their own, we must do all that we can to provide them with the benefits and safety net that they need and deserve.

That's why I was proud to join Representative HASTINGS and over 150 other members of the House in co-sponsoring H.R. 2946, the Displaced Workers Relief Act of 2001. This bill served as the companion bill to S. 1454, which was introduced in the Senate by Senator JEAN CARNAHAN of Missouri. It would have provided those who lost their jobs in the wake of the attacks of September 11 with the ability to pay rent, put food on their table, buy school books for their children, while trying to get by in these difficult times.

Specifically, the bill extended unemployment benefits from 26 to 78 weeks, provided 26 weeks of unemployment insurance benefits for workers who would not otherwise qualify, extended Job Training Benefits from 52 to 78 weeks, provided up to 78 weeks of federally subsidized COBRA premiums, and provided temporary Medicaid coverage for up to eight months to those workers without COBRA

coverage. Many of these benefits would have served Americans well had they been included in this Conference Report.

I am, however, pleased with the large increase to the National Institutes of Health by targeting \$23.3 billion, which helps meet our pledge to double fiscal 1998 spending on NIH by fiscal 2003.

The bill addresses the new threats that the nation faces by increasing the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) by increasing funding 11% above last year. Also, it maintains the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) at the FY 2001 level, an increase of \$300 million over the President's request. Finally, it rejects proposed enrollment cuts to Head Start, preventing potential cuts of as many as 2,500 children from the program. Finally, the support I received for Houston in fighting prostate and breast cancer—with \$290,000 for minority testing centers and \$150,000 for Sisters Network—will help save lives.

Overall, this bill, while not perfect, addresses many of the problems that we currently face and fulfills our obligations to the American people. I support it, and I urge my colleagues to also support it.

THE NATIVE AMERICAN BREAST
AND CERVICAL CANCER TREAT-
MENT TECHNICAL AMENDMENT
ACT OF 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2001

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, let me begin by thanking Chairman TAUZIN for allowing S. 1741, introduced by my good friend Senator JEFF BINGAMAN, to be considered by the House. I have appreciated working with him to bring S. 1741 to the floor and know that the issue of early detection and prevention holds a personal closeness to the both of us and to other members of this body.

On April 3, 2001, I introduced H.R. 1383, the companion to S. 1741, along with Representatives WATTS, HAYWORTH, SHERROD BROWN, CAMP, DELAUNO, KENNEDY, KILDEE and over one hundred bi-partisan co-sponsors.

The consideration of this legislation today represents the diligent and bi-partisan work over the last month and within the past few weeks and hours, by several Members of Congress and their staffs. The work of these individuals ensures that a simple but very important technical correction to the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment and Prevention Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-354) will allow coverage of breast and cervical cancer treatment to Native American women.

Mr. Speaker because of a technical definition in P.L. 106-345, American Indian and Native Alaskan women were and currently are excluded from this law's eligibility for treatment. And, as states determine whether to expand their Medicaid programs to provide breast and cervical cancer treatment as an optional benefit, passage of this legislation will ensure Native American and Alaskan Women are included to receive treatment.

It is estimated that during 2001, almost 50,000 women are expected to die from

breast or cervical cancer in the United States despite the fact that early detection and treatment of these diseases could substantially decrease this mortality. While passage of last year's bill made significant strides to address this problem, it failed to do so for Native American women and that is why we are here today.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues, especially Representatives WATTS, SHERROD BROWN, WAXMAN, CAMP, and HAYWORTH for working with me to bringing S. 1741 to the floor today. I especially want to thank Jack Horner of Representative J.C. WATT's Republican Conference staff, Tim Westmoreland of HENRY WAXMAN's office, Katie Porter of SHERROD BROWN's office, and Tony Martinez and Mike Collins of my office for their vigilant and diligent work to ensure that this legislation did not fall victim to the end-of-the-year crunch.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this bi-partisan and important legislation so that we may send it to the President for his signature to ensure that Native American and Native Alaskan women are not denied life-saving breast and cervical cancer treatment.

ESTABLISHING FIXED INTEREST
RATES FOR STUDENT AND PAR-
ENT BORROWERS

SPEECH OF

HON. PATSY T. MINK

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2001

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I want to express my support for S. 1762, which will provide students with low interest rates on Federal student loans, while preserving the health of the student loan industry by ensuring the current and future participation of lenders in this market. By helping lenders stay in the student loan markets, we are making sure that qualified students will have access to a higher education, regardless of their financial background.

S. 1762 represents a carefully brokered compromise between those representing the needs and interests of students, and those representing the lending industry. This compromise essentially fixes a problem that would have arisen in 2003 in the student loan interest rate formula that, according to the lending community, would have dried up resources for students needing funds for college by potentially reducing returns for such loans below the cost of issuing such loans. The fix that was worked out preserves the current interest rate formula that determines how much lenders receive from the Federal government, while locking in today's very low interest rates for students.

The formula will change in 2006 so that the interest rate students pay will be fixed at 6.8 percent, which is an historically low interest rate for students, and will eliminate confusion among borrowers of student loans regarding changing interest rates and formulas. With the changes in S. 1762, students benefit by getting guaranteed low interest rates, and by having the availability of funds for loans, and the stability of the student loan industry ensured.

As I mentioned, S. 1762 is supported by groups representing students and lenders

alike, as well as student financial aid administrators. We have received letters of support from the United States Student Association, the State Public Interest Research Groups, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, the American Council on Education, the Consumer Bankers of America, and the Education Finance Council.

Passage of S. 1762 is crucial for ensuring the availability of funds for qualified students to go to college. As we know, more and more students are going to college these days, and more are doing so with the help of student loans. S. 1762 will mean that more students can go on to college and will be more able to participate in the 21st century.

I urge a "yes" vote for S. 1762.

ECONOMIC SECURITY AND
WORKER ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. WILLIAM J. COYNE

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2001

Mr. COYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to this second deeply flawed economic stimulus bill.

The measure before us today represents a modest improvement over the first stimulus bill, but it is still inadequate. While the bill would extend unemployment benefits for an additional 13 weeks, it does nothing to help part-time and low-wage workers.

And while this version of the Republicans' partisan stimulus bill appears to provide more assistance to laid-off workers so that they can keep their health insurance, it would, in fact, provide them and their families with little help. Serious concerns have been raised about the administration of the proposed 60 percent refundable tax credit for health insurance premiums, but even if such assistance could be smoothly administered, it would in many cases not provide enough help to many families—who would still be unable to afford to pay their health insurance premiums. Such premiums cost, on average, about \$220 a month for an individual and \$580 a month for a family. Moreover, concerns have been raised that enactment of such a credit could undermine our country's existing system of predominantly employer-provided health insurance.

In addition, the legislation before us still provides an inadequate level of funding to States to help them deal with the crisis. The National Governors' Association estimates that the combined budget shortfall for all 50 States could exceed \$50 billion in 2002. Some provisions in the bill before us would actually exacerbate the fiscal challenge facing many states—the proposal to allow larger tax write-offs for purchases of new equipment, for example, which has been estimated to reduce state revenues by more than \$5 billion next year alone.

Finally, this latest bill still allocates much of its "economic stimulus" to tax cuts for corporations and upper-income households. While this Republican stimulus bill would not repeal the corporate alternative minimum tax, it would effectively eviscerate it. This latest stimulus bill would also speed up the phase-down of marginal tax rates for taxpayers in the upper tax brackets—just like the first stimulus