

of a number of economic, spiritual, and educational programs for church members and local residents.

Once again, I applaud the many ongoing contributions to our community made by New Jersey's Secretary of State DeForest Soaries and ask all my colleagues to join me in recognizing these commitments.

DISTINGUISHED DIRECTOR'S AWARD

HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2001

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, today I personally extend my warmest congratulations to United States Marshal James L. Whigham and the honorable men and women of the Northern District of Illinois' United States Marshals Service.

On February 28, 2001, Marshal James L. Whigham accepted the prestigious 2000 Director's Distinguished District Award on behalf of the Northern District of Illinois' United States Marshals Service. The outstanding achievements of Marshal James L. Whigham and the men and women of the Northern District have brought great pride to my district, and I commend their dedication and commitment to their service.

It is a great achievement and honor to be distinguished among the other United States Marshals Service districts. This honor has truly shown the strong leadership and exemplary performance of the United States Marshals in the Northern District of Illinois.

I am very proud of United States Marshal James L. Whigham and the men and women of the Northern District of Illinois. I wish them the best of luck in their future service to our community.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DENNIS REHBERG

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2001

Mr. REHBERG. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained due to travel delays and was not able to cast a vote on rollcall No. 16. Mr. Speaker, had I been present and not unavoidably delayed I would have voted "yea" on this important House Concurrent Resolution.

IN MEMORY OF CLARENCE
MARVIN BLACKMAN, SR.

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2001

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, today I honor the life of Clarence Marvin Blackman, Sr. of Benson, North Carolina, who died December 20, 2000. In his passing, Benson lost one of its most outstanding citizens and a man who was instrumental in growing the town to its present state. He was the kind of citizen who had the best interest of his community in mind before he made any decision.

As one of his friends put it, "If anything good happened in Benson, it was a safe bet that C.M. Blackman would be one of the people behind it."

Born in Johnston County, Blackman was the son of the late Frank and Callie Altman Blackman. He came to Benson in 1934 to open a farm supply and grocery store with Alton Massengill. He later bought out his partner and in subsequent years added an insurance agency to the business he already owned. In 1950, Blackman and four other Benson men founded the Benson Livestock Market, putting a market in easy reach of the hundreds of farmers in Harnett and Johnston counties.

A man of great energy and widespread interests, Blackman served as a town commissioner for 29 years and was mayor from 1955 to 1959. He was named Citizen of the Year in 1962 and was a charter member of the Benson Lions and the Benson Businessman's Club, which later became the Benson Area Chamber of Commerce. He was also a member of the Benson Junior Order.

After being appointed to the Board of Directors of the Benson Annual Sing in the early 1940's, Blackman served as assistant manager. He also served as announcer for the competitions.

Blackman loved his family and friends and business associates. He hosted a Christmas breakfast for them every year for 31 years. In 1999, the breakfast was named in his honor as the Annual C.M. Blackman Christmas Breakfast.

Blackman's survivors include his wife, Pernella Massengill Blackman; a daughter, Jackie B. Smith of Fayetteville; two sons, C.M. Blackman, Jr., of Raleigh and Danny Blackman of Dunn; six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, C.M. Blackman, Sr. used every minute of his long and productive life to make the world a better place. He was a respected and successful businessman, a dedicated public servant, and a great North Carolinian. It is fitting that we honor him and his family today.

INTRODUCTION OF A BILL TO REPEAL THE 2-PERCENT EXCISE TAX ON PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS

HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2001

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, the United States is blessed with a deep spirit of philanthropy. Charitable organizations serve the interests of both the individual and the community. Private foundations, in particular, have made a measurable difference in the lives of Americans. From access to public libraries, developing the polio vaccine, and even leading in the creation of Emergency 911, each and every American has experienced the benefits of the tireless efforts of these foundations.

Currently, there are approximately 47,000 foundations in the United States. In 1998, foundations gave away an estimated \$22 billion in grants. These foundations were also forced to give the Federal Government a grant of \$500 million in 1999.

Under current law, nonprofit private foundations generally must pay a 2-percent excise tax on their net investment income. This requirement was originally enacted in the Tax Reform Act of 1969 as a way to offset the cost of Government audits of these organizations. However, since 1990, the number of IRS audits on private foundations has decreased from 1200 to 191. Yet, excise collections have grown from \$204.3 million in 1990 to \$499.6 million in 1999.

In addition, private foundations are bound by a 5-percent distribution rule. Foundations must make annual qualifying distributions for charitable purposes equal to roughly 5-percent of the fair market value of the foundation's net investment assets. The required 2-percent excise tax—payable to the IRS—actually counts as a credit to the 5-percent distribution rule.

So, what we have is a private foundation making a charitable grant to the Federal Government every year. Now, the last time I looked, the Federal Government was not in any dire need of charitable contributions. In fact, in the next 10 years, the Federal budget surplus is projected to be \$5.7 trillion. In 2002 alone, we are projected to have a \$231 billion surplus. Therefore, I believe that Americans have been more than "charitable" in giving the Government their hard-earned dollars. It is time that we begin the process of returning that money to the people.

President Bush is working to accomplish that goal with his reduction in tax rates, and allowing for the increased use of charitable deductions and credits. My bill goes one step further, it gives those charitable organizations relief from wasting \$500 million on the Federal Government and, instead, giving the money to those who truly need it.

I would also like to emphasize that former President Clinton proposed a reduction in the excise tax in his fiscal year 2001 budget. The Treasury Department noted, "Lowering the excise tax rate for all foundations would make additional funds available for charitable purposes." Common sense dictates that the elimination of this tax would spur additional charitable giving.

I want to thank Congressman CRANE for his support on this bill and ask our colleagues to lend their support as well.

VETERANS' OPPORTUNITIES ACT OF 2001

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2001

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, today I am introducing on behalf of Mr. Evans, Mr. Hayworth, Mr. Reyes and myself the Veterans' Opportunities Act of 2001. This measure would make a number of needed improvements to VA benefits and services including memorial affairs, life insurance, the means-tested pension program, automobile and adaptive equipment and specially adapted housing for seriously disabled veterans. Five different transition and outreach services to servicemembers, veterans, and disabled veterans and their dependents are included in the bill, as well as provisions affecting various veterans' educational assistance programs.

My colleagues and I have also consulted with Armed Services Committee Chairman BOB STUMP and Ranking Democratic Member IKE SKELTON to make certain time-sensitive technical amendments to certain servicemembers' and veterans' education provisions in current law.

Mr. Speaker, veterans' benefits and services indeed are "earned opportunities." They are earned through selfless and often hazardous service to our nation, during war and peace alike. Doing right by America's sons and daughters who have worn the military uniform is firmly ingrained in our national values, our national pride, and our sense of moral responsibility. On behalf of my fellow original cosponsors, I would like to highlight just a few of the 17 provisions in the bill.

Sadly, our nation loses about 1,500 World War II veterans each week. The Department of Veterans Affairs projects that the current death rate for our veterans will continue to increase, peaking in 2008. Our bill would increase the burial and funeral expenses for veterans whose death is service-connected from \$1,500 to \$2,000; increase burial and funeral expenses for veterans with nonservice-connected disabilities from \$300 to \$500; and increase the burial plot allowance from \$150 to \$300. The amount payable for these benefits has remained constant for many years in spite of inflation. The purchasing power associated with these provisions still is limited and I consider these provisions as a starting point for further improvements. I note that VA continues to maintain some 119 veterans cemeteries and 26 States participate in VA's State Cemetery Grants program. Both of these programs provide a final resting place for our veterans, and are separate and independent from the burial benefits in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, VA provides certain severely disabled veterans with grants for the purchase of automobiles or other conveyances. The grant also provides for adaptive equipment necessary for safe operation of these vehicles. Our bill would increase the amount of assistance for automobile and adaptive equipment for severely disabled veterans from \$8,000, which Congress established in October 1998, to \$9,000. Veterans eligible for the automobile allowance are among the most seriously disabled. I have a deep respect for them. Prior to the 1998 increase, Congress had not adjusted the grant since 1988. We need to ensure that seriously disabled veterans have the opportunity to participate in the everyday freedoms sustained by their service. We owe them nothing less and they ask for nothing more.

VA provides a one-time specially adapted housing grant of up to \$43,000 to veterans with service-connected disabilities consisting of certain combinations of loss or loss of use of extremities and blindness or other organic diseases or injuries. Veterans with service-connected blindness alone or with loss or loss of use of both upper extremities may receive a home adaption grant of up to \$8,250. Our bill would increase the amount of assistance for specially adapted housing grants for severely disabled veterans from \$43,000 to \$48,000 and the amount for additional adaptations that may be necessary later in the life of the dwelling from \$8,250 to \$9,250. I urge my colleagues to support these increases because, unless the amounts of the grants are periodically adjusted, inflation erodes their value and effectiveness.

Whenever we have the opportunity to make our policies family-friendly for Americans who wear the military uniform, I think we should do so. Our bill would extend coverage under the Servicemembers Group Life Insurance program to dependent spouses and children. The amount of coverage for a spouse would not exceed \$100,000 and the amount of coverage for each child would be \$10,000. The servicemember would not pay premiums on the child's coverage.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud my colleagues LANE EVANS and JERRY MORAN for their efforts on our provision that would revise the rules with respect to the net worth limitation for VA's means-tested pension program. Under our bill, the value of real property owned by the veteran and the veteran's spouse and children would be excluded if such property is used for farming, ranching, or similar agricultural purposes. I believe this provision is a fairer approach to the family farmer who becomes disabled from nonservice connected causes. Further, it would simplify administration of this program.

I appreciate Representatives PASCRELL and DOYLE's work on our next provisions, which would expand the definition of "eligible dependent" for purposes of VA outreach services to mean a spouse, surviving spouse, child, or dependent parent. The bill would require VA to make known through a variety of means such as the Internet, media outlets, and veterans' publications the VA services available, and require VA to provide to the veteran or dependent information concerning benefits and health care services whenever the veteran or dependent first applies for any benefit. My colleagues and I appreciate VA Under Secretary for Benefits Joe Thompson making Ms. Diane Fuller and Mr. Dennis Rhodes available to assist us in drafting this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the fundamental marker of a successful transition for our servicemembers is timely and suitable employment. The Departments of Labor, Veterans Affairs and Defense operate a Transition Assistance Program, known as "TAP" for this and other transition purposes. In its 1999 report to the Veterans' Affairs and Armed Services Committees of the House and the Senate, the bipartisan Congressional Commission on Service members and Transition Assistance made a number of recommendations to improve servicemembers' transition programs and services. The Commission reported that the Department of Defense expects to separate about 238,000 servicemembers annually for the foreseeable future and that during the 10-year period from 1987 to 1997, total unemployment compensation to former servicemembers surpassed \$2.9 billion. The Commission also reported that compared with other veterans, Department of Labor Transition Assistance Program participants collected Unemployment Insurance for Ex-Service Members benefits for shorter periods because they found jobs more quickly. About 65 percent of servicemembers are married at the time of transition and many have children.

The issue our bill addresses is one of the timing of the Transition Assistance Program. Although section 1142 of title 10, United States Code, requires the Services to furnish transition assistance no later than 90 days before an individual's separation or retirement, the law does not specify the earliest point at

which this service should begin. Transition Assistance Program statistics reveal that the majority of servicemembers are within this three-month window when they first visit a transition office.

The Commission reported that during its visit with servicemembers at military installations in the Continental United States and around the world, servicemembers repeatedly voiced their desire to begin the transition process earlier than 90 days prior to separation—ideally one-year prior for regular separatees and two years prior for retirees. The Commission agreed that this approach gives servicemembers more adequate time to prepare. The Commission's Vice Chairman, G. Kim Wincup, former staff director of the House Armed Services Committee, an Assistant Secretary of the Army during the Persian Gulf War, was the Commission's chief advisor on transition matters. We note the Commission's observation in its report that: "additionally, it provides commanders flexibility since many servicemembers are deployed during the last six months of their active duty. With additional time, servicemembers could learn the fundamentals of transition and the job search process before deployment and relieve the pressure to compress transition and out processing into the last few weeks."

This provision in our bill would expand the availability of pre-separation counseling (and Transition Assistance Program assistance for servicemembers) as furnished by the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs and Labor to as early as nine months for separatees and 18 months for retirees, but in no event less than 90 days. TAP is so important because often it is the last thing servicemembers remember about their military service and it is what they share with the next generation.

Mr. Speaker, dramatic changes have occurred in both the methods for providing education and in the institutions offering courses over the past several years. As the Transition Commission pointed out, "postsecondary education is now available on the Internet, through broadcast media and videotape on satellite campuses, and through non-campus programs." Our bill would permit veterans to use VA educational assistance benefits for an independent study certificate program offered by an institution of higher learning. I thank the University of Phoenix, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, DeAnza Community College, Washington State University and George Washington University for bringing this issue to the Committee's attention.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL RULING ON RAPE

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2001

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear about the International Criminal Tribunal's conviction of the three Bosnian Serbs for rape, torture, and sexual enslavement of Muslim women during the Bosnian war. I submit into the RECORD the following Washington Post article that appeared on February 23, 2001, which details the outcome of