

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 adaptation 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

the verdict. Perhaps most significantly, the judges ruled that mass rape is a crime against humanity, the most serious category of international crimes after genocide.

This is a landmark moment in the struggle for women's rights and in addressing issues of violence against women. For the first time, in the international justice system, sex crimes against women are being specifically identified and punished. In the past, UN war crimes tribunals ignored mass rape and sexual enslavement and considered these crimes to be a natural occurrence in war. Crimes against women like forced prostitution and rape that took place during WWII were never even prosecuted in the international tribunals that followed the war.

Violence against women is unacceptable. We, in the United States, need to recognize the importance of this decision, take it to heart, and make ending violence against women a priority here at home and abroad.

I want to recognize Presiding Judge Florence Mumba for her excellent work in pushing this trial to a just conclusion. It is a milestone decision for women all over the world.

I applaud this decision and hope that we, in Congress, will follow this global legal model and use all of our means and resolve to bring justice and security to the women of our nation and the world.

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 23, 2001]

WATERSHED RULING ON RAPE

SERBS FOUND GUILTY OF 'CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY'

(By Peter Finn)

BERLIN, Feb. 22.—Three Bosnian Serbs were found guilty today by a U.N. war crimes tribunal of the rape, torture and enslavement of Muslim women during the Bosnian war. It was the first time an international court ruled that rape is a "crime against humanity."

The three men were sentenced to between 12 and 28 years in prison for sex crimes committed near the town of Foca, southeast of Sarajevo, in 1992 and 1993, at the height of Bosnia's ethnic conflict. Human rights groups have estimated that tens of thousands of women, mostly Moslems, were raped during the war.

The judges found the three men's crimes to be part of a pattern of violent sexual abuse and intimidation condoned by the wartime Bosnian Serb leadership. "What the evidence shows is that the rapes were used by members of the Bosnian Serb armed forces as an instrument of terror," said Presiding Judge Florence Mumba as she sentenced the men at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at the Hague.

Today's decision was also significant for breaking old patterns by which international courts considered rape during war to be some lesser offense, if an offense at all. The decision "opens a whole new category" of war crime, said Eugene R. Fidell, of the National Institute of Military Justice, a nonprofit organization in Washington.

During World War II, the Japanese and German armies systematically enslaved thousands of women to serve as prostitutes for their soldiers. Dutch authorities tried Japanese officers who enslaved Dutch nationals, but the international war crimes tribunals that the allies created after the war did not treat the women's enslavement as a war crime, or crime of any kind.

Likewise, international courts have generally not treated as war crimes rape and other sexual violence that soldiers in combat zones commit of their own volition, assuming the soldiers were prosecuted at all.

In today's decision, Dragoljub Kunarac, 40, was sentenced to 28 years on 11 counts, including rape, torture and enslavement as crimes against humanity. Radomir Kovac, 39, was sentenced to 20 years on four counts. And Zoran Vukovic, 45, was sentenced to 12 years after the court dismissed most of the charges against him but convicted him on four counts.

The crimes occurred as Bosnia, formerly a republic of Yugoslavia, was the scene of war between its three main ethnic groups, Serbs, Muslims and Croats.

After Foca, a largely Muslim town, was overrun by Bosnian Serb forces, its mosques were burned and its civilian population rounded up and imprisoned in separate camps for males and females.

Sixteen rape victims and other witnesses testified at the eight-month trial that Serb paramilitary forces entered the women's detention centers and selected women and girls as young as 12 for nightly gang rapes and sexual torture. Many of the women were left with permanent gynecological and psychological damage.

In an impassioned and scathing judgment today, Mumba said, "Muslim women and girls, mothers and daughters together [were] were robbed of the last vestiges of human dignity."

"Women and girls [were] treated like chattels, pieces of property at the arbitrary disposal of the Serb occupation forces."

Lawyers for the convicted men had argued that the women were willing sexual partners.

As Kunarac stood before the three-judge panel, Mumba said, "You abused and ravaged Muslim women because of their ethnicity, and from among their number, you picked whomsoever you fancied on a given occasion." Kunarac briefly bowed his head as his sentence of 28 years was read.

"I remember he was very forceful. He wanted to hurt me," one witness testified about Kunarac during the trial. "But he could never hurt me as much as my soul was hurting me."

Sentencing Kovac, the court said that it was particularly appalled at his treatment of a 12-year-old-girl, who was identified only as A.B. None of the 16 victims who testified, or other victims, was identified, so as to shield them from further trauma.

A.B., the court said, was "a helpless little child for whom you showed absolutely no compassion whatsoever, but whom you abused sexually in the same way as the other girls. You finally sold her like an object in the knowledge that this would almost certainly mean further sexual assaults by other men."

The court noted that eight years later, A.B. has never been heard from.

Sentencing Vukovic to 12 years, the judges found that he raped a 15-year-old girl after threatening her mother with death if she did not tell him where her daughter was hiding. Mumba recalled case after case, summarizing the catalog of horror before she issued the prison terms.

In one instance, she noted, Kunarac "personally raped Witness FWS-183 and aided and abetted her rape by the two other soldiers by encouraging the other men while they were raping her. You further mocked the victim by telling the other soldiers to wait for their turn while you were raping her, by laughing at her while she was raped by the other soldiers, and finally by saying that she would carry Serb babies and that she would not know the father."

Noting that the three soldiers were not the masterminds of the war—Bosnia Serb leaders have been indicted but remain fugitives—the court said that "lawless opportunists should expect no mercy [from the court], no matter how low their position in the chain of command may be."

Foca now lies in the Serb zone of Bosnia and was renamed Srbijne after the war. There are few Muslims in the town today.

Dirk Ryneveld, the lead prosecutor in the case, welcomed the verdicts and commended "the bravery of the victims who came forward to tell their stories."

BANKRUPTCY ABUSE PREVENTION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT OF 2001: CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

HON. F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2001

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, March 1, 2001, the House is scheduled to consider H.R. 333, the "Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2001." On February 15, 2001, the Committee on the Judiciary ordered reported favorably the bill H.R. 333 and the report thereon was filed on February 26, 2001. The Congressional Budget Office ("CBO") cost estimate, however, was not available for filing on February 26. Therefore, I hereby submit the CBO cost estimate for printing in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, February 27, 2001.

Hon. F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for H.R. 333, the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2001.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contacts are Lanette J. Walker (for federal costs), Erin Whitaker (for the revenue impact), Shelley Finlayson (for the state and local impact), and Paige Piper/Bach (for the private-sector impact).

Sincerely,
BARRY B. ANDERSEN
(for Dan L. Crippen, Director).

Enclosure

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE
H.R. 333—*Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2001*

Summary: CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 333 would increase discretionary costs primarily to the U.S. Trustees by \$256 million over the 2002-2006 period. At the same time, the bill would slightly increase the fees charged for filing a bankruptcy case, and would change how some of these fees are currently recorded in the budget. We estimate that implementing the bill would increase the amount of bankruptcy fees that are treated as an offset to appropriations by \$279 million over the five-year period, resulting in a net decrease in discretionary spending of \$23 million over this period.

In addition, CBO estimates that enacting this bill would decrease governmental receipts (revenues) by \$260 million over the 2002-2006 period because bankruptcy fees that are currently recorded as revenues would be reclassified as offsetting collections and offsetting receipts. Finally, enactment of H.R. 333 would result in filling additional judge-ships, and we estimate that their mandatory pay and benefits would cost \$18 million over the next five years. Because the bill would