

are not talking about the election of 2000. I believe that that is an issue that should be a priority for America, as well as it is for us to appreciate and commemorate and celebrate our Constitution. The right to vote is fundamental, and so I intend tonight and tomorrow to offer two pieces of legislation, one to establish a national holiday for Americans to vote during a Presidential year and, secondarily, an act that will study the issue of how do we design a system that counts every vote and allows every American to vote, the Secure Democracy Act.

Those legislative initiatives will substitute for H.R. 60 and H.R. 62. We will establish a generic national holiday every 4 years so Americans who work every day will have the privilege and opportunity for expressing their choices and their rights to express the decision of who will be President and who will be elected to this body in the coming years.

I ask my colleagues to join me in support of this legislation.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the importance for ensuring the right to vote is a fundamental right guaranteed to every citizen of the United States. Many people were denied this fundamental right in the past presidential election partly because they were unable to vote due to work commitments.

The bill I am introducing tonight will substantially resolve this serious issue raised by last year's presidential election, the lack of time for people to vote or participate in the very important federal election process, due to employment commitments that keep many Americans from voting or acting as election day officials.

I firmly believe that the United States Constitution is not just there to protect me or people who agree with me, but it is there to also ensure that those who do not share my view also have equal access to the tools of democracy. My legislation would establish a National Election Day on the 2nd Tuesday of November, in presidential election years as a legal public holiday. I am now lending my full support to this new bill instead of H.R. 62, which I previously filed. I am now also removing my complete support from H.R. 62.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will forge a strong commitment to Democracy at home and abroad by making substantive changes to how future presidential elections must work in order to avoid the problems of the last presidential election.

It is my opinion that the larger threat to our national identity as a democracy and the sense of well being that Americans once had about the election process is the acceptance of a belief that citizens of this country do not have a voice in its governance. This is the greatest Achilles Heel that this nation has ever faced. Throughout history many nations and governments have ceased to exist because they failed to fulfill the true mission of gov-

ernment, which is to be responsive to the needs of citizens.

For this reason, I am introducing legislation to establish a National Election Day as a legal public holiday to ensure that the fundamental right to vote that is granted to every citizen of the United States is adhered to. I am asking my colleagues in Congress for their support in meeting the voting challenges that have been presented to our growing and diverse nation.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HANSEN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PLATTS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PLATTS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, last month we praised our forefathers in observance of Presidents' Day and we also praised the contributions of African Americans in the development and continuation of this country. This month, as women's history gets underway, I rise to recognize some of our foremothers; women who dared to be first, who strove for equality and social justice for all; women who not only broke ceilings but shattered spheres in pursuit of rights that should have been inalienable; women whose contributions continue to pave the way and to inspire others.

Mr. Speaker, I am from Chicago, a city rich in women pioneers and trailblazers, both past and present. One such individual is Ida B. Wells who founded the first black female suffrage club in Illinois, as well as the first kindergarten in a black neighborhood. Wells was born in 1862, was a slave for the first 6 months of her life, and spent the remainder of her life fighting for civil and economic rights for African Americans.

Declaring that one had better die fighting against injustice than die like a dog or rat in a trap, Wells crusaded against lynching and segregation until her death in 1931.

Labor activist Sylvia Woods was a pioneer in civil rights. During World War II, she led the Union organization at Bendix Aviation. She spent much of the 1940s organizing United Auto Workers Local 330 and formulating the UAW resolution against sex discrimination. Following the war, she assisted women

who were laid off in Chicago and co-founded the National Alliance Against Racism.

However, at present there are future history-makers that are making an impact on the lives of the citizens of Chicago and the Nation. Exemplary individuals from today include Addie Wyatt, Reverend Willie Taplin Barrow, Dr. Johnnie Coleman and Mrs. Mamie Bone.

Reverend Addie Wyatt has the distinction of having had active involvement with the three major movements of the 20th Century, labor, civil rights and women's rights. Her leadership roles in labor were international vice president of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union and she broke ground as the first female local union president of the United Packing House and Allied Workers, and as international vice president of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America. Her founding roles in Operation Breadbasket and Operation PUSH, as well as her work with Martin Luther King, Jr., illustrate her commitment to civil rights. Her involvement in the women's movement has also generated a number of noteworthy achievements.

Reverend Wyatt is a founding member of the National Organization for Women, was even appointed by Eleanor Roosevelt to serve on the Labor Legislation Committee of the Commission on the Status of Women.

During her distinguished career, she advised Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Carter and other important leaders on causes. She and her husband Claude currently serve as pastors emeritus of the Vernon Park Church of God in Chicago.

Reverend Willie Taplin Barrow is the co-chair of Rainbow/PUSH Coalition and is well-known for breaking barriers in a male-dominated profession. She is an ordained minister and on the Governor's Committee on the Status of Women in Illinois.

Another fine citizen is the Reverend Dr. Johnnie Coleman. Sometimes referred to as the first lady of the religious community, she is the founder-minister of Christ Universal Church where 4,000 people go to hear her words of wisdom and healing every Sunday.

To her credit, Reverend Coleman has several organizations in Chicago, the Universal Foundation for Better Living, Inc.; the Johnnie Coleman Institute; and the Johnnie Coleman Academy and a book of teachings entitled *Open Your Mind and Be Healed*.

Ms. Mamie Bone, as chairperson of the Central Advisory Council for the Chicago Housing Authority, fights regularly for residents. She serves as a member of the CHA Board of Commissioners and continues to champion the employment security and safety of public housing residents.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to just highlight the activities and the involvement of Margaret

Blackshere, who currently serves as President of the Illinois Federation of Labor. She is an outstanding labor leader, civic activist, former teacher, political activist and a fighter for the rights of working people all over America.

Margaret Blackshere, is currently the President of the Illinois AFL-CIO. A former classroom teacher, Blackshere has served on all levels of the Labor Movement from president of her local union in Madison to statewide vice president of the Illinois Federation of Teachers, to her current position.

Blackshere has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a master's degree in Urban Education—both from Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville.

She has been a delegate to the Democratic National Convention, served as the director of the Illinois Democratic Coordinated Campaign in 1990 and 1992, and is a member of the Democratic National Committee.

Blackshere serves on various boards and councils including the United Way of Illinois, Voices for Illinois Children, White House Commission on Presidential Scholars, and the Illinois Skills Standard & Credentialing Council.

She is a member of American Federation of Teachers Local 763 and is a delegate to the National AFL-CIO Convention.

EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, as the Republican co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues, I am pleased to join the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD), the other co-chair of the Women's Caucus, and my other colleagues in celebrating March as women's history month.

Women accomplished so much in the 20th Century and I am fortunate and proud to co-chair the first Women's Caucus of the 21st Century. Let us hope that this century is productive for our daughters and granddaughters as it was for our mothers and us.

The last 100 years have seen women make important advancements in the area of public service. Not only did our predecessors gain the right to vote, but in recent years we have been considered a decidedly important voting block. We now have more women serving in the House and the Senate than ever before, 61 women in the House and 13 in the Senate. I think we will keep seeing these numbers increase.

We have women serving as Supreme Court justices, governors, Attorneys General and in many other elected offices, but we still have a long way to go. For all the accomplishments that women have achieved in the 20th century, we should not be complacent. We still have a lot to do.

One of the areas where females have made important strides is in the area of education. Women currently make up over 50 percent of college freshmen

in the country. To think that in 1872, over 100 years ago, only 97 educational institutions even accepted women.

The National Center for Education Statistics report that females are now doing as well or better than males on factors measuring educational attainment. Nevertheless, women continue to trail their male counterparts in the areas of mathematics and science. This is something that I hope, through my position on the House Committee on Science, to help rectify.

What is more, women are still under-represented in doctoral and first professional degree programs, although, as the NCEC points out, women have made substantial gains in these areas during the last 25 years.

There are other areas of education where improvements need to be made, most notably in the area of school access for so-called disadvantaged students. A group of disadvantaged students whose needs are often overlooked are homeless children. Homeless children face unique problems when attempting to access a quality education. Some schools do not allow homeless children to register for classes without school or medical records. Others will not enroll children without a home address, and there is nobody in the schools whose job it is to help them.

As a result, homeless children wait days and even weeks just to get into the classroom. Obviously this has serious and negative consequences for their educational advantages.

Mr. Speaker, some may be wondering why I am talking about homeless children during this recognition of the achievements of women. Well, it is because, as data shows, educating homeless children is a women's issue. According to a Federal study released in 1999, 84 percent of parents or guardians of homeless children are female. The average homeless family is composed of a single mother in her twenties and two children under the age of 6. Single mothers are vulnerable to homelessness because of the high cost of housing for families, the high cost of child care and lack of housing assistance.

We must work together as women, as leaders in our community and as public servants, to find answers to the destructive cycles caused by homelessness and poverty. That is why I have introduced H.R. 623, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act of 2001. This bill will ensure that all homeless children are guaranteed access to public education so that they can acquire the skills needed to escape poverty and lead healthy and productive lives. It will also strengthen the parental rights at a time when mothers of homeless children find themselves most vulnerable. It will help homeless mothers pay for school supplies and other emergency items that children need to participate in school, such as clothes, eyeglasses and hygiene products.

Many mothers have expressed gratitude through letters and cards for these items which they could not oth-

erwise afford at such a difficult point in their lives. Working hard now to ensure a brighter future for all Americans is something that we as women learn the importance of during our struggle to gain equality in the 20th century. During the month of March, it is fitting that women take time to reflect back upon and celebrate our collective accomplishments over the last 100 years. We must use every opportunity to show how we are going to use the lessons learned in yesteryear's battles to eliminate illiteracy, increase educational opportunity for all and promote high academic achievements. If we do so, that would give women 100 years from now something to crow about.

CONCERN OVER PROPOSED CASPIAN OIL PIPELINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CANTOR). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I come to the House Floor today to voice my concern regarding the proposed Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, originating in the Azerbaijani capital of Baku, bypassing Armenia via Georgia and ending at the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

Over the last few years, despite the reluctance of major U.S. oil companies, the Clinton administration promoted the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, which many experts are now questioning. Cato Institute analyst Stanley Kober recently noted at a foreign policy briefing that the pipeline, far from promoting U.S. interests in the region undermines them.

Another report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace knows that pursuit of this pipeline only exacerbated tensions between the United States and Russia and did little to advance U.S. interests.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear today that I strongly oppose the current plans for this project that is expected to cost \$3 billion.

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It is my hope that the Bush administration will take into account these reports and thoroughly examine the need for this proposed pipeline route. I am not encouraged, however, by recent reports that the Bush administration, like the Clinton administration before it, seems to believe that the pipeline would provide the West with a greater amount of oil, thus cutting down on the U.S. dependence on Middle Eastern countries for oil. I am here today to say that this is not the case. In fact, with reserves estimated at approximately 2 to 3 percent of the world's total, experts note that Caspian oil reserves will have no significant impact on world oil prices.

The Bush administration also seems to be under the impression that by building a pipeline in this volatile area