

Both Europe and Greater China have the economic mass required to anchor the world monetary system to their currencies, as the UK once did.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I very much regret that I was unavoidably detained and unable to vote on rollcall No. 278, the motion to commit S. 2578, on June 27, 2002. Had I been present, you may be assured that I would have cast my vote in opposition. My beeper did not work.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS RESEARCH CORPORATION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2002

HON. STEVE BUYER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the "Department of Veterans Affairs Research Corporation Accountability Act of 2002."

In 1988 Congress enacted Public Law 100-322, the Veterans' Benefits and Services Act, which included a provision that gave the VA the authority to establish nonprofit research corporations. This was done to provide a flexible funding mechanism for the conduct of approved research at medical centers. Prior to giving VA this authority any funding received from private sources such as pharmaceutical companies was placed in a General Post fund. However, it became virtually impossible to track the funding stream. There was no way to identify the source of the funding, nor how the money was being spent. The impetus behind establishing the research corporations was to create an accounting mechanism whereby the VA would submit to Congress an annual report on the number and location of corporations established and the amount of contributions made to each such corporation. Unfortunately, these reports have turned out to be nothing more than ledger sheets with numbers with little or no detail.

Earlier this year, my Subcommittee held a hearing on VA Research Corporations and we heard from the VA's Assistant Inspector General for Auditing that during the years 1994 through 1997, that his office published three reports that identified the need for stricter accountability and oversight with regard to the administration of funds by the Veterans Health Administration research corporations. For instance, in 1994, the IG audit of a million dollars of the \$3.6 million in expenditures spent at three research corporations and identified approximately \$625,000 that was spent on salaries of medical residents, staff travel not clearly related to research or administration. Funds were also spent for non-research related conferences, honorary gifts, awards, entertainment, other than non-research expenditures. This one but one example of how money can be misspent when in this case the corporation is not held accountable.

Under current law, the VA nonprofit research corporations are required to provide Congress with an annual report summarizing their activities and accomplishments. These reports have turned out to be nothing more than bare bones financial statements. The legislation I have introduced today amends section 7366 of Title 38 of the United States Code to require each VA corporation submit a detailed statement that includes the corporation's operations, activities, and accomplishments during the preceding year to the Secretary of the VA by not later than March 1 of each year. The report should include the amount of funds received along with the source of funding; and an itemized accounting of all disbursements. Those corporations with funding in excess of \$300,000 must obtain an audit of the corporation for that year, corporations with funding totaling less than \$300,000 must obtain an audit every three years. These audits must be conducted by an independent auditor and shall be performed in accordance with generally accepted Government auditing standards.

The VA's Inspector General will be required to randomly review audits to determine whether or not they were carried out in accordance with the auditing standards outlined in the legislation. My bill would also extend the life of the corporations by providing authority to establish such corporations until December 31, 2006.

The VA has made tremendous contributions in the field of medical research. I think we all recognize the many accomplishments made by the VA in discovering new drug therapies and developing medical devices that have benefited not only veterans but all Americans. For instance, the VA invented the implantable cardiac pacemaker, developed the nicotine patch, performed the first successful liver transplant, and the development of the first oral vaccine for smallpox.

It is not my intention to prevent VA research from continuing to make great strides as it has in the past, but we must ensure that all research funds are directed with focus and accountability.

LYNDA SCOTT EVERETT

HON. KEVIN BRADY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a special lady who is not only a constituent, but a close personal friend, Lynda Scott Everett. On July 11, 2002, Lynda will receive the Texas Council of Community MHMR Centers' "Betty Hardwick Best of Texas Award" for her long and distinguished record of service and commitment to providing the citizens of Texas with the best possible mental health, mental retardation, and substance abuse services. Lynda is only the second person to receive this distinguished recognition.

Concerned about the quality of care her son, Andy, who suffers from autism and mental retardation, was receiving, Lynda became a tireless voice for those who could not speak out for themselves. She began her volunteerism for the mentally disabled as a consultant for the Tri-County MHMR in Montgomery County, Texas. She was then ap-

pointed to the Board of Trustees in 1989 and continued her fight for better services, stronger rights, and additional funds for more effective medications for those who are disabled. Lynda's presence was quickly felt as she attended hearings, meetings and conventions in order to improve the lives of individuals with mental disabilities, as well as their families. Her work expanded her cause across the state of Texas when she was appointed by Governor George W. Bush to the Texas Board of Mental Health and Mental Retardation in 1999.

As part of Lynda's efforts to help the mentally disabled, she also has been a member of the Texas State Autism Task Force, served on the Montgomery County United Way Campaign Cabinet, as a Board member of the Texas Council of Community MHMR Centers and the Mental Health Association in Texas, as well as being president and co-founder of the Citizens for the Developmentally Disabled.

While Lynda was also a recipient of the Montgomery County Women of Distinction Award from 1997-1999, I am personally grateful for her role as a key, and indispensable member of my first U.S. congressional campaign committee.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Lynda Scott Everett on her hard work and dedication to the mentally and physically disabled on behalf of the eighth Congressional District of Texas. She not only is an exemplary Texan, but an exemplary American with a wonderful heart and inspiring courage. As Cindy Sill, Executive Director of the Tri-County MHMR, who nominated Lynda for the "Betty Hardwick Best of Texas Award" said, "She began her journey into advocacy and volunteer work to help her son, but quickly expanded her focus and has spoken for countless individuals whose voices are often not heard or ignored. . . . She makes a difference in countless lives throughout Texas."

IN CELEBRATION OF THE 90TH BIRTHDAY OF GRACE VIGNEAU

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Grace Vigneau of East Hartford, Connecticut, who is celebrating her 90th birthday. Grace is a fellow Mayberryite whose enthusiasm and good will shine through in all she does. Her continued involvement and energy make the Energizer Bunny pale by comparison.

The impact Grace has had on our community in East Hartford is sizable and her accomplishments numerable. She was an original organizer of the Mayberry Village Social and Athletic Club and provided many years of outstanding service to the Democratic Women's Club. She is also a prime mover behind the "Golden Girls," a group of women that includes my mother who have been friends for years and remain nearly as active as they were when they first met. One of their main goals is community involvement, which Grace exemplifies. I must admit, I would not be standing here on the floor of the House today without the support of Grace and the Golden Girls.

Grace is known not only for her community service, but also for her competitive spirit in my annual charity bocce tournament. For the past eleven years, Grace has displayed a superior level of skill and sportsmanship on the bocce court. No tournament would be complete without Grace's ever-present smile and humor.

Even at 90 years of age, Grace maintains her high energy level and the organizing skills that made her such a leader. I would not be surprised if the phrase "growing old gracefully" was created to describe Grace Vigneau. She is loved by family and friends for her infectious enthusiasm, good will, and caring ways. Therefore, I ask my colleagues to rise with me today and celebrate the 90th birthday of Grace Vigneau and wish her continued health and happiness for years to come.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, on roll-call Nos. 283, 284 I would have voted "aye."

WATER RIGHTS IN CALIFORNIA

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, the following editorial was written by my fellow colleague from California, Representative GEORGE MILLER. It was published in The Los Angeles Times on June 20, 2002 under the title, "Dammning the Money Stream of the Water Profiteers."

I commend Representative MILLER for eloquently addressing the issue of water rights in California. I support the conviction that California's water belongs to all Californians. We should not allow big agribusiness to profit off antiquated government subsidies at the expense of California's water-strapped communities and family farms.

The following is a reprinted version of Mr. MILLER's editorial:

[From the Los Angeles Times, June 20, 2002]
DAMMING THE MONEY STREAM OF THE WATER PROFITEERS

(By George Miller)

Californians who recently learned a very expensive lesson about futures trading from Enron Corp. may soon get a second dose of market manipulation, this time courtesy of the federal government.

Instead of watching out for the water needs—and pocketbooks—of taxpayers, the Department of the Interior may soon sign long-term water contracts that provide multimillion-dollar windfalls to agricultural corporations at the expense of cities and consumers.

A hundred years ago, Congress made a bargain with farmers in the dry West: Taxpayers would subsidize dams, canals and water to promote settlement and irrigate family farms. In return, farmers would have to repay only a fraction of the true cost of the investment. The subsidies were locked into long-term contracts that the Interior Department signed with water districts promising to deliver millions of acre-feet.

Yet for decades, some reclamation beneficiaries in California's Central Valley have been farming the taxpayers as much as the land.

Huge companies maneuvered to capture the multibillion-dollar subsidy intended for family farmers, leading Congress to close the loopholes and reduce the subsidies that encourage overuse of water resources.

Now the original water contracts are expiring, and Interior must negotiate new contracts under much tighter terms dictated by a historic 1992 water reform law. Given the growing demand for water throughout the state, some of these giant farm operations have a new scheme for enriching themselves at public expense: Instead of using subsidized water for growing crops, they want to sell some of their government-provided water back to the government—or to water-short cities or farms—for huge profits.

Bennett Raley, who is in charge of the federal water program at the Interior Department, approves. "We believe in the free market," Raley says. "It's their water." Well, actually, it isn't "their" water.

The water originates in the mountains and the rivers of this great state. It belongs not to any particular contractor or farmer but to all the people of California, who paid for its development, storage and delivery with costly subsidies. The Interior Department's customers enjoy the use of the water only because of their contracts with the government, and those contracts now need to be renegotiated.

The government signed contracts to provide subsidized water for food and fiber production, not to award a public resource to a particular group that could convert it into an annuity for personal profit. If there is a market in California for \$1,000 an acre-foot—and there is—why would any responsible federal official sign a 25-year contract to sell water to farming concerns that will resell it for a profit of 800% or 1,000%?

If the water market is that healthy, why shouldn't the taxpayers, who built and subsidized the projects in the first place, get to sell the water for a large profit?

If the contractor's intent in signing a new contract is merely to market a portion of the water, then, learning from the Enron example, we should not be concentrating public resources in the hands of a few private individuals.

Yet farming interests, many with longstanding ties to the Bush administration, are pressuring federal officials to sign new contracts that deliver them control of vast amounts of water.

Water is already an overcommitted resource in California, with competing interests divided among cities, agriculture, industry and the environment. Global warming has raised concerns of diminished Sierra snowpacks and runoffs in the future, which would reduce our ability to fill our reservoirs.

Surely this is not the time for responsible government officials to commit water to one group of contractors and force the rest of the state to cut deals that enrich private interests from the sale of public resources.

Doesn't it make sense for Raley and his co-workers at the Interior Department to use great caution in deciding how much of the public's subsidized water to include in those new contracts, instead of promising vast volumes that irrigators will turn around and resell—perhaps even to the government—at a huge profit?

It's not their water, Mr. Raley, unless you give it away.

WILLIAMS SISTERS AT WIMBLEDON

HON. MAXINE WATERS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Serena Williams on her impressive win at Wimbledon. Over the holiday weekend, Serena beat her older sister, Venus, to win her third grand slam title but her first Wimbledon title. I congratulate the two sisters on a great match.

Serena said she gained a lot of momentum from her French Open win, and it showed. In the end, Serena won in straight sets. With the win, Serena became the first woman to win the French Open and Wimbledon back-to-back since Steffi Graf in 1996.

The next day, the two sisters teamed up to win the Wimbledon Doubles Title over French Open champions, Paola Suarez and Virginia Ruano Pascual. While the weather did not look great, the skill these young ladies displayed certainly was. It was an entertaining match, but in the end the Williams sisters proved too strong for their opponents. They won 6-2, 7-5. With that win, the sisters' 2002 Wimbledon record was 19 wins and 1 loss. The one loss came when Venus lost to Serena in the Singles Finals.

Serena now is ranked number one in the world. Venus, who previously was ranked first, is now second. They are quickly becoming the most dominant figures in tennis. They are extremely skilled, they can hit both forehands and backhands with pinpoint accuracy. And their serves are clocked at well over 100 mph.

Venus and Serena enter each match well-prepared and confident, but the sisters always handle themselves with grace. What is perhaps most telling about them, though, is their love for each other. Even after battling it out on the tennis courts for nearly two hours, Venus said, "Serena is my sister and I'm really happy she won, especially her first time. I would have loved to have won. At the same time, I'm so happy for her."

These young ladies are true competitors, but also great individuals. Again, I would like to congratulate Serena on her win this past Saturday. I wish both of them, Serena and Venus, the best of luck in upcoming tournaments.

SAN MATEO SCHOOL STUDENTS DISCUSS WHAT THE AMERICAN FLAG STANDS FOR

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues six of my constituents who have been selected winners in a very important essay contest. The six were authors of first, second, and third place winners in an Americanism essay competition for school children in grades 5 and 6 and in grades 7 and 8.

This contest was designed to promote and encourage patriotism. The theme for this year's competition was "What the Flag of the