

HONORING MR. ROBERT WAGNER

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 22, 2002

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Robert Wagner, a resident of California's 27th Congressional District. Mr. Wagner has recently been honored by his alma mater, Georgetown University, with the renaming of the University's Alumni House, the Robert M. Wagner Alumni House.

Robert Wagner was born in Perth Amboy, N.J. but raised in both Iowa and California during the Great Depression. In 1940, at age 16, Mr. Wagner was called to serve in World War II and during boot camp found enough time to earn his GED. Upon completion of his service, he was accepted as a student at Georgetown University on the GI Bill.

It was at Georgetown, Mr. Wagner says, that he learned the skills that have made him a success. His professors, course work and classmates, all played a role in both his professional success in the years after his graduation, and his dedication to the school which helped him to achieve some of his life's greatest successes.

His dedication to Georgetown is legendary. Over the past 33 years, he was volunteered to interview Georgetown applicants, founded the Georgetown University Alumni Association of Southern California, and has endowed five scholarships to benefit financially needy students. In addition to scholarships, Mr. Wagner has made unrestricted gifts to the Georgetown Annual Fund and endowed the Carroll Quigley Lecture Series, which brings experts in international affairs to the University.

Most recently, Mr. Wagner endowed both a charitable remainder unitrust and a charitable lead trust. Both trusts will support the reconstruction, renovation and maintenance of the newly designated Robert M. Wagner Alumni House.

Such dedication to the educational institution which served him so well is admirable and it is with great pleasure that I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Mr. Robert Wagner upon his being bestowed this great honor by Georgetown University.

TRIBUTE TO JACK STEWART

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 22, 2002

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the career of a true public servant, a man who has touched literally thousands of lives. Jack Stewart, who is currently the Monterey County Military and Veterans Affairs Officer and a long-time constituent of mine, will be retiring from the post he created in 1983 after a career that has been marked by excellence and dedication.

Jack first served in the U.S. Army in 1954, eventually serving 20 years and receiving several decorations and awards including the Combat Infantryman Badge, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, and Good Conduct Medal. Mr. Speak-

er, these commendations obviously show the level of commitment he had to defending and protecting the democratic ideals our country cherishes, but it is only the beginning of what would become a career dedicated to those who, like himself, served their country with honor.

As a county supervisor, I got to know Jack and understand the workings of his office, which helped us both when I became a California State Assemblyman. When the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (which Jack served three terms as president) came to Sacramento I was always there for Jack, as he was for me. Jack was always a welcome sight in my office, and I know other counties were envious of the relationship and understanding that we had.

One of the highlights of my work with Jack during those years was helping him bring a replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall to Monterey County, a deeply moving experience. This project was one of the best instances of veterans coming together with the community, including anti-war leaders, in an outpouring of love and respect for those who didn't come home. This was the first listing of all Monterey County MIA's and those killed in action, which led to the creation of a separate Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Salinas. It also provided for listing those names on the state memorial in Capitol Park in Sacramento, including my cousin John Geisen and Carmel High School classmate Andrew Elliot, who is MIA. For Jack's work on these projects, I am personally grateful.

Mr. Speaker, many people will undoubtedly sing Jack Stewart's many praises as his retirement nears, but I must mention a few things that he has done while I have been a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Perhaps the single most influential role he had was during the closure of Fort Ord in Monterey County, the largest base closure in US history. The economic and social implications on the local communities were astounding, but Jack made sure that the interests of the veterans in the area were attended to. He had the world pulled out from him, as we lost a four hundred-bed hospital that served both active duty members and retirees; the CHAMPUS provider was to be switched so no one knew who to go to for health care; disabled vets were stranded without transportation; and all military personnel who could help handle such a crisis were gone. The only person left was Jack, who, with his staff had to do the work of an entire division.

Out of this chaos, he will be leaving behind a new clinic run by the Department of Veterans Affairs, serving a broader community than ever; a new Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Counseling Program; a Veterans Transition Center for homeless veterans and a transportation network that provides van rides to disabled veterans. Jack was also able to get the federal government to put up land and money to open a state-run veterans' cemetery at Fort Ord, and has been instrumental in starting and running the local process for making this a reality. Of course, this is a project that will continue without Jack, but he should be honored for his role in moving this from an idea to where it is today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close today by saying that Jack Stewart has handled more challenges than any county veterans officer I know of, and produced a more lasting legacy

of services than anyone. This alone speaks volumes, but I hope I have been able to show how much he will be missed, not only by me, but also by the community at large. I wish Jack and his family all of the best in retirement, even though I know that he will remain an active part of the veteran's community.

THANKING MY CONGRESSIONAL STAFF

HON. GEORGE W. GEKAS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 22, 2002

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, on November 19, 2002, I submitted remarks thanking my congressional staff. Inadvertently, several lines from those remarks were not included in that CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. I here resubmit those missing lines which thanked Phil Jodz and Mike Rule on my staff for their contributions to my incumbency.

The end of a congressional career brings about many emotions. Over the last 20 years I have happily spent representing the fine people of the 17th Congressional District of Pennsylvania I have had the pleasure of working with thousands of constituents, local, state and federal officials, and many former and current distinguished members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. To all of them I say, thanks for working with me towards a better America.

And, of course, every Member of Congress works with many, many competent staff, from the staff in their own personal offices to the committee and subcommittee staff and the leadership and floor staff. It has often been said that without staff where would this institution be? And I concur with that statement, for without the many fine staff with whom I have had the good fortune to work, I and other Members of Congress of the United States would be far worse off.

Phil Jodz, is the many talented staff assistant who handled constituent tours and interns, and also ably handled press, legislative research, the office website, and all manner of writing in my office. Mike Rule, our newest staff assistant, showed a willingness, and more importantly a capability, to do whatever was needed to assist the office.

To both I say please accept my sincere thanks for making my tenure in the U.S. House of Representatives a productive and pleasant one. Any current Member of Congress or committee would be well served by the high-quality staff with whom it has been my pleasure to work over these many years.

CONCERNS WITH THE PAKISTANI PARLIAMENT'S RELIGIOUS BLOC

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 22, 2002

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to express my concerns regarding the Pakistani Parliament and in particular, the efforts of the Islamic alliance to form a governing coalition in Parliament with either the King's Party, led by President

Musharraf, or the People's Party, led by Benazir Bhutto.

Mr. Speaker, during Parliamentary elections held in Pakistan last month, members of the Pakistani religious bloc known as the Islamic allies unexpectedly won 60 out of 342 seats. Not only was this surprising, but furthermore, the outcome of the elections was divided in such a way that no party won the number of seats necessary to form a government.

As a result, the Islamic allies have been negotiating separately with the pro-Musharraf party and the Bhutto party in an effort to form a coalition and thereby create a majority. Their intent is to demand a reversal of constitutional amendments introduced by Musharraf earlier this year, and most importantly, to overturn the amendment that allows Musharraf to dismiss Parliament.

However, what concerns me greatly is that the members of this Islamic alliance, or this Pakistani religious bloc, won their seats based almost exclusively on an anti-American platform. In fact, this party's primary campaign message criticized Musharraf's support for the war on terror and denounced Musharraf's cooperation with the United States. In addition, a component of this party's message demanded that the U.S. military leave Pakistan and Afghanistan immediately. Lastly, the Islamic allies have encouraged Pakistanis to offer sanctuary to both the Taliban and Al-Qaeda and to embrace the work of Osama bin Laden.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that for these reasons, it is imperative that Pakistan's religious bloc remain unsuccessful in forming a coalition with Musharraf's party or Bhutto's party. If in fact this party gained a majority and was able to implement its anti-US policies, the consequences would be devastating.

At this stage, it does not seem as if the religious bloc will be able to achieve forming a government. However, Mr. Speaker, it is in the best interest of the U.S. to monitor this situation closely.

CONFERENCE REPORT FOR H.R. 4546, THE BOB STUMP NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2003

HON. WALTER B. JONES

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 22, 2002

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last week, the House of Representatives took up and passed the conference report to H.R. 4546, the Fiscal Year 2003 National Defense Authorization Act. As one of the conferees to that measure, I was proud to support the overall bill and was pleased to see its passage. The Bob Stump National Defense Act was a fitting tribute to a man whose congressional career was spent working for our Nation's men and women in uniform.

This year's Defense Authorization Act has three main principles: protecting and defending America's homeland, supporting U.S. service members and their families, and better equipping troops with training, equipment and weapons to fight and win the war against terrorism. It marks the largest increase in defense spending in over 20 years, providing billions of additional dollars for procurement, research, and development for the next genera-

tion of weapons. The measure continues our commitment to improving the pay of military personnel by providing a 4.1 percent pay increase and continued the administration's plans to eliminate out-of-pocket housing costs for military families. H.R. 4546 devotes considerable resources toward protecting our homeland from the threat of terrorist attacks and from the growing proliferation of ballistic missiles. I stand behind this bill because I believe it provides our military with the foundation it needs and deserves. We are living in a time of war and must act accordingly.

Despite the important advances this bill makes for our national defense, I retain two reservations about the final product.

One significant issue which has not been addressed is legislation I sponsored to redesignate the position of the Secretary of the Navy as the Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps. For over 200 years the Navy and Marine Corps have shared a secretary in being, but not in name. Notwithstanding their jointness, the Navy and Marine Corps are distinct with their own history, honors, and tradition. Rather than detracting from those traditions, this legislation seeks to recognize the separate, but equal traditions that the Navy and the Marine Corps team share. It acknowledges that there are two members of the same team and seeks to reinforce to the American people that the Secretary is a proud supporter of both. The legislation was adopted unanimously in the House Armed Services Committee, over half of whose membership had cosponsored the legislation. It was supported by three former Secretaries of the Navy, the current and two former Commandants of the Marine Corps, a former Secretary of the Veterans Administration, and many other former senior leaders of the Navy and Marine Corps. The Fleet Reserve Association and the Marine Corps League, each boasting thousands of members, also strongly urged passage of the legislation. Yet because of the concerns of a few, it was not included in the final conference report.

However I do not view this as a setback, but instead an opportunity. I remain committed to introducing the measure again early in the 108th Congress. As Commandant Jim Jones stated, this is an idea whose time has come. I will be working diligently with my Navy and Marine Corps friends to broaden the support and communicate the importance of this measure. By passing this legislation, the teamwork that has been present for over 200 years will finally be recognized in the title of the person who coaches the team.

A second shortcoming of the otherwise outstanding measure is the compromise on concurrent receipt. Although the language in the conference report regarding concurrent receipt is a very important step forward, I strongly believe that more should be done. As I stated in a letter to President Bush, if a man or woman served in uniform and retired honorably, they deserve to receive the retirement pay they were promised. If in the course of that service, that military member was injured and sustained a lasting disability, they should be compensated for that as well. One was earned for service and one was earned for sacrifice. It is for that reason that I have been a strong supporter of legislation to eliminate this offset since coming to Congress.

It is true that correcting this unfair penalty is expensive, however I also believe that our

military retirees are priorities for which we must be willing to support. Congressman BILIRAKIS, numerous military and veteran organizations such as the Fleet Reserve Association, and countless veterans have waged a tireless effort to see legislation ending the prohibition against concurrent receipt enacted. They should be commended for the great work that has been accomplished to date and encouraged to continue this fight in the future. I look forward to working with them on future efforts to meet the principles behind H.R. 303. Our military retirees did not fail us when they were called. We should not fail them.

GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET AND WINDFALL ELIMINATION PROVISION

HON. MAX SANDLIN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 22, 2002

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, in the waning moments of this Congress, the House of Representatives almost adopted a bill that would have devastating consequences to teachers and public employees across the State of Texas and the country. Instead of helping teachers and government employees secure a better retirement, H.R. 4070, Social Security Program Protection Act of 2002, as amended, would have left hard working teachers worse off rather than better off. In these uncertain economic times, this Congress should be adopting legislation to make sure everyone has access to the retirement benefits they have earned over a lifetime of work and service.

Two little known amendments to the Social Security Act are dramatically and unfairly slashing the retirement benefits of hundreds of thousands of Americans—teachers and other public school employees, firefighters, police, social workers, and other civil servants—who are being penalized for their public service. These provisions are just plain unfair, and I am committed to working to end the injustices of these two provisions.

The Government Pension Offset, GPO, requires that an individual who receives a pension from work that was not covered by Social Security has his or her Social Security spousal benefit substantially reduced. The law allowed an exemption from the GPO if he or she worked in a job that was covered by Social Security on his or her last day of employment. Under the Senate-passed version of H.R. 4070, an individual would be required to work in a Social Security-covered job for the last 5 years of employment to be exempt from the GPO. The amendment is being characterized as closing a loophole. This is not a loophole but rather a mechanism for individuals to obtain the benefits for which they have paid. It is an unnecessary and unjust hurdle. Instead of raising the bar to achieve these earned benefits, Congress should be eliminating the barriers completely.

In addition to the GPO, teachers and certain other workers are subject to the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). This provision unfairly harms public servants by reducing—sometimes by as much as 55.6 percent—the Social Security benefits of federal, state, and local employees who retire from government jobs that are not covered by Social Security.