

Each day, we work with a select group of members—allied members so to speak—who understand the cooperative roles of our Nation's fire service and the Federal Government in protecting our communities. They represent both sides of the political aisle. Our efforts are geared towards developing legislation and influencing Federal policies for the betterment of public safety.

Today, we are honoring a true champion of our Nation's fire and emergency services, Congressman Nick Smith. While Congressman Smith represents the 7th district of Michigan, his contributions to public safety go way beyond his Congressional district, impacting the readiness of over 26,000 fire departments, nationwide.

The fire service is greatly indebted to this individual for championing many of our causes. For instance, two years ago, Congress authorized for the first time a major grant program specifically for local fire and emergency services departments. This year, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program was funded at \$360 million. It was through the efforts of Congressman Smith and a select group of colleagues that this program became a reality, enabling thousands of departments to receive funding to help reduce the threat of fire and other dangers within their local jurisdictions.

Operating a fire department is not an easy task. Nor is getting Federal programs established. The grant program was no exception. I'll never forget a meeting I attended two years ago in a Congressional office regarding this program. A number of Congressmen and women were meeting with the OMB Director to express their frustration with the budget proposal which failed to include funding for this program. One of the most vocal members at the meeting was Congressman Smith, who was not shy about expressing his frustration over the lack of funding. Two days later, the OMB Director had a change of heart and placed \$100 million in the budget for this grant program. Everyone at the meeting would agree who made the difference for the fire service that day.

And before this program, Congressman Smith was working to revitalize the mission of the United States Fire Administration. In 1999, a blue ribbon panel charged with reviewing the mission of the Fire Administration issued a report questioning, among other things, an apparent lack of leadership within the Administration. The report included 34 recommendations for improvement.

Much of the problem had to do with a lack of funding—badly needed funding for research, education and training. As Chair of the Basic Research Subcommittee, which has oversight of USFA, Congressman Smith was able to significantly increase the funding authorization, enabling Congress to infuse a financial dose of medicine into the staggering agency.

That same year, I had the honor of attending the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service in Emmitsburg, Maryland, an annual event honoring the sacrifices of those firefighters who fell in the line of duty that year. Congressman Smith delivered the special address. I don't remember any particular thing he said; but what I do recall is that he didn't read from a prepared script, but rather spoke from the heart. You could easily sense Nick Smith's admiration and respect for all first responders.

Congressman Smith is an individual of great character, a man who is truly dedicated to supporting our Nation's fire and emergency services. The events of September 11th have made all of us work a little harder to ensure we are ready for the next attack. In the case of Nick Smith, it has become a passion, an unrelenting mission for which we should all be grateful.

I have just shared with you my observation of Nick Smith in Washington. Now it is my pleasure to turn the microphone over to Chief Victor Hilbert, of the Delta Township Fire Department who will offer some insights into how the Congressman's work has benefited public safety in his own Congressional district.

TRIBUTE TO THE WILKERSON CHAPEL

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Wilkerson Chapel and the anniversary of its 140 years of service to the community of Collinsville, Illinois.

The people of the Wilkerson Chapel are truly good Samaritans. They have spent 140 years preaching the word of Christ to Collinsville and surrounding areas and participating in other good works.

To such people as Rev. Charles Orr and his congregation, the good deeds themselves are their own best rewards. Yet, on this special day, I think it is appropriate that they are recognized for their efforts. They are good Christians and good Americans, and remind us all of the compassion and energy that makes this country great.

To the people of the Wilkerson Chapel, thank you for all your good works over almost the last century and a half; and may God grant you the opportunity to continue doing His work for many years into the future.

RECOGNIZING STAFF SERGEANT WINFORD EVANS AS THE RECIPIENT OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

HON. JO ANN EMERSON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Mrs. EMERSON. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, March 30th, a great soldier and leader was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, 56 years after its authorization.

Sadly, the recipient, SSG Winford Evans, who fought for this country in World War II passed away in 1991. However, the U.S. Army presented the award, along with two others, to his family during a ceremony held in Sikeston, Missouri.

SSG Evans earned the Distinguished Service Cross for his heroic action during a July 1945 battle in the Southwest Pacific Theater. Seeing his platoon leader wounded, SSG Evans disregarded enemy fire and brought the leader to safety. As the battle progressed, he directed mortar attacks and was wounded but continued to fight. Less concerned with his own immediate safety than with defending those around him, he positioned himself within 25 yards of the enemy, threw hand grenades, fired on the enemy and wounded and killed several enemy soldiers.

In addition to the Distinguished Service Cross, SSG Evans was awarded two Bronze Star Medals. The first has an oak leaf cluster and the other one has a "V" device. These

two medals were awarded to SSG Evans for his heroic achievements in the Asian Pacific Theater from 1943–1945.

This May as we take time to celebrate Military Appreciation Month, it seems fitting that we recognize men and women in uniform like SSG Winford Evans. His sacrifice, along with the sacrifice of so many others who stood in harm's way to defend our country, remind all of us of the selfless valor of our military men and women. I am hopeful, particularly during this time of military action abroad, that others will reflect on the service and dedication of those who came before SSG Evans and those who will come after him and hold in their hearts an appreciation and admiration for their actions and desire to secure peace and freedom for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, on this very special occasion, I ask that all of my colleagues join me in recognizing and remembering SSG Evans and extend our best wishes to his family as they remember his service to the United States of America.

EXPRESSING REGRET AND SYMPATHY FOR FAMILIES OF CANADIAN SOLDIERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN

SPEECH OF

HON. CASS BALLENGER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. BALLENGER. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 412 and offer my sincerest condolences to the families and friends of the four Canadian soldiers who gave their last full measure of devotion in the defense of liberty during Operation Enduring Freedom last month. Eight of their comrades also were wounded in the same tragic incident. They, along with the rest of Canada, are now left to mourn the loss of their fellow patriots.

The tragic event of April 17 should remind all of us that war is dangerous. Service men and women often risk their lives each and every day, so that we may enjoy our freedom and security. These brave Canadians have made the ultimate sacrifice for Canada and for freedom throughout the world. Today, I pray for their families and loved ones.

Canada is not only our neighbor, it has been our closest friend and ally. Soon after the terrorist attacks on September 11, Canadian families selflessly opened their homes to American travelers who were stranded in Canada when American airspace was closed. Since then, Canada has stood, shoulder to shoulder, with its American ally to face the forces of evil in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Despite this tragic accident, Canada and the United States will continue to stand together and fight our mutual enemies until they are vanquished and peace prevails.

Canada, we grieve with you today for your fallen heroes. Their dedication and steadfastness in the face of danger should be a source of pride and comfort. With soldiers like these, I have no doubt that the days of the terrorist are limited and that victory will be ours.

I want to commend my friend and colleague from New York, Mr. HOUGHTON, for this resolution. I urge my colleagues to stand with our

Canadian neighbors and support passage of the resolution.

TANF REAUTHORIZATION

HON. MAXINE WATERS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, in the past several weeks we have heard a lot of talk about TANF reauthorization. The Bush Administration wants to increase the number of hours that welfare recipients work to 40. Twenty-four hours would have to be in work-related activities, activities that do not include education or vocational training.

But even in the remaining 16 hours, the limits on education and job training are severe in the Republican proposals. Recipients can receive vocational training, education, or rehabilitation and substance abuse treatment for a total of three months in a 24 month period.

We know that education is one of the main avenues for a person to move out of poverty. A year 2000 survey of people who left the welfare rolls after 1996 found that only those workers who had at least a two-year post secondary or vocational degree were able to rise above the poverty line.

Single female heads of households with a high school diploma are 60 percent more likely to have jobs. That number increases to 95 percent when they have an associate's degree.

We need to focus less on putting people in jobs, and focus more on training people for careers with room for advancement. TANF Reauthorization should be about reducing poverty, not reducing caseloads.

RECOGNIZING THE OUTSTANDING WORK OF THE CONGRESSIONAL TOWN MEETING STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

HON. BERNARD SANDERS

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, today, I recognize the outstanding work done by participants in my Student Congressional Town Meeting held this spring at the University of Vermont. These participants were part of a group of high school students from around Vermont who testified about the concerns they have as teenagers, and about what they would like to see government do regarding these concerns.

FINANCIAL AID AND HIGHER EDUCATION
(By Candace Crosby and Kim Dickenson Apr. 8, 2002)

CANDACE CROSBY. As students preparing for college, we find that the financial issue is becoming a larger problem compared to what our parents had to pay for college tuition. According to a VSAC representative, 70 to 80 percent of students today need some type of financial aid. The rates for tuition are high, but what's worse is that they are rising at a rate of about 5 percent a year all over the country.

What concerns us as future college students is how we will be able to pay for the tuition, and tuition doesn't include room and

board and other expenses. We think that, today, there is a lack of adequate financial aid for college-bound students.

When preparing to pay for college, teens in Vermont turn to VSAC—which is the Vermont Student Association Corporation—for financial help. Of course, VSAC is a healthy program, but are they able to give financial aid to all the students that need it? No. Does VSAC have enough money to give scholarships and grants to the teens that need it at the same increasing rate that college tuition is rising? No.

We spoke to a representative from VSAC who gave us the information that VSAC has increased their funds for scholarships and financial aid, but has not been able to keep up with the increasing tuition costs. Based on one of VSAC's grants, the Vermont Incentive Grant, fulltime graduates can get between \$500 and \$8,650 for one year to help pay for college. The \$8,650 is an extremely helpful amount of money to receive, but not all the teens going to college will receive this amount. Even if a student gets the minimum, \$500, it will not even begin to help for any student to pay for their college education. It will only cover a few of the books that students will need for their first year of college.

KIM DICKENSON. Online at USNews.com, we searched for college tuitions for various Vermont colleges. We looked up the cost at Castleton State College, Lyndon State College, UVM, Johnson State College, VTC and Southern Vermont College. We found that the average tuition costs for these schools was approximately \$6,825. We found that the average room and board add approximately \$5,520 more to tuition. Together, this amounts to \$12,345. Even more interesting is that some of the room-and-board costs are higher than the tuition costs. At Castleton State College, tuition is \$5,392, and room and board is \$5,530. \$12,000 is a lot of money, even with VSAC's help, but students leave colleges thousands of dollars in debt.

What about students who want to go to college outside of Vermont? These costs are astronomical, and the tuition alone can be \$20,000 or \$30,000, because the students are not residents of the state. How are students supposed to pay for college without a lot of financial aid when they go to these schools?

0 percent of Vermont students take out loans provided by VSAC. We found a list of loans that could be borrowed from VSAC, and the amounts ranged from \$1,000 to \$50,000. Even if a student went to a college that had a tuition of \$25,000 a year, and they took out a loan to pay for the first two years, they would have to pay back 73,615. The student pays 23,615 more dollars in interest. That is practically paying for a third year of college.

We think that is a ridiculous amount. We thought of a few solutions so that students can receive more financial aid and won't have to have an enormous debt to pay back. The burden of debt would decrease if funds for scholarships, grants and other financial aid would be increased. We think the federal and state governments should fund VSAC's financial aid programs even more than they already do. This would enable more students to receive money so that the financial burden on families wouldn't be as great.

THE RIGHTS OF THE ABENAKI

(By Evan Worth, Alan Blackman, Nicolette Baron, and Steph Bernath April 8, 2002)

EVAN WORTH. We are doing the issue of Abenaki rights. And as of now, they are not recognized as an Indian tribe. They have been pushing, seeking federal recognition for the past 25 years, which is a criteria for federal recognition, which they need to have been a continuous entity since 1900, they

need to have existed as a community since before 1900, there needs to be a political influence throughout history, they need a membership criteria and governing procedures, they need roots before 1900, and they cannot be members of any other type of group, and cannot be stripped of their status.

ALAN BLACKMAN. Vermont seems to have a very long-held tradition in being first in giving people, specific groups of people, rights—outlawing slavery, granting rights for all men to vote, and, more recently, civil unions. I feel we should continue this. And in doing this, it is another way to, so to speak, take Vermont forward.

The main concern against this, particularly Governor Dean's apprehension with granting them recognition is, casinos and land claims. Chief April Rushlow has claimed on numerous occasions that, quite frankly, they have higher concerns, such as burial grounds and things of this nature. The main reason they want this, what provoked this, actually, such a strong pursuit of this, was kids being taunted at school for being Abenaki, but not being recognized by the government. What they want is essentially grants for education, healthcare, things they couldn't get as of now. And I feel that it is a good idea and it would be a step in the right direction to grant them recognition.

NICOLETTE BARON. Some of the qualms that state government has cited for not giving recognition to the Abenaki was extra rights, aside from those already given to minorities, the fact that it will lead to federal recognition, and they can institute their own laws and have their own fish and wildlife regulations that do not need to concur with the guidelines of the state.

On the issue of the minorities, the minorities that are around the nation and around the state are African-Americans and Hispanics. While those groups do have an important part in the history of this state and the nation, the Abenakis were among the first inhabitants of this state, and they are the only native American tribe that has not been recognized.

State recognition could lead to federal recognition, which would give the Abenaki rights to make their own laws, including those regarding fish and wildlife regulations. The laws that they would make would most likely conform to the Constitution of the United States, not go beyond that or not be radical, which I think is what the state government is concerned with. All laws would be to prohibit harm and to make it, you know. And fishing and wildlife laws would be based on the need to eat, and not hunting game, not game-hunting. And being recognized as a tribe would allow them to sell their wares, like basket weaving, which is a tradition in the Abenaki, and to get better economic status for these people. And it would give them rights with scholarships, and that's really important, to send their kids to school.

STEPH BERNATH. What I find to be very disturbing about the Abenaki struggle for recognition is the negativity exhibited by the state department. I have yet to hear the acknowledgement from the state department that something positive may come out of the Abenaki getting the recognition they obviously deserve. Nearly every argument brought forth by the state of Vermont has been critical of what the tribe may do once they receive recognition. It has been made clear very many times that the Abenaki are not interested in gambling or hurting Vermonters in any way. Chief April Rushlow has clarified this one too many times.

The victims of this criticism, on the other hand, the Abenaki, have openly acknowledged they are aware of what the State Department fears may happen to those people who live on Abenaki land if they are given