

make sure that voters receive a physical, paper verification of their votes. After all, voting should not be an act of faith. It should be an act of record.

That is why I am introducing this bill— The Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2003 — to amend HAVA to require a voter-verified record for all votes cast in federal elections. Under my bill, funds expended under HAVA will be utilized in a manner that ensures that this minimum standard of voter protection will be built into computer voting systems before the next general election.

Key provisions of my bill include:

1) A requirement that all voting systems produce a voter-verified paper record for use in manual audits. A system using optical scanning of cards marked by the voters is one acceptable version. For those using the increasingly popular direct recording electronic (DRE) voting machines (such as 'touch-screen' machines), this requirement means those machines would print a receipt that each voter would verify as accurate and deposit into a lockbox at the polling station for later use in a recount. States would have until November 2003 to request additional funds to meet this requirement.

(2) A ban on the use of undisclosed software and wireless communications devices in voting systems.

(3) A requirement that all voting systems meet these increased standards of protection in time for the general election in November 2004. Jurisdictions anticipating that their new computer systems may not be able to meet this deadline will be able to use a paper system, as an interim measure and at federal expense, in the November 2004 election.

(4) A requirement that electronic voting systems be provided for persons with disabilities by January 1, 2006—one year earlier than currently required by HAVA. Like the voting systems used by persons without disabilities, those used by disabled voters must also provide a mechanism for voter-verification, though not necessarily a paper trail. Jurisdictions unable to meet this requirement by the deadline must give disabled voters the option to use the interim paper system with the assistance of an aide of their choosing.

(5) A requirement of mandatory surprise recounts in 0.5 percent of domestic jurisdictions and 0.5 percent of overseas jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more crucial to democracy than guaranteeing the integrity, fairness, and accuracy of elections. The election of 2000 was a fiasco, but unless this legislation is promptly enacted the election of 2004 could be a disaster.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2003

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 20, 2003

Ms. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1683, the "Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2003."

Texas is the home of 1.8 million veterans. Of those, 40,998 veterans live in the 18th

Congressional District of Texas. That means 8.6 percent of the district's adult population is veteran.

These brave men and women have fought valiantly in our wars. They risked their lives to protect the freedoms that every American citizen holds dear. Every American owes every veteran a debt of gratitude. I support H.R. 1683 because it is a means for this Chamber to show our appreciation for our veterans.

This legislation provides a financial boost to our deserving veterans. H.R. 1683 increases the disability compensation rates for veterans who have suffered injuries as a result of their service, and also increases the rates of compensation for dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain veterans. Furthermore, H.R. 1683 increases the compensation for veterans, their dependants, the clothing allowance, and dependency and indemnity for surviving spouses with minor children.

Our veterans have made immeasurable sacrifices for all Americans. H.R. 1683 ensures that veterans get the cost-of-living adjustment they need and deserve. This legislation will increase the compensation our veterans receive to offset the additional cost associated with inflation. This adjustment in compensation is very timely considering the present sluggishness of our economy.

More than 2 million veterans receive disability compensation each month as a result of injuries suffered in the course of military service. Nearly 600,000 spouses, children, and parents of veterans will also receive additional compensation and benefits as a result of H.R. 1683.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1683 is a bill that helps our heroic veterans live more comfortable lives. I support H.R. 1683 and I salute our veterans.

INTRODUCTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACT

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, today I am today again introducing the Environmental Justice Act. I am proud that my colleague Congresswoman HILDA SOLIS is once again joining me as an original cosponsor of this bill.

Representative SOLIS and I first introduced this bill last year, too late for consideration in the 107th Congress. Its reintroduction today reflects our continued concern about the way federal actions have had disproportionately adverse effects on the health, environment and quality of life of Americans in minority and lower-income communities.

Too often these communities—because of their low income or lack of political visibility—are exposed to greater risks from toxins and dangerous substances because it has been possible to locate waste dumps, industrial facilities, and chemical storage warehouses in these communities with less care than would be taken in other locations.

The sad fact is that in some eyes these communities have appeared as expendable—without full appreciation that human beings, who deserve to be treated with respect and

dignity, are living, working, and raising families there.

This needs to give way to policies focused on providing clean, healthy and quality environments within and around these communities. When that happens, we provide hope for the future and enhance the opportunities that these citizens have to improve their condition.

Our bill would help do just that. The bill essentially codifies an Executive Order that was issued by President Clinton in 1994. That order required all federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice considerations in their missions, develop strategies to address disproportionate impacts to minority and low-income people from their activities, and coordinate the development of data and research on these topics.

Although federal agencies have been working to implement this order and have developed strategies, there is clearly much more to do. We simply cannot solve these issues overnight or even over a couple of years. We need to "institutionalize" the consideration of these issues in a more long-term fashion—which this bill would do.

In addition, just as the current policy was established by an administrative order, it could be swept away with a stroke of an administrative pen. To avoid that, we need to make it more permanent—which is also what this bill would do.

It would do this by statutorily requiring all federal agencies to—make addressing environmental justice concerns part of their missions; develop environmental justice strategies; evaluate the effects of proposed actions on the health and environment of minority, low-income, and Native American communities; avoid creating disproportionate adverse impacts on the health or environment of minority, low-income, or Native American communities; and collect data and carry out research on the effects of facilities on health and environment of minority, low-income, and Native American communities.

It would also statutorily establish two committees: the Interagency Environmental Justice Working Group, set up by the Executive Order to develop strategies, provide guidance, coordinate research, convene public meetings, and conduct inquiries regarding environmental justice issues; and a Federal Environmental Justice Advisory Committee, appointed by the President, including members of community-based groups, business, academic, state agencies and environmental organizations. It will provide input and advice to the Interagency Working Group.

In a nutshell, what this bill would do is require federal agencies that control the siting and disposing of hazardous materials, store toxins or release pollutants at federal facilities, or issue permits for these kinds of activities to make sure they give fair treatment to low-income and minority populations—including Native Americans. The bill tells federal agencies, "In the past these communities have endured a disproportionate impact to their health and environment. Now we must find ways to make sure that won't be the case in the future."

For the information of our colleagues, here is a short analysis of the bill:

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACT

Summary: This bill would essentially codify a Clinton Administration Executive Order which directed a number of federal agencies

and offices to consider the environmental impact of decisions on minority and low-income populations.

Background: On February 11, 1994, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations." The President also issued a corresponding Memorandum to all federal departments and agencies further explaining the order and how the agencies should implement it to address environmental justice issues. The Order and Memorandum called for the creation of an interagency working group to provide guidance on identifying disproportionate impacts on the health and environment of minority and low-income populations, develop strategies to address such disproportionate impacts, and provide a report on that strategy. Since the order was promulgated, the affected agencies have developed reports and strategies.

Need for the Bill: Although federal agencies and offices have been complying with the Executive Order, disproportionate impacts related to human health and the environment still exist for many minority and low-income communities. These impacts must be addressed over the long term. In addition, due to the lack of resources and political clout of many of these impacted communities, vigilance is required to make sure that disproportionate impacts are reduced and do not continue. As the effort to date has been primarily administrative based on the presidential order and memorandum, these strategies need to be incorporated into the routine functioning of federal agencies and offices through federal law.

The bill—Requires federal agencies and offices to: include addressing environmental justice concerns into their respective missions; conduct programs so as not to create disproportionate impact on minority and low-income populations; include an examination of the effects of such action on the health and environment of minority and low-income populations for actions that require environmental analyses under the National Environmental Policy Act; create an environmental justice strategy to address disproportionate impacts of its policies and actions, and conduct and collect research on the disproportionate impacts from federal facilities.

Creates an Interagency Environmental Justice Working Group to develop strategies, provide guidance, coordinate research, convene public meetings, and conduct inquires regarding environmental justice issues.

Creates a Federal Environmental Justice Advisory Committee composed of members of community-based groups, business, academic, state agencies and environmental organizations which will provide input and advice to the Interagency Working Group.

SELECTED RESERVE HOME LOAN
EQUITY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 20, 2003

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1257, the "Selected Reserve Home Loan Equity Act."

The Selected Reserves are the reserve forces of the various branches of the military. Each branch of our Armed Forces, the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, have Selected Reserve Corps. Additionally, Coast Guard Reserves, as well as the Army National Guard and the Air Guard have Selected Reserve Corps.

In Texas, the Selected Reserve Corps is thriving. Texas has 1.35 million volunteers serving in the Guard and Selected Reserve Corps. Of those, 8,370 members are serving in the Coast Guard Selected Reserve

While the Selected Reserves don't get the accolades rightfully showered upon our Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines, they provide invaluable service to our country. Since 1990, there have been 99 major commitments of Americans in uniform. In each of these conflicts, both active duty and Selective Reserve Corps have been deployed to virtually every corner of the globe.

H.R. 1257 amends Title 38 of the United States Code, "to make permanent the authority for qualifying members of the Selected Reserve to have access to home loans guaranteed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and to provide for uniformity in fees charged qualifying members of the Selected Reserve and active duty veterans for such home loans."

I support H.R. 1257 because it is a way for this body to thank our Select Reservists the same way we thank the brave veteran men and women who have served their country so valiantly. The Department of Veterans Affairs provides our active and inactive military personnel with various services and benefits. One of the benefits provided is guaranteed home loans at reasonable fees.

Presently, members of the Selected Reserves are eligible for Department of Veterans Affairs loans. However, the current program is scheduled to expire at the end of fiscal year 2009. Moreover, Selected Reservists pay a higher fee on guaranteed home loans than do active duty veterans. H.R. 1257 grants Selected Reservists permanent access to guaranteed home loans just as like veterans. Selected Reservists will also be eligible for the same fee structure as veterans.

Our Selected Reservists are an important part of our exemplary military, and are integral to protecting our homeland and bringing peace throughout the world. Providing our military personnel, including members of the Selected Reserve with access to economically beneficial programs like guaranteed loans is one small way to thank them for their service.

Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 1257, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE
LARRY COMBEST

SPEECH OF

HON. ROY BLUNT

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 19, 2003

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate LARRY COMBEST on his nearly twenty years of service for the people of Texas. He has had a wonderful career helping others at the local level, helping others as a Congressman and helping others as the Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee.

He has served this House of Representatives and our country well. He will be truly missed.

As a freshman member I had the pleasure of serving with LARRY on the Agriculture Committee. During this time, I found him to be a wealth of information regarding agriculture policy and I relied on him heavily on many issues that were debated in the committee. As Chairman of the Agriculture Committee, Larry made great efforts to consider the diversity of America's agriculture, which helped us to create a broad and sensible agricultural policy.

Larry has traveled to southwest Missouri to meet with students and to seek advice from farmers where I live. He has worked tirelessly for the future of agriculture in America.

One of the best examples of this effort is found in "The Farm Security Act of 2002". In developing this landmark legislation, LARRY organized numerous field hearings throughout the country in an attempt to understand what America needed in sound farm policy. He also felt that it was necessary to talk to farmers and local people seeking grassroots advice. As a result of this Chairman COMBEST helped develop a road map that will improve agriculture policy and help secure the future of our Nation.

I stand here today to congratulate Chairman COMBEST on his years of service and to wish LARRY and Sharon the best as they begin a new chapter in their lives.

HONORING BISHOP LAWRENCE L.
KIRBY

HON. PAUL RYAN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Bishop Lawrence L. Kirby of Racine, Wisconsin for the spiritual leadership that he has provided to the members of the St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church and the positive influence that he has had on Racine's African American community.

For the past 22 years, Bishop Kirby has served as the Senior Pastor at St. Paul's Missionary Baptist Church, the oldest African-American church in the State of Wisconsin. Under his leadership, St. Paul's has grown significantly, evolving into one of the largest and most influential churches in the State. A visionary leader, Bishop Kirby has implemented a series of progressive assistance and developmental programs that serve the needs of the entire community. He has also founded numerous faith-based community organizations and has been called to preach around the world, spreading a message of faith, tolerance and compassion.

Throughout his career, Bishop Kirby has remained steadfastly dedicated to helping others and he has not wavered in his commitment to his family, his church, his community and God. His generous actions have touched the lives of the less fortunate, filling their hearts with love and inspiring them to succeed. The citizens of Wisconsin's First Congressional District are fortunate to have been blessed with this wonderful, caring and compassionate man. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Bishop Lawrence L. Kirby for his efforts to make the world a better place in which to live.