

public safety. These outstanding men and women have played an important role in building a better community. This hard work and determination has earned several citizens of Prince William County the highest honor bestowed upon county public safety officials—The Gold Medal Valor Award.

The Gold Medal is the highest award for bravery and heroism. It is awarded to emergency service officers who have knowingly placed themselves in peril of death or extreme harm while saving or attempting to save the lives of others.

It is with great honor that I recognize Firefighter Carrie Wilson of the Stonewall Jackson Volunteer Fire Department as a recipient of the Gold Medal Valor Award. Firefighter Wilson helped to avert possible deaths and injuries at an apartment fire by acting quickly and professionally. A prime example of her bravery was when she came to the aid of an engine officer after a balcony railing collapsed, despite the burning debris pouring onto the crew. Firefighter Wilson also took part in the Red Cross Emergency Response Team, assisting the twenty-four displaced families find accommodations. The Chamber has made an excellent decision in awarding Carrie Wilson this prestigious honor.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating this extraordinary citizen. In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the men and women who serve Prince William County. The events of September 11th served as a reminder of the sacrifices our emergency service workers make for us every day. Their constant efforts on behalf of Prince William County citizens are paramount to preserving security, law and order throughout our neighborhoods, and their individual and collective acts of heroism deserve our highest praise.

RECOGNIZING THE SOCIAL PROBLEM OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT, AND SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO ENHANCE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM

SPEECH OF

HON. DAVE CAMP

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 26, 2003

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 113, the Child Abuse and Neglect Bill of 2003. This bill will support efforts to enhance public awareness of child abuse and neglect.

In the state of Michigan, where I am proud to represent the 4th District, the number of child abuse and neglect related fatalities have been steadily increasing since 1998. Again, in my state, there are 2.4 identified victims of child abuse per 1,000 Michigan residents. I emphasize, that statistic encapsulates identified victims only. I implore my fellow members of the House to think of the number of unreported cases. This sad fact proves that the American public is not fully aware of the problem presented by child neglect and abuse. Thus, a challenge lies before us. This is a challenge of committing every possible effort towards the elimination of child neglect and abuse.

Behind every number is a person, a child. Some of these children die because of child

neglect and abuse. Some of them simply never experience the love of a parent. Either situation is abominable and the American people need to be made aware of it.

The mission of this bill is to break the cycle of violence, especially with emphasis on the important first step of awareness. This bill intends to achieve a maximum awareness of child abuse and neglect.

Mr. Speaker, this is a worthy bill and an important step in the right direction. As a long time advocate for the oppressed children of our nation, I urge support for this bill. I yield back the balance of my time.

THE DEMOCRACY DAY ACT OF 2003

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 31, 2003

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the "Democracy Day Act of 2003," legislation that would provide a day off of work so that more of our citizens can vote. I am joined by Representatives CUMMINGS, RODRIGUEZ, WU, RANGEL, MCGOVERN, FROST, KILPATRICK, WOOLSEY, KAPTUR, CARSON (IN), and DAVIS (IL).

The United States is the greatest democratic republic in the history of civilization, and at the foundation of our democracy is the right to vote. This right was not simply handed to Americans; rather, it was hard won by many of our Nation's citizens. Today, active citizenship demands that Americans cast a vote to have their "say" in the political arena.

Despite this privilege, voter turnout has been declining since the 1960s in both Presidential and mid-term elections. Less than half of the voting age population (49.5 percent) voted in the 1996 Presidential election, and only 51.2 percent voted in the 2000 presidential election. The 1998 midterm elections saw the lowest voter turnout since 1942 at 36.1 percent. Of the 163 democracies worldwide, the United States ranks 139th in voter participation.

Among several factors causing this decline in voter turnout is the fact that many people do not have time to vote on election day. In fact, according to a recent Census Bureau study, nearly 25 percent of eligible voters cited time constraints or busy work or school schedules as the primary reason for failing to vote in the 2000 Presidential election.

The Democracy Day Act of 2003 addresses this problem by providing many hardworking Americans with the necessary time off from work so they can vote. In addition, the bill would have the added benefit of increasing the number of available election day judges, poll workers and suitable polling places. It would also serve to decrease long lines and the overcrowding that occurs during peak times on election day, as well as reinforcing the notion that voting is an important civic duty.

The movement to ensure that citizens have time to exercise their democratic right to vote has gained significant momentum in various states. According to the Federal Election Commission, 12 states designate election day as a state holiday, some of which close the schools in addition to excusing employees from work. In addition, 20 states provide state employees

time off to vote, and in 26 states, private sector employees may take time off to vote. It is time the Federal Government acts to solidify and coordinate this very important movement.

The right to vote is at the foundation of our democracy, and we must do everything we can to ensure that every eligible American has equal access to the polling booths. I am hopeful that Congress can move quickly to enact this worthwhile and timely legislation.

APPLAUDING ELSIE P. BROWN FOR HER COMMITMENT TO INCREASED HEALTH CARE ACCESS FOR UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS OF GEORGIA

HON. CHARLIE NORWOOD

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 31, 2003

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, Elsie P. Brown has had a remarkable career in public health and primary health care that spans over thirty years. Few Georgians have worked as diligently for so long to address the need for providing quality health care access to Georgia's underserved populations.

Elsie is soon retiring from her current role as the Director of Government Affairs and Membership Services, for the Georgia Association For Primary Health Care, Inc. During Elsie's tenure, she has provided critical leadership and unwavering commitment in bringing to the forefront at the state and national levels the need to improve access to primary care. While Elsie can give you the facts, it has been her ability to work with everyone, from patients to Governors, from physicians to Congressmen that has made her a unique force in this movement. It is largely through her single-minded effort that the state of Georgia has made its very first state appropriation for Federally Qualified Health Centers in Georgia from its portion of the tobacco settlement.

There is no one who has served in Congress from Georgia over the last thirty years who has not had Elsie and her "troops" make the case increased emphasis on access to care for everyone with vigor and persistence. Yet, Elsie has always seemed like a friend rather than an advocate. She understands the workings of government as well as she understands the delivery of primary care. Her work has contributed directly to the creation of Community Health Centers in 37 Georgia counties. This has resulted in access for over 100,000 quality primary care visits for the poor and underserved.

Elsie's retirement will leave a void in the Health center community, but the legacy she leaves as a result of her thirty year commitment to making Georgia a better and healthier state will stand as an example to all who follow her.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ERNIE FLETCHER

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 31, 2003

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, March 27, 2003, despite all my efforts, I was

unavoidably detained. Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 89, on final passage of H.R. 1104, The Child Abduction Prevention Act, I would have voted as follows: rollcall vote No. 89—"aye."

Protecting our children is a top priority of this Congress. Child abduction and exploitation cannot and should not be tolerated. The Child Abduction Prevention Act not only creates new methods for finding and recovering abducted children, but it also takes steps to prevent them from happening in the first place.

To help recover abducted children, it establishes a national AMBER Alert communications network and doubles the annual grant to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to \$20 million through 2005.

To get tough on perpetrators and bring justice to sexual predators, it eliminates the statute of limitations for child abductions and sex crimes, denies pretrial release for child rapists or child abductors, requires a mandatory life sentence for twice-convicted child sex-offenders and a minimum 20-year prison sentence for the kidnapping of a person under 18 by a nonfamily member. It also punishes persons who travel to foreign countries to engage in illicit sexual relations with minors and criminalizes the actions of sex tour operators.

To provide law enforcement officers the tools they need, it authorizes COPS funding for a Sex Offender Apprehension Program, so local law enforcement may track sex offenders that violate the terms of their release.

I fully support this strong measure, "The Child Abduction Prevention Act," that will help protect America's children.

CHILD ABDUCTION PREVENTION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 27, 2003

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1104) to prevent child abduction, and for other purposes:

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 1104, legislation that would improve our capacity to recover missing children with implementation of a national AMBER Alert program.

The safe recovery of 15-year-old Elizabeth Smart in Utah recently brought this important issue to national attention. I am well aware of how important AMBER Alert systems can be to helping bring abducted children home safely, which is why I am an original cosponsor of H.R. 412, the National AMBER Alert Network Act included in this bill, and supported the legislation introduced by Representatives MARTIN FROST and JENNIFER DUNN in the 107th Congress.

As Johnson County District Attorney for 12 years, I have seen child abduction cases that ended with the most horrible result—the death of a child. I helped bring AMBER Alert to Kansas City in 1999 and the system so far has contributed to the safe return of a 16-month-

old child and a 4-year-old child. As a result, the state of Kansas implemented a statewide AMBER Alert program in October of 2002. I have since actively worked to bring the AMBER system nationwide.

Earlier this month, I hosted a news conference in Kansas City, Missouri, with my colleague Representative KAREN MCCARTHY, to raise awareness about AMBER procedures and the need for a national program. We joined with local police to publicize AMBER Alert and expressed our support for immediate passage of this bill. Cases like Elizabeth Smart demonstrate the urgency for recovering missing children, and although the Smart family was incredibly lucky, many others are not.

Mr. Chairman, I am disappointed that we have not seen the AMBER Alert legislation come to the floor as a stand alone bill, as I called for many months ago. I believe that saving children should be above partisan politics and that Congress should be able to unite in favor of increasing measures to help our kids. While I rise in support of H.R. 1104, I do want to express my dissatisfaction that we could not follow the model of our Senate counterparts who passed AMBER Alert without additional provisions that likely will delay enactment.

I hope that you will join with me to pass H.R. 1104, however, to improve the safety of our children.

HONORING PAUL H. BETANCOURT

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 31, 2003

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Paul H. Betancourt on the occasion of the Annual Banquet of the Fresno County Farm Bureau on April 4, 2003. A diversified row crop farmer, Paul completed his two-year term as Fresno County Farm Bureau president in 2002.

Born on the East Coast, Paul was raised in San Diego, California, and became a farmer after marrying into a farming family. Mr. Betancourt earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in religious studies from Westmont College, and a second degree in agriculture business from California State University, Fresno. He is a graduate of Class XXV of the California Agriculture Leadership Program.

The Fresno County Farm Bureau represents over 6,000 members, which includes over 4,500 farmers and ranchers, on trade, land use, water, labor, and all agricultural related issues. Mr. Betancourt has held several positions within Farm Bureau, including director-at-large, secretary-treasurer, and second and first vice presidents. Through his Farm Bureau activities, Paul served on the board of directors of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce, and represented the Farm Bureau at many industry and community forums and events.

Paul currently serves on the Kerman Unified School Board of Trustees and is involved in the Fresno Area Collaborative Regional Initiative. In addition, he farms 765 acres of cotton and almonds in the Kerman and Cantua Creek

areas of Fresno County. Besides farming, Mr. Betancourt is a noted columnist for a local business publication and also enjoys teaching Sunday School class at Kerman Covenant. Paul and his wife, Sheryl, have two children, Heidi and Jonathan, and live near Kerman, California.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Paul H. Betancourt for his dedication and commitment to the Fresno County Farm Bureau and to the broader California agriculture community. I invite my colleagues to join me in commending Paul for his service and hard work and in wishing him many years of continued success.

THE PRINCE WILLIAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2003 MERIT VALOR AWARD RECIPIENTS

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 31, 2003

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, every year, the Prince William Chamber of Commerce recognizes individuals who have courageously demonstrated selfless dedication to public safety. These outstanding men and women have played an important role in building a better community. This hard work and determination has earned several citizens of Prince William County the highest honor bestowed upon county public safety officials—The Merit Valor Award.

The Merit Award recognizes public service officials for acts involving personal risk. The award may also be presented to those who demonstrate judgment, zeal, or ingenuity above what is non-nally expected in the performance of duty.

It is with great honor that I enter into the record the names of the 2003 Merit Award recipients. Prince William County Police Department: Police Officer Second Class R.A. Arce; Police Officer Second Class R.W. Minnick; Police Officer Second Class B.K. Oxendine; Sr. First Sergeant J.B. Wheeler; Prince William County Department of Fire & Rescue: Technician II Michelle Butler; Technician I Scott Calder; Technician II Stephen Horvath; Technician I Landon Timbers, Jr.; Virginia State Police: Trooper Darrel D. Estess; Senior Trooper Mark C. Wilkinson; USMC: Corporal Amber V. Kephart; Prince William County Office of the Sheriff: Deputy Sheriff Heath Stearns; OWL Volunteer Fire Department: EMT Robert W. Warner. The service they provide to the community is tremendous and is deserving of such acclaim.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the men and women who serve Prince William County. The events of September 11th, served as a reminder of the sacrifices our emergency service workers make for us every day. Their constant efforts on behalf of Prince William County citizens are paramount to preserving security, law, and order throughout our neighborhoods; and their individual and collective acts of heroism deserve our highest praise. I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating these outstanding individuals.