

veterans' training by a state approving agency, would continue to serve as legitimate training and learning opportunities for beneficiaries. This section would also furnish the VA Secretary the authority to use up to \$3 million to develop the computer systems and procedures needed to carry out provisions of the bill.

Section six would require the VA Secretary to establish a pilot program to furnish on-job benefits to claims adjudicators training in its disability compensation, dependency and indemnity (DIC), and pension programs. I note that two of VA's four regional offices that adjudicate educational assistance claims offer such training. This pilot is unique because it would waive the current two-year maximum for on-job training. VA employees who adjudicate disability, DIC, and pension claims require three years to qualify as journeyworkers. I believe this provision has the potential to increase VA's ability to recruit and retain former servicemembers in these important positions, especially given the aging of VA's workforce.

Section seven would require certain coordination of information among the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Labor with respect to on-job training. This provision would do two things. First, at the time of a servicemember's separation from active duty, the Secretary of Defense would be required to furnish to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs information concerning each registered apprenticeship pursued by the servicemember during his or her active duty service. Second, it would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in conjunction with the Secretary of Labor, to encourage and assist states and private organizations to accord credit to servicemembers for skills in any related apprenticeship the servicemember may pursue in civilian life. I applaud the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard for moving in this direction through its U.S. Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP). But more can be done.

LEADERSHIP

Mr. Speaker, leadership abounds in serving America's sons and daughters who have protected our freedoms. Let me mention just a very few examples:

The Non Commissioned Officers Association of the United States for some 30 years has held job fairs for separating servicemembers at home, as well as abroad;

The American Legion, through its Economic Commission, has played a major leadership role in creating opportunities to help veterans meet civilian licensing and credentialing requirements;

The U.S. Army Ordnance Corps, on its own initiative, has exhibited leadership in linking training of its soldiers in many military specialties with civilian licensing and credentialing bodies so military time will count toward such requirements;

The AFL-CIO's Center for Military Recruitment, Assessment and Veterans Employment, has initiated its Helmets to Hard Hats program in its Building and Construction Trades Department to link veterans possessing construction/building trades skills to learn-and-earn opportunities with companies nationwide;

The Communication Workers of America has an on-going initiative to connect high-tech employers with high-performing veterans whose military occupational training makes them job-ready immediately;

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Center for Workforce Preparation has initiated a pilot

program in San Diego called 'Operation Transition' to examine ways to link veterans and their spouses with employers; and

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is a partner in the innovative vetsjobs.com program.

PARTNERS

Mr. Speaker, lastly I'd like to commend the many organizations that have offered suggestions for this bill:

AFL-CIO; American Portland Cement Alliance; Associated Building and Contractors, Inc.; Associated General Contractors of America; College and University Professional Association for Human Resources; Communication Workers of America; International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers; International Brotherhood of Teamsters; International Organization of Masters, Mates, and Pilots; Iron Workers International; Labor Policy Association; Laborers' International Union of North America; Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; National Association of Manufacturers; National Association of State Approving Agencies; Nebraska Department of Education; Pennsylvania Department of Education; Sheet Metal Workers International Association; Society for Human Resource Management; Transport Union of America; United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing, Pipefitting, and Sprinkler Fitting Industry; United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America; and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

I encourage my colleagues to add their names in support of this timely legislation.

TRIBUTE TO THE BOULDER CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Boulder City Fire Department for obtaining a Class 2 Insurance Service Offices, ISO, rating. The ISO Class 2 rating is obtained by less than one percent of the fire departments in the country and is made possible by the dedication and skill of Boulder City Fire Chief Dean Molburg and the firemen of Boulder City.

As a former mayor of Boulder City, and its current Congressman, I am proud that Boulder City has been recognized for its excellent fire coverage. The courage and commitment to public service shown every day by Boulder City firefighters is an example for all of us. They, and all Nevada first responders, have my thanks and full support.

REGARDING: (ARMY SGT. EDWARD
J. ANGUIANO)

HON. SOLOMON P. ORTIZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Sgt. Edward J. Anguiano, a missing soldier from Los Fresnos, Texas. Sgt. Anguiano, assigned to the 3rd Combat Support Battalion out of Ft. Stewart, GA, is an

Army mechanic who graduated from Hanna High School.

The 24-year-old serviceman has not been seen since his convoy was ambushed March 29 in Iraq. He remains one of the few U.S. soldiers whose status is unresolved.

His mother's anguish is evident in her question the day she was told Edward was missing: "Does it mean that he is dead and they can't find him or that he is alive and they can't find him? What does that mean?" That is a painful limbo for a parent and family.

There's a yellow ribbon tied to a tree in front of Edward's home on Melon Street for him. He is one of several soldiers believed captured by Iraqis in an ambush on their supply convoy at An Nasiriyah in southern Iraq.

Edward, like all the servicemen for our nation, is an outstanding and brave young man. This soft-spoken soldier is a survivor who is motivated, disciplined, and attentive—all traits his family is depending on to help him survive in captivity.

His family is clinging to the memory of the last time they saw him, at Christmas.

His family has said that Edward did not express fear of battle or doubts about serving in the military. He was doing what he wanted to be doing. They are finding strength in their faith and through prayer.

I ask my colleagues to remember Sgt. Edward J. Anguiano and continue to pray that he is found soon. Please pray, too, for his family: his mother, San Juanita Anguiano; his two sisters, Rebecca and Jennifer Garzoria; and his uncle, Vicente Anguiano Jr.—a veteran like so many other family members.

ADDRESS OF MAJORITY LEADER TOM DELAY ON RECEIVING THE FRIEND OF ISRAEL AWARD

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call the attention of my colleagues to an outstanding speech given by Majority Leader Tom DeLay. His remarks were made when he received the "Friend of Israel Award" at the Washington Briefing of Stand for Israel—an organization under the aegis of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. This statement is of unmistakable importance in its application of American values and moral clarity to the political problems of the Middle East.

Mr. Speaker, the acts of terrorists—blowing up school buses, bombing markets, killing innocent children—are unmatched in their cowardice. I fully share Congressman DeLay's belief that murderers should neither be trusted nor rewarded for their crimes. He eloquently stated: "As a friend of Israel, and a lover of liberty for all God's children, we must reject any suggestion that its government negotiation from weakness, stand on an even moral footing with suicide bombers or trust the promises of terrorists." These words should serve as the foundation of U.S. Peacemaking in the Middle East.

Majority Leader DELAY understands that there can be no such thing as even-handedness between good and evil. As Americans we can do nothing less. America did not

waver when our British friends were imperiled by Nazi force during World War II. We did not tremble when Stalin and his successors threatened the destruction of our NATO allies in Europe. Mr. Speaker, as America confronts evil at home and around the world, we must stand with the democratic State of Israel and against the terrorist scourge that threatens its people and its existence.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to read Congressman DELAY's principled statement.

SPEECH OF MAJORITY LEADER TOM DELAY AT STAND FOR ISRAEL WASHINGTON BRIEFING DINNER, APRIL 2, 2003.

Thank you. I'm not a great award recipient. There are so many people that need to be thanked that worked so hard for so many reasons to support Israel. It's great to see so many of my friends in the audience that came to be with us tonight, and all the others that I haven't met yet, I just say to you and you'll understand when I say, to God belongs the glory.

So I really want to thank you for this honor and I especially want to thank my good friend Tom Lantos for being here and he greatly deserves this award for his long-standing work in the Congress as well as work with Israel. He stands like a rock on behalf of Israel and has always stood that way and you can tell the worth of a man by the woman who stands beside him, and Annette is here tonight. She is always by Tom's side, and they work as a team and we greatly appreciate them. I just really have the utmost respect for Tom Lantos and have become closer to him over the last year or so, and greatly appreciate my friendship with him, and I do love him. He is really a wonderful, wonderful man.

As we meet here tonight, something extraordinary is happening on the other side of the world. Hundreds of thousands of trained and dedicated volunteers, an army of virtue, are liberating a nation. Pretty Amazing. Mile by mile, a blood-thirsty dictator's grip on a noble people slips. Town by town, Iraqi families realize what smiling people in camouflage uniforms have won for them. And day-by-day, children wake up for the first morning of their lives to God's freedom. This is the meaning of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

We all know greater love hath no man than this, than he lay down his life for his friends. Yet today, in Iraq, liberating armies are risking their own lives in a land and for a people they have never before met. Decades long Iraqi pleas for freedom and justice will soon be answered. But my friends theirs is not the only voice that cries out in the desert. For as we meet tonight, in that same part of the world, violent men plot the deaths of school children. These men view innocent human life as a means to an end and murder as a propaganda technique. These men act outside the boundaries of humanity and these men support a career terrorist too long tolerated by the civilized world.

Tonight our thoughts are with the people of Israel, and it is on their behalf, the courageous who live everyday in the cross-hairs of such men, that I accept this award and proudly count myself as a friend of Israel.

You know after Operation Iraqi Freedom is won, and it will be won, international attention necessarily focused on the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime will disperse. There will be the re-building of Iraq and its welcomed return to the community of nations, there will be a simmering crisis in North Korea, there will be strained relationships with old friends to address, and a blossoming alliance with the surging powers of new Europe to solidify.

And there will be, as we all well know, calls on Israel to set aside decades of experi-

ence and once again trust the words and paper of a terrorist entity bent on her destruction. Voices will call on the United States to serve as an honest broker in negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government. They will call on Israel to take risks for peace. As a friend of Israel, and a lover of liberty for all God's children, we must reject any suggestion that its government negotiate from weakness, stand on even moral footing with suicide bombers, or trust the promises of terrorists. The United States stands for justice and that means we stand for Israel.

Our qualms are not with the Palestinian people, but their self appointed leaders. Yasser Arafat and his thugs do not serve the interests of the Palestinian people, they are exploiters, in business today as always, only for themselves. They perpetuate violence and misery in a country that has known too much of both. Negotiating with these men who sharpen their tongues like swords is folly, and any agreement arrived at through such empty negotiations would amount to a covenant with death as generations of Israelis have already witnessed.

Yasser Arafat and his cronies are enemies of peace and a threat to the community of civilized nations. The Palestinian people, used as pawns by Arafat's regime, do not desire this existence. More and more of them are coming to realize the barriers to this new life are not in Ariel Sharon's cabinet but Yasser Arafat's compound. Palestinians and the Arab world at large tragically have only their corrupt leaders to blame for their economic depravation, not Americans and not Israelis.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in Iraq today we are making a stand against oppressive terror. It is not the first time and it won't be the last. The United States and it allies will no longer live in fear of terrorist networks of global reach, nor of their state sponsors. That is why we are in war tonight in Iraq. We are disarming a dangerous regime because it threatens the security of the world. The President has directed his advisors to craft a plan, to do it with speed and precision never before witnessed in the history of war. The plan is working, the military is advancing, and the under-informed talking heads of the media elite are just dead wrong.

We thank God every day that the President is a man of faith and a man of confidence. But it must frustrate him to hear the incessant carping of blow dried Napoleons hunkered down in their air-conditioned studios night after night on the twenty-four hour news networks. Peter Arnette thinks a war plan that advanced hundreds of miles in a week, in less than a week, is a failure. Geraldo Rivera drew a map in the sand of American positions for our enemies to see. Well thankfully, President Bush has also drawn in the sand. He has drawn a line beyond which the civilized world will not accept the behavior of evil men. We will free ourselves from terrorist threats and free those who live under terrorist regimes.

Americans have defended our freedom for more than two hundred years and Israelis have done the same for more than fifty. We are opposed by many of the same enemies who use many of the same tactics. Israel's fight is our fight against terror and for humanity. The United States therefore can not serve as a disinterested broker between an ally and its terrorist enemy. There is no moral equivalence between an aggressor and a man who defends himself against aggression, just as there is no moral equivalence between terrorists and the Israeli government sworn to stop them, despite the absurd assertions of the State Department's newly released human rights reports.

This report just boggles my mind. This report is designed to document human rights

conditions in countries all around the globe, however it compares the human rights record of a free, tolerant, and pluralistic nation with that of a terrorist network. There is no comparison and to assert one is absolutely ridiculous. Israel is governed by democratically elected representatives. The Palestinian Authority is governed by a gang of murderers. Experience and common sense lead to one conclusion about America's proper role in the Middle East. We are absolutely right to stand with Israel and our opponents are absolutely wrong. The moral ambiguities of our diplomatic elites not withstanding, Israel is not the problem, Israel is the solution.

The House of Representatives said as much, they shouted in fact, by a margin of 352 to 21, by passing the resolution that Tom Lantos and I sponsored last year. The resolution affirmed America's solidarity with Israel, supported Israel's right to self-defense, urged all Arab states to denounce all forms of terrorism and encouraged the alleviation of the needs of the Palestinian people. Any viable plans for peace must require the Palestinian Authority to do the same and to permanently sever ties with those who do not.

President Bush has laid out a bold vision to this extent. He has made it clear Israel must have a right to defend herself and that the Palestinian Authority must stop its acts of terror once and for all. Certain parties to the peace process, more interested in appeasing aggression than combating terrorism, have forfeited their right to leadership on this issue. The United States is the world's defender of freedom, and Israel is one of our greatest allies. We won't allow anyone to reward terrorists and terrorist acts, least of all nations and organizations who appease Saddam Hussein and who continue to appease Yasser Arafat.

This struggle is one of good versus evil. Nations and organizations who fail to distinguish between the two disqualify themselves from input on this matter. The President understands Israel must not be asked to negotiate with the men terrorizing its innocent citizens even as speak. The Palestinian Authority and their state sponsors must end the violence. This must be an act of principle, not some gesture of goodwill. The Palestinian Authority's words have no meaning, their actions do. The violence must stop—period. No negotiations.

And when it does, and not before, the Palestinian people will have a real, viable opportunity for peace. Thankfully, President Bush understands that no peace process worthy of its name can be obscured by appeasers or moral relativists. He understands that process for its own sake is not the goal, the security of our allies is the goal, and no quartet of appeasement will obscure that fact.

You know, though tested by generations of fire, the people of Israel do not exhibit malice or even seek revenge. Much like everyday Palestinians, they just want peace and the security to live their own lives, free from want and free from fear. They are not fools, and should not be expected to bargain with murderers. But when a new generation of Palestinian leaders arise, with a real and lasting peace as their goal, and more importantly the authority and will to deliver on it, a comprehensive solution may finally be attainable. But Israel should not be expected to offer substantive concessions while the Palestinian leaders offer only empty promises. Israel should have the freedom to defend its national security and to negotiate at a time and on terms set by its democratic government, not those imposed by anyone else.

To be a friend of Israel demands no less than supporting her through these very difficult days, as well as the better ones we all know await her, and await her people in the future. And despite decades of terror in the holy cradle of faith, we must hope, as did a fifteen year-old girl hiding in Amsterdam writing in her diary less than a month before she was taken to Auschwitz, "I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too shall end, that peace and tranquility will return once more."

You know Ladies and Gentlemen, through God's grace, the friendship of the United States and Israel will endure to see the dreams of that little girl fill the whole world with light and truth forever.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 1715, TO
ENHANCE VA'S AUTHORITY TO
RECOVER COSTS OF MEDICAL
CARE

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, along with Mr. EVANS of Illinois, the Committee's Ranking Member, I am introducing a bill to strengthen the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) rights under law to recover the costs of providing medical care to veterans and other persons from certain third parties. A number of public health plans either refuse to reimburse VA, or are prohibited from doing so by current law. This bill would correct this problem by eliminating barriers to reimbursement for VA care. It is identical to a bill I introduced in the 107th Congress, H.R. 5530. That bill was referred exclusively to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R. 1715 is based upon the simple principle that acknowledges when VA provides medical care to an insured or Medicare-eligible veteran, VA should receive payment for the services it provides. This principle is not new. Since 1986, VA has had statutory authority to collect from traditional insurers such as Blue Cross-Blue Shield, Aetna, Mutual of Omaha and many others. These funds are used by VA to supplement appropriated funds to maintain high quality health care. VA also collects from so called "Medi-gap policies" that are an important adjunct to the Medicare program.

But VA is unable to collect from the massive managed care sector, accounting now for over two-thirds of all health plans in the United States, including the managed care plans within Federal Employee Health Benefits Plan. Nor can VA collect from the Medicare program. RAND Corporation has estimated that over 2 million Medicare-eligible veterans were enrolled in VA health care in fiscal year 2000, with that number increasing each fiscal year since then.

My legislation would require these federal programs to pay VA for care it provides to covered beneficiaries. This would increase the amount of money VA could collect by hundreds of millions of dollars each year—providing funds that are desperately needed to reduce these intolerable waiting lists and promote better use of all available health care resources.

This legislation will not limit the choices available to veterans in Medicare or any other

federal health care plan, and I do believe it will create a modest incentive for veterans to remain enrolled in the VA rather than move back and forth between systems as they do now. This bill will also provide an important supplement to the VA health care system for the services it renders in caring for many of our nation's heroes.

I urge my colleagues to support this common-sense approach to improving veterans' health care, reducing waiting times for VA health care, and helping Medicare-eligible and other federally insured veterans gain better health care coverage from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

TRIBUTE TO THE FOREIGN
AGRICULTURAL SERVICE

HON. BOB GOODLATTE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, today Congressman STENHOLM and I are introducing a resolution recognizing the important service of the Foreign Agricultural Service of the Department of Agriculture on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service was established to develop and expand markets for United States agricultural commodities and products.

Our farmers and ranchers are the most productive in the world and produce much more than we in the United States can consume. Therefore a vibrant export market is very important to the success of United States agriculture. FAS has contributed to that success and as of 2002, United States agricultural exports exceed imports by more than \$12 billion. Our exports have grown significantly over the history of FAS and now exceed \$50 billion per year.

FAS fosters the public and private partnership that is needed to promote United States agricultural exports and to develop and expand markets around the world.

At this important time when free trade negotiations are ongoing, both in the World Trade Organization and through bilateral negotiations, the FAS is essential to represent United States agriculture and ensure that the challenges facing our agriculture producers are thoroughly addressed.

Another responsibility of the FAS is to provide food aid to needy people in developing countries and to help those countries to eventually become trading partners of the United States and buy our agricultural products.

The FAS and its employees provide a significant service to the farmers and ranchers here at home so that they can compete in worldwide markets. I congratulate them on their achievements and look forward to working closely with the FAS as the Committee continues its work to expand markets for United States agriculture.

NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor of National Public Health Week. I want to thank

the organizers and sponsors of events around the nation that serve to raise everyone's awareness of the need to improve public health, particularly in the area of the nation's obesity crisis. Those groups include the American Public Health Association, American Dietetic Association, Pfizer Inc., Association of American Medical Colleges, Association of Teachers of Preventive Medicine, Research!America, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

One of the greatest public health challenges facing our Nation today is curbing obesity, which has increased at such unprecedented levels that health professionals are calling obesity a national epidemic. Spurred by sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy diets, about 60 percent of American adults are overweight and 15 percent of children and teenagers are overweight. The percentage of overweight adolescents has tripled during the last twenty years.

Although I am pleased that the numbers in my home state are slightly better, the percentage of the population that is obese is still troubling. What is even more troubling is the research that indicates that obesity is an even greater problem among the African-American and Latino communities.

The health consequences of obesity are real and significant. Being overweight is associated with increased risk for heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. About 300,000 deaths each year are associated with being obese. In fact, people who are overweight have a 50 to 100 percent increased risk of premature death. As the American Public Health Association stated in their release, "reversing this life threatening trend has moved beyond a matter of personal responsibility to a national crisis that all Americans must respond to."

Unfortunately, we are moving in the wrong direction. Less than ten percent of children walk or ride their bicycles to school and more schools are inviting fast food vendors into their cafeterias. We need to make a concerted effort to increase physical fitness activities among the entire population, especially children, and encourage all Americans to adopt a healthier diet that includes fruits and vegetables. I applaud the work of all of the organizations that are spreading this message during National Public Health Week. However, if we are going to be successful in reducing obesity, we must make sure that this message is heard the entire year and not just for one week.

That is why I will soon reintroduce my bill, the Medicaid Obesity Treatment Act. I hope to work with all of the sponsors involved with National Public Health Week to ensure passage of my bill in this Congress.

RECOGNIZING THE "FROM SEA TO
SHINING SEA: A CELEBRATION
OF MARINE SANCTUARIES" EXHIBIT
AT MOTE MARINE LABORATORY,
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

HON. KATHERINE HARRIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Ms. HARRIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary work of the National Marine Sanctuaries Foundation, as exemplified by an exhibit entitled "From Sea to