

does a better job keeping us focused than AIPAC.

Tonight, I am inspired . . .

Inspired by the incredible dedication of people whom I have met through my involvement in politics . . . grassroots activists, elected officials, candidates—all of you have my deepest admiration.

Inspired by our Christian Zionist friends who mean so much to me and who have opened their hearts to Israel and to the Jewish people.

Inspired by the words we heard earlier this evening from Sen. John Cornyn and the members of our local Congressional Delegation, who prioritized their schedules to be here tonight. And by all the other elected officials who have joined us here tonight as well.

Inspired by our wonderful Houston Jewish Community and the professionals and lay leaders with whom I have the privilege of working. Each organization plays an important role in the totality we call Klal Yisrael.

Inspired by a strong spiritual attachment to Judaism. My faith and the values that derive from our rich heritage are the underpinnings for my political activism.

I want to thank Relda for sharing this honor with me. And to the entire AIPAC staff who worked so hard on this event.

As a Holocaust survivor, my father's legacy to me is the sacred duty to remember those who did not survive. My mother, of blessed memory, was an example of unending endurance and inner strength, and my mother-in-law's zest for life is very special to me.

Sandra and I have been blessed with three wonderful children—Jordan, Seth and Marissa. They have learned to cope with the evenings that both Mom and Dad are out at meetings. However, Friday nights are spent together at Beth Yeshurun and Shabbat Dinner afterwards.

I hope my children will look around this room and see how many of you have taken the time to support the important mission of AIPAC.

Things can get pretty crazy in our home between all the meetings and events Sandra and I are involved with. Yet, Sandra still makes sure that there are three meals a day on the table, and that each kid gets to wherever they need to go. She is an awesome mother, wife and partner. I am so fortunate to have a wife who is not only supportive, but who makes me proud for all that she does. Sandra, I love you.

At one time or another, all my other family members who are here to support me this evening end up pitching in to help in one way or another. Thank you all.

I close with a hope that each of us this evening has been inspired to increase our level of pro-Israel activism at least one notch—it begins with education on the issues. There is no better place for that than AIPAC . . . get involved with candidates, elected officials, and the political party of your choice . . . or better yet, with the political party of my choice. Not to worry, Mark, that's as partisan as it gets tonight.

The great sage Hillel asked—"If I am not for myself who will be? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?" The answer to the question "when" is "now!" Let's go do it!

Thank you.

## IN CELEBRATION OF THE HAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL CRABBERS 700TH VICTORY IN FOOTBALL

### HON. ROBERT C. SCOTT

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, October 9, 2004

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, along with my colleagues, Representative JOANN DAVIS and Representative ED SCHROCK, I rise with great pride to call attention to a group of young students who have distinguished themselves, their school, their community, and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Hampton High School Crabbers football team won their 700th game last night. By doing so, the Crabbers became one of only 11 high school football programs in the Nation to reach 700 victories. This is a remarkable feat and I believe they deserve formal recognition for their accomplishment.

Hampton High School began playing football in 1899, so the legacy of this milestone extends to the hundreds of players who have worn the Crabber uniform and to coaches such as Mike Smith, Dick Esleeck, James "Suey" Eason, and Johnny Palmer. Coach Smith has been head coach for more than half of the Crabbers' 700 wins, and has been a part of more than 400 victories.

My colleagues JOANN DAVIS, ED SCHROCK, and I would like to extend our enthusiastic congratulations to the Hampton High School players and their families, Coach Smith and the rest of his coaching staff, Hampton High alumni, and the entire Hampton High community for their remarkable accomplishment.

## THE INCREASED MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF OUR RETURNING SOLDIERS AND VETERANS

### HON. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, October 9, 2004

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, October 3 through October 9 is Mental Illness Awareness Week. During this week, it is critical that Members of Congress and the American public recognize the increased mental health needs of our returning soldiers and veterans.

As co-Chair of the Congressional Mental Health Caucus, I rise today to express my strong support for expansion of the mental health benefits offered to our veterans and the men and women currently serving in our armed services. Those who have witnessed the atrocities of war must have professional assistance to deal with the traumatic memories that they are going to live with for the rest of their lives. These traumatic memories can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, a dangerous biological condition affecting a soldier's body, mind, and certainly family. Unfortunately, soldiers returning home often do not receive the comprehensive care they need. Some even sign their rights-to-service away.

Many of the soldiers who served in recent wars in the Middle East have a desperate need for mental health services. Here are some alarming statistics. Out of 15,000 veterans returning from the Middle East who

have utilized VA healthcare services, 12 percent presented symptoms related to psychological trauma. It is estimated that more than 25 percent of troops returning from Iraq are being examined for mental health concerns. These are startling statistics and dramatically demonstrate the need for more mental health services.

We must concern ourselves that many soldiers find it difficult to obtain treatment or fail to seek help because of the stigma attached to mental illness due to a lack of sensitivity. Just look at our jails and our homeless population. Our communities and our social service system are affected, yet we refuse to admit a problem exists.

I am also deeply troubled and concerned, as are many women Members of Congress, with our returning women soldiers who may have been exposed to the traumatic experience of sexual assault. For example, a horrendous 8 percent of female Gulf War Veterans experienced an attempted or completed sexual assault during deployment. The PTSD from sexual assault is just as harmful as combat related PTSD. This must cease immediately.

In the past three decades, the Veterans' Administration has taken great strides toward better mental care services for men and women, and there is now a better understanding of PTSD because of research conducted through the VA health system. More remains to be done. Twenty-five years ago, the VA offered no PTSD services, no Vet Centers, no homeless services. Today these services exist though limited. However, many veterans will not benefit from these services because of a lack of access. There are just not enough Vet Centers, and the need for services will only continue to grow as a result of U.S. involvement throughout the world.

Additional funding for the VA health system must be appropriated to improve access to care. The President's proposal of funding increase of only 2 percent for the VA health system does not even cover increases in cost of living and is insufficient even to maintain the inadequate current level services. The demand on PTSD services has not kept up with the increase need of services. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have greatly increased the need for these vital services. Some veterans who need weekly or biweekly follow-up appointments for therapy are forced to wait weeks, and in many cases even months. This is unconscionable. The VA does not have enough mental health professionals due in part to lack of funding, and the President's low funding proposal will exacerbate this problem. Our returning soldiers and veterans deserve better from their government. They have earned what was promised them.

The Bush administration has repeatedly emphasized that the war in Iraq is not another Vietnam. However, by not providing veterans the necessary mental health resources, we can assure the same high rates of suicide that existed among Vietnam veterans. As we conclude our recognition of mental illness awareness this week, we will continue our fight to ensure that our veterans and service personnel will be able to receive the mental health services they deserve. Their sacrifice for our beloved country paid for them.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4200,  
RONALD W. REAGAN NATIONAL  
DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT  
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

SPEECH OF

**HON. RUSH D. HOLT**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, October 8, 2004*

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of adoption of this conference report which authorizes \$447.2 billion for the U.S. Defense Department (DOD) and the national security programs of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

As is always the case, there are many provisions in the final version of this massive bill every year which I enthusiastically support and others that I do not. On balance, this conference report has more merits than shortcomings.

First, I am pleased that it provides more generous pay and benefits for the men and women who currently serve in our armed forces and for those who have done so in the past.

It authorizes a 3.5 percent across-the-board pay raise for our troops. This is the sixth consecutive year that Congress will have provided a pay raise for our men and women in uniform greater than the level of private sector pay raises. This will help to further reduce the gap between average military and private sector pay. Similarly, it makes permanent the increased rates for imminent danger pay from \$150 to \$225 per month, and the family separation allowance from \$100 to \$250 per month, while also eliminating out-of-pocket housing expenses.

For members of the National Guard and Reserves, it extends several special pay provisions and bonuses through December 31, 2005, including bonuses for enlistment, reenlistment, and prior service. Reservists and family members will also receive enhanced TRICARE benefits.

For our Nation's military retirees and their survivors, this legislation goes further in protecting their financial security. It will eliminate the Social Security offset under the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) by increasing in stages the annuities paid to survivors of military retirees who are 62 years of age or older from 35 percent of retired pay.

Last year's version of this legislation, made significant and overdue strides in redressing the disparity by which disabled military retirees have their pension benefits reduced, dollar for dollar, by the amount of disability benefits they receive from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It authorized full concurrent receipt to be phased in over 10 years. This bill makes further progress by removing disabled retirees, who are rated as 100 percent disabled, from the 10-year phase-in period. These deserving military retirees will be authorized for full concurrent receipt effective next January.

Second, we now know that our troops were poorly served by Pentagon war planners in advance of the invasion of Iraq. Many of them were sent into harm's way without adequate supplies of body armor, armed Humvees, and other essential equipment. This bill will help correct these inexcusable miscalculations by providing a \$572 million increase to speed the

production of up-armored Humvees plus \$100 million for add-on armor kits for Humvees already in use.

Third, it is no secret that current troop strength is inadequate and our troops in Iraq and elsewhere are stretched too thin. To redress this military manpower shortage, this bill increases active Army end strength from the present level of 482,400 to 502,400 in 2005 and authorizes further increases to 512,400 by 2009. Similarly, it increases the Marine Corps from its current level of 175,000 to 178,000 in 2005 and to 184,000 by 2009.

Fourth, in their recent presidential debate, both President Bush and U.S. Senator JOHN KERRY spoke about the importance of stepping up nonproliferation efforts to curb the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and to lessen the danger of terrorists acquiring these horrible weapons. While I'd have preferred a higher level of funding, this bill provides \$409.2 million for the Cooperative Threat Reduction Initiative that will help dismantle, secure, and eliminate WMD and WMD facilities in the former Soviet Union.

On the negative side, this legislation provides \$10 billion for a bogus missile defense program. In defiance of physics, this Congress continues to shovel ever increasing sums of taxpayer funds to deploy a missile defense system that has not been tested adequately nor demonstrated to work.

There is continued authority and funding in this legislation for further research on new tactical nuclear weapons. Specifically, it provides an additional \$27.9 million for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator—the so-called nuclear bunker buster, plus an additional \$9 million for advanced concept initiatives. While these sums may not seem all that significant in a \$447.2 billion bill, they continue our nation down a dangerous and destabilizing path. By continuing to fund this type of research; the U.S. is opening Pandora's box and encouraging other nations to develop and deploy supposedly more usable nuclear weapons.

Finally, I am disappointed that a provision authored by U.S. Senators BOXER and COLLINS was dropped from this conference report that would have afforded stronger protection for women serving in our armed forces who are victims of rape. More specifically, it would have permitted women victimized by rape to receive medical abortions without having to pay for the procedures themselves.

Recent statistics from DOD reveal that as many as 6 percent of active-duty service women report having been sexually assaulted. There have been 112 reports of sexual misconduct over the past 18 months in Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan.

U.S. Army officials recently issued a policy statement to Army medical professionals clarifying their position on care for victims of sexual assault. In it, they instructed that "the Army has existing medical and legal policies and programs to assist leaders. Use these resources to provide victims with immediate medical care, follow-up counseling, and seamless victim assistance." However, by banning abortion funding for rape victims in the military, this provision will severely impede the ability of rape victims to receive the appropriate medical care and assistance they need. This ban further injures the women who are bravely defending our country, and keeps victims who have already suffered an unspeakable assault from exercising their constitutionally-protected right to choose.

On balance this legislation will enhance our Nation's security.

FEDERAL EMPLOYEES DENTAL  
AND VISION BENEFITS ENHANCE-  
MENT ACT OF 2004

SPEECH OF

**HON. DANNY K. DAVIS**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, October 8, 2004*

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, visual health and oral health are integral to our general health. Eye and oral diseases are progressive and become more complex over time. Our ability to eat, see, read, learn, and communicate all depend on good visual and oral health.

Periodic eye and dental examinations are an important part of routine preventive health care. Many visual and oral conditions present no obvious symptoms. Therefore, individuals are often unaware that problems exist.

There are safe and effective measures to prevent the most common eye and dental diseases. That is why early diagnosis and treatment are important for maintaining good visual and oral health and why a vision and dental benefit should be made available to federal employees and annuitants.

We know that in 1987 the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) stopped plans in the Federal Health Benefits program from adding new vision and dental packages. OPM did so for various reasons. However, that decision was made over 15 years ago, and it is time to take a fresh look at how we can meet the visual and oral health needs of federal employees.

In the long run, preventive care, through periodic examinations and doctor visits, will help keep down long term vision and dental costs due to early detection.

Therefore, I am extremely pleased to be an original cosponsor of H.R. 5295, which permits OPM to contract with qualified companies to offer dental and vision benefits to federal employees and retirees under the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program.

I am also pleased that this bill includes a provision that requires OPM to study the feasibility of providing hearing benefits to federal employees and retirees. Currently, over 28 million Americans suffer hearing loss, half of whom are under the age of 50. Hearing loss is not just a problem affecting adults. Thirty-three children are born everyday with some form of hearing loss. With early detection and treatment, these children can be taught in regular classes, saving a school system as much as \$500,000 during a 12-year education.

I included similar language in H.R. 3751, which passed the House in June. Like vision and dental benefits, most insurance plans do not provide hearing benefits, such as coverage for hearing aids. I believe the Federal Government should consider taking a lead in this area.

I urge my colleagues in the House to support this legislation.