

Counseling Act of 2004.” This legislation would permanently extend VA’s authority to offer services to women and men who experienced sexual harassment, abuse or assault while serving on active duty in the armed services.

Congress originally authorized VA to offer sexual trauma counseling in November 1992 in the wake of the Tailhook Scandal where U.S. naval aviators were found to have sexually abused 14 women officers and 12 civilians at a 1991 convention in Las Vegas. In the wake of another scandal at the Aberdeen Proving Ground in 1998, legislation resulting in the extension and expansion of authority for the sexual trauma counseling program was enacted. I want to commend my colleague on the VA Committee, Luis Gutierrez, for his hard work in support of this legislation.

As the number of women serving in the military continues to grow, the need for this program is sadly more evident. According to a VA report, more than half (55%) of all women in VA’s patient population said they had experienced sexual harassment while in the military, and almost one-quarter claimed to have been sexually assaulted. Although the military is moving to address some of the long-standing problems it has had in managing sexism of all kinds in its increasingly integrated armed services workforce, we cannot expect the military’s culture to change overnight.

VA’s sexual trauma counseling programs are designed to create a secure and sensitive environment in which women who served in the military can deal with the emotional burden of being a victim of sexual abuse. Studies have shown that almost a third of all rape victims have active cases of post-traumatic stress disorder. Typically individuals who seek care may need other types of VA services including appropriate treatment for the psychological effects of trauma, in addition to medication and treatment for the substance use disorders that sometimes arise from victims’ attempts to “self-medicate” symptoms such as stress, impaired concentration and nightmares.

Since the program was authorized, VA has embraced the challenge of developing unique resources to serve women and men who suffered such abuses during their military service. The program does not limit its services to veterans and is authorized to provide services to members of the National Guard and Reserve and others who were on active duty, such as trainees, who may never attain veteran status.

To date, thousands of veterans have received VA sexual trauma services and a General Accounting Office study shows a general satisfaction with the programs provided. All VA medical centers, in addition to some vet centers, have resources available to veterans and reservists. It is through effective intervention and counseling that individuals may overcome some of the problems associated with sexual trauma and return to normal, productive lives.

In 2002, the Committee on Veterans Affairs examined the status of VA’s health programs for women. One witness, Linda Spoonster-Schwartz, the former Chairperson of the VA’s Advisory Committee on Women Veterans and now the Commissioner of Veterans Affairs in Connecticut had this to say:

Surely by now, this Committee is aware that the need for this treatment program will persist as long as incidents of sexual assault and trauma continue to occur in the ranks of our military. For all practical pur-

poses, this problem is not going away. Indeed, there is no question that there is sufficient utilization of VA resources committed to treat veterans who were victimized while in the service of their country. Women of all ages and periods of service continue to seek assistance from VA for the physical and emotional aftermath of these traumatic events. The burning question to this Committee is why hasn’t this become a permanent program of the VA?

The time is right to give this proven program the permanent authority it deserves. I urge this Congress to pass this bill so sexual trauma counseling services will be available to current and future generations of veterans.

RECOGNIZING THE FAIRFAX COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2004 VALOR AWARD RECIPIENTS FROM THE FAIRFAX COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE DEPARTMENT

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 26, 2004

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, Mr. MORAN, Mr. WOLF and I rise today to recognize an extraordinary group of men and women in Northern Virginia. Each year, the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce recognizes individuals who courageously have demonstrated selfless dedication to public safety. The hard work, dedication, and perseverance of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department have earned several of its members the highest honor that Fairfax County bestows upon its public safety officials—The Valor Award.

There are several types of Valor Awards awarded to a public safety officer: The Life-saving Award, the Certificate of Valor, or the Gold, Silver, or Bronze Medal of Valor. During the 26th Annual Awards Ceremony, 53 men and women from the Office of the Sheriff, Fire and Rescue Department, and the Police Department received one of the aforementioned honors for their bravery and heroism.

It is with great honor that we enter into the RECORD the names of the recipients of the 2004 Valor Awards in the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. Receiving the Life-saving Award: Technician Brent M. Schnupp; the Certificate of Valor: Master Technician John L. Capps, Master Technician Even J. Lewis, EMS Captain Gary D. Pemberton; the Silver Medal of Honor: Firefighter Michael V. Allen, Lieutenant Edward D. Bowman, Haz-Mat Technician Thomas L. Flint, Captain Samuel L. Gray, Firefighter Richard D. Riley, Master Technician Timothy A. Sparrow, Lieutenant Daniel T. Young; the Bronze Medal of Honor: Master Technician Anthony E. Doran, Firefighter Clayton Thompson III.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all men and women who serve the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. The events of September 11th serve as a reminder of the sacrifices our emergency service workers make for us each day. These individuals’ continuous efforts on behalf of Fairfax County citizens are paramount to preserving security, law, and order throughout our community. Their selfless acts of heroism truly merit our highest praise. We ask our colleagues to join us in applauding this group of remarkable citizens.

TRIBUTE TO FATHER AUGUSTINE SZEKULA

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 26, 2004

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to proudly honor Father Augustine Szeckula. Father Szeckula is being honored on the joyous occasion of 60 productive years of distinguished service and leadership in Armenian, religious, cultural and literary endeavors.

Father Szeckula is a man for all seasons—devoted parish priest, distinguished educator, prolific author and editor. He is highly respected by the Armenian communities throughout the world, especially in the United States, Lebanon and Austria, where his dedicated service and visionary leadership has impacted a score of students and priests.

Father Augustine Szeckula was born on September 19, 1921 in a city called Gyergyoszentmiklos, Transylvania, which currently is Gheorgheni in Romania. His ancestors emigrated in 1913 from the city of Ani, part of the historic Armenia. In 1931, Father Szeckula attended the Mekhitarist Seminary of Vienna and was granted membership into the congregation in 1938. In 1946, he received his masters degree from the State University of Vienna. From 1946 through 1993, among his other duties, he served as director of the Mekhitarist “Madenataran,” the museum, and the Chancery and editor of “Hantes” Armenian Review. Father Szeckula went on to become Vice-Superintendent of the Mekhitarist Seminary in Vienna, Austria, principal of the Mekhitarist school in Hasmie, Lebanon and parish priest of the Armenian church in Budapest, Hungary.

Today, he is the Principal of the Mekhitarist Fathers’ School and continues to serve the Armenian community with his leadership and wisdom. Please join me in extending congratulations to Father Szeckula on his 60 years of exemplary community service.

TRIBUTE TO AUNT EUNICE MERRELL

HON. ROBERT E. (BUD) CRAMER, JR.

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 26, 2004

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to honor the memory of Eunice Merrell, known affectionately as Aunt Eunice to everyone that knew her. Aunt Eunice passed away last week at the age of 84.

Aunt Eunice was the proprietor and host at Eunice’s Country Kitchen. There you could find friendly faces and good down-home cooking. In addition to the best biscuits in North Alabama, Aunt Eunice never met a stranger. She loved every one of her customers and especially her community. Her restaurant was in business for over 50 years.

Mr. Speaker, there was no place like Eunice’s Country Kitchen. It was a part of local legend. At Eunice’s, people from all walks of life at all stages of life, were welcomed.

I considered Aunt Eunice a close friend and trusted advisor. She was the type of person

who would speak her mind and report what other people were saying about the issues, not what she thought you wanted to hear. She could always be counted on to give honest opinions on developments, controversies, and issues in the community. I believe that Aunt Eunice was part of the unique fabric that makes North Alabama such a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family. She will be deeply missed.

Aunt Eunice is survived by her sisters Naomi Johnson and Elizabeth Lyon, brother John Jenkins, son Joseph, daughters Doris Elkins and Linda Sledge, six grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, as well as countless friends and admirers. My thoughts and prayers are with them all.

BILL MCNEAL: NATIONAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR

HON. DAVID E. PRICE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 26, 2004

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and proud to inform my colleagues that last Friday, the American Association of School Administrators selected Wake County Superintendent Bill McNeal as the 2004 National School Superintendent of the Year.

Bill has a career of service to Wake County that dates back to 1974, when he arrived to teach middle school social studies. He rose through the ranks to serve as an Assistant Principal, Principal, Assistant Superintendent and Associate Superintendent. He is a graduate of Merrick Moore High School in Durham, North Carolina and received his bachelor's and master's degrees from North Carolina Central University. Bill is the definition of a homegrown leader, and I couldn't be more pleased that his outstanding commitment to education has been recognized on the national level.

As Associate Superintendent for Instructional Services, Bill played a key role in developing Goal 2003, Wake County's groundbreaking effort to take elementary education to a new level. Adopted by the Wake County Board of Education in 1998, Goal 2003 aimed to have 95 percent of the county's third and eighth graders performing at or above grade level in 5 years. Upon assuming the position of superintendent in 2000, it was Bill's challenge to implement strategies for achieving this goal. The tremendous academic improvement which has been achieved as a result is a testament to Bill's leadership and to the power of pursuing a common endeavor on behalf of our children.

Today the Wake County Public School System serves more than 104,000 students from kindergarten through 12th grade in 79 elementary schools, 25 middle schools, 16 high schools, and 5 special/alternative schools. It is North Carolina's fastest growing, highest-performing large urban school district. With a record-high average score of 1067 on the SATs, a low dropout rate, end-of-grade test scores higher than the state average for every ethnic group and income level, and continued academic growth among struggling and advanced students alike, it's evident that Bill's emphasis on academic excellence for all children has had a tremendous impact.

As a former teacher himself, Bill has worked hard to make sure that the views of educators are valued and utilized in the school system's planning efforts. He has convened the Superintendent's Teacher Advisory Council to provide him ongoing feedback about teacher and classroom issues. In addition, he recognizes that the success of schools depends on teachers accepting increasingly complex roles and leadership responsibilities. The challenge is to create the conditions necessary for success and to structure the work of teaching to make it more attractive and rewarding.

Mr. Speaker, as I join in recognizing Bill McNeal for this tremendous honor, I also want to thank him for his service to the schools of North Carolina's 4th District. Just this week, Forbes Magazine named the school system he leads third in the nation on its Top Ten List for the Best Education in the Biggest Cities. I know that Bill's outstanding efforts in Wake County will continue to serve as a model for others across the country.

HONORING TOWNSHIP OF WEST CALDWELL

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 26, 2004

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Township of West Caldwell, in Essex County, New Jersey a vibrant community I am proud to represent. Incorporated on February 16, 1904, the good citizens of West Caldwell are celebrating the Township's Centennial Anniversary with special events throughout the entire year.

In the very early history of our country, well before the American Revolution, the towns known today as Caldwell, West Caldwell, North Caldwell, Verona, Essex Fells, Roseland, Fairfield, Cedar Grove and Livingston were inhabited by the Lenni Lenape Indians. As Europeans emigrated to the New World, however, property ownership changed hands; and soon the entire region was purchased by the newcomers and renamed Horseneck. A century after Puritans settled the "metropolis" of the area known as Newark in 1666, steadily growing populations spurred settlers to move slightly westward to occupy what would be the Caldwells in the early 1700s. Almost 50 years of peace followed, until disputes over property rights with the Royal Proprietors of the colony led to jailbreaks and protests led down the narrow, dusty road called Bloomfield Avenue, which today remains a major business corridor through Essex County.

At the time of the Horseneck Riots in 1745, James Caldwell, after whom the Caldwells are named, was a young boy of about 11 years. By the time of the Revolution, though, he was an adult, a minister, in fact, who had endeared himself to the people of Horseneck by journeying over the mountains to preach to them. During the War for Independence not long afterwards, Caldwell earned the nickname "the Fighting Parson" because of his aid to Washington's men as they battled in various parts of Horseneck. Following the Revolution, a local chapel was finally erected and in memory of the Fighting Parson who had stood with them since colonial times, the citizens of Horseneck in 1798 renamed their home "Caldwell."

Caldwell Township flourished throughout the 1800's. Prescribed by physicians as a "pure air" retreat for patients with all kinds of ailments, the quiet region was home to about 485 people (1800 census). Franklin and Westville, what would eventually become known as West Caldwell, began to grow as well. Westville, owned predominantly by the Crane and Harrison families, whose historical homes still exist, was the site of farming lands and the local sawmill. Franklin, on the other hand, was the principal business center of Caldwell Township and had an economy supported by firms, a store, two factories, a cider mill and distillery.

By 1904, the population of Caldwell Township had grown and become so spread out that public renovations could never be approved by residents on both sides of town. To alleviate the problem, on February 16, 1904, West Caldwell was incorporated as an individual borough comprised of 3,175 acres and 410 people. Like every suburb of the metropolitan New York and Newark, New Jersey area, the 20th Century brought with it incredible growth and today West Caldwell boasts more than 11,000 proud residents who treasure the Township's legacy of patriotism, its small town flavor and its strong sense of community.

Mr. Speaker, I urge you and my colleagues to join me in congratulating the residents of West Caldwell on the celebration of 100 years of a rich history and the building of one of New Jersey's finest municipalities.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF NIKKI YAMASHIRO

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 26, 2004

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Nikki Yamashiro, a dedicated, thoughtful, and intelligent young woman who I have been fortunate to have working on my staff for over two years.

Nikki first began working in my Washington office as an intern in the winter of 2001. We were pleased to have a resident of Monterey Park, a community I represent, and a graduate of the University of California at San Diego, in our office. Nikki quickly showed us the qualities that would make her a valuable contribution to our team—her intelligence, willingness to work hard, and commitment to the residents of California's 32nd Congressional District.

Nikki gradually worked her way up from an intern to her current position of Legislative Assistant. Along the way, she spearheaded my office's participation in the Congressional Arts—Competition and improved the efficiency of our constituent mail system. Last year, she played a key role in strengthening two bills I introduced—the Domestic Violence Courts Assistance Act and the Domestic Violence Prevention, Education, and Awareness Act. Nikki is a true champion for women's rights and has helped me build nationwide support for these bipartisan bills.

I am very proud of her work, but I am most proud of the work Nikki did to shepherd into law a bill important to our community—the Francisco A. Martinez Flores Post Office Act (Public Law 108-116). Lance Corporal Martinez Flores was a courageous Marine from