

professional associations and boards. Through MARC, the Mid America Regional Council, he was instrumental in the economic development of the Little Blue Valley and the creation of the I-70/Little Blue Parkway interchange to ease traffic flow and provide access for valley expansion. His leadership was an integral part of the development of eastern Jackson County, particularly his focus on neighborhood revitalization, road improvements and numerous renovations to area parks.

I am honored by the opportunity to collaborate with Larry Blick and Mayor Ron Stewart to secure Federal funding for local projects such as the Lewis and Clark Roadway, the Memorial Building, grants to support local first responders in protecting our community, FEMA assistance for the devastating 2002 ice storm, and for the expansion of the Blue River Community College to train our law enforcement officials and first responders. A lasting achievement for which he will long be remembered is his efforts to secure the prestigious title of "All American City" for Independence in 2001. Larry Blick's work with the community played a crucial role in highlighting Independence's enterprises, schools, parks and history to earn the support of the All-America City Program.

Around his office, Larry carries a coffee mug that states, "Will golf for food." I join with myriad others in wishing him time during his retirement to hit the greens and spend quality time with his loving family.

Another great leader from Independence, President Harry S Truman, made this observation in 1951: "Unless a man is fundamentally sound ethically, you can't teach him what to do as a public servant." As City Manager, Larry has exhibited exemplary vision, sound values and unwavering commitment to fundamental issues important to all of us.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in saluting the remarkable service of retiring City Manager Larry Blick. His leadership will be missed, but his accomplishments will live on as a reminder of the difference he made by his outstanding service to the city of Independence, Missouri.

UNsung HERO AWARD

HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, when the idea of Black History Month, formerly Black History Week, was conceived by historian, Carter G. Woodson, he envisioned a celebration of black history achievement as well as an educational medium. Mr. Woodson organized the first celebration in 1926 to be held the second week in February in honor of Frederick Douglas's and Abraham Lincoln's birthdays. Because of its popularity among the black and white press, schools and women's clubs, the week long commemoration was expanded into a month-long salute to African Americans. Black History Month now provides an annual forum for African Americans to share their culture with the world.

For the past 5 years, I have hosted an Un-sung Hero Program during Black History Month as a means of acknowledging the many accomplishments of my constituents who often go unnoticed for their service to the community.

The following residents of Texas's 9th Congressional District have proven they embrace Mr. Woodson's vision of a brighter tomorrow by their efforts to serve humanity. I am proud and honored to present my 2004 Un-sung Heroes for inclusion in the U.S. CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

Mrs. Carla Allen, Mr. Rudolph P. Antoine, Ms. Shirley Bailey-Jones, Detective Alton James Baise, Mr. Reginald C. Boykin, Sr., Ms. Whitney Breaux, Bishop B. R. Brown, Mr. Keith Chachere, Mrs. Linda G. Clark, Mr. Freddie L. Coleman, Pastor Michael Cooper, Mrs. Tanya Mechelle Corbin, Ms. Josie Curtis, Mr. Shawn Dorian Dages, Ms. Kimberly Dartist, Mr. Timothy W. Duriso, Mr. Murphy J. Fisher, Mr. Matthew J. Francis, Sr., Mr. Freddie Franks, Ms. Loma George, Mr. Melvin G. Getwood, Sr., God's Kitchen Angels, Bishop Curtis J. Guillory, Mr. Eddie Guillory, Mr. Shelton Guillory, Sr., Ms. Delores Jean Gunner, Mrs. Mary Hayes, Mr. Benjamin J. Jones, Sr., Mr. Willie "K" Knighton, Mr. Jerry Levias, Mr. Michael W. Lewis, Reverend Mark McKinley, Ms. Dorothy J. Milburn, Ms. Ann Monette, Mr. Everett Moton, Mr. Gregory B. Mouton, Mr. Christopher C. Mouton, Mr. Eric Narcisse, Ms. Tina Nguyen, Mr. John E. Payton, Mr. Edgar Sonny Perkins, Jr., Mr. Gene Perkins, Mr. Alex Warren Sanders, Jr., Mr. James Saveat, Ms. MaDeline Kaye Savoy, Reverend Charles H. Segura, Ms. Ora Segura, Ms. Janai Sells, Mr. Brandon Smith, Reverend Adam Smith, Constable Joe Stevenson, Mr. Joseph Threats, Mr. Howard Trahan III, Ms. Thuytram Tram, Mr. Jack Turner, Mrs. Kate Walker, Ms. Wanda G. Wallace, Reverend Alfred White, Mr. Eugene Wilson, Jr.

Members of the communities in the 9th District nominated these individuals for the Un-sung Heroes award that gives special recognition to those un-sung heroes, willing workers, and individuals who are so much a part of Texas's and our Nation's rich history. The award winners were chosen because they embody a giving and sharing spirit, and made a contribution to our Nation. I am proud to represent them here in Congress.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO BARBARA JEFFERIES

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Barbara Jefferies and thank her for the remarkable civic contributions she has made to her Durango community and the State of Colorado. As a lifelong resident and rancher of La Plata County, Colorado, Barbara has actively participated in numerous community organizations. Recently, the Durango Chamber of Commerce recognized her efforts as they named her their Agriculturist of the Year. It is with great satisfaction that I congratulate Barbara for her well-deserved award, and thank her for her significant contributions to the Durango Community.

Barbara's life has always revolved around agriculture; she was born on her grandmother's farm, raised on her parents ranch, and now works on a ranch with her husband Ned. Her commitment to the agricultural community in Colorado includes her involvement

with the La Plata County Cow Belles, La Plata-Archuleta County Farm Bureau and Cattleman's Association, and the Colorado Cattlemen's Association. Her enthusiasm for taking part in these organizations comes from her firm belief that "agriculture takes a lot of people to be involved to keep it going," as told to the Durango Herald.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that Barbara Jefferies is a woman of great commitment to the agricultural community in Durango and the State of Colorado. Barbara's willingness to provide her time and experience to her fellow farmers and ranchers is worthy of recognition before this body of Congress and this nation today. It is my privilege to extend to Barbara my sincere congratulations on her being named Agriculturist of the Year by the Durango Chamber of Commerce, and to wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

ON BEHALF OF VETERANS

HON. MIKE McINTYRE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

Mr. McINTYRE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the 77,015 veterans in my district. These selfless warriors have dedicated their lives to fighting for this great country and our freedoms, and it is disheartening that many of them do not have access to adequate and affordable health care. Long ago, we made a promise to our veterans and military retirees that we would provide quality health care in return for their service. Unfortunately, over time, this promise has been broken, and too often today quality veterans' facilities are too far away to be truly accessible to rural veterans. How can we continue to sit back and ignore our veterans' requests for better access to health care? Don't we owe it to them to ensure that they are properly cared for? It is time that we take on a new attitude and put forth real actions that will help us to make achievements for veterans for years to come.

First, it's about attitude—the attitude to change the way we provide health care to our veterans today. In my district in rural southeastern North Carolina, there has been enormous growth within the veteran population. In addition to being the home of or near to important military installations, including Fort Bragg, Pope Air Force Base, Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point, and three Coast Guard stations, the area is widely known for its pristine beaches and recreational activities. These amenities make the area a popular destination for retirement, and I am pleased that so many of our courageous service men and women either move to or remain in the area after their retirement. However, with this increase in the veterans' population comes the important issue of how best to serve our veterans' health care needs.

Although Southeastern North Carolina is represented by two commendable VA facilities, access to care remains limited. Veterans in the town of Supply must drive over two hours to be seen at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center. And those who need more specialized care must drive an additional two hours to the Durham VA Medical Center. One trip alone could equal eight hours of driving! In addition, because both the Fayetteville VA

Medical Center and the Wilmington VA Clinic are operating over their budgeted capacity, there is concern that if these facilities are not expanded, they will face difficulties taking new patients. We need to develop a direct and positive attitude to change this system properly and bring our veterans in closer contact with their health care providers!

Secondly, we must put forth actions that will ensure that our rural veterans receive the proper care that they deserve. That is why I am cosponsoring legislation that would set aside a percentage of funds appropriated to the VA medical care funds to be used for highly rural or geographically-remote veterans. The Rural Veterans Access to Care Act would also encourage the Secretary of the VA to use his contract authority to assist highly rural veterans in obtaining health care services closer to home.

In my district, most of the veterans fought in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf, and they are suffering medical conditions that make traveling any distance extremely difficult, if not impossible. These veterans also have to travel in inclement weather to receive basic health care from the VA. In addition, many times they have to reschedule their appointments, which could mean waiting over a month for a simple test. It is disgraceful that veterans have to travel hundreds of miles to get their blood pressure checked or to have routine blood tests done.

Mr. Speaker, I stand committed to improving health care benefits for our veterans—not only for those who have duly served our country, but also for those valiant soldiers who will become the veterans of tomorrow. That's why I am also cosponsoring the Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act, which would take an additional step toward restoring adequate health care to military retirees by allowing them to participate in the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program. We must continue to support our promise so that all veterans will receive the health care benefits that they deserve.

In addition, I am supporting legislation, the Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act, which would provide for a guaranteed adequate level of funding for veterans health care. Unfortunately, the money that is set aside for VA hospitals and clinics falls under discretionary spending, meaning that there is no guarantee that it will be increased as the demand grows. Without this funding, rural veterans will continue to be served in outdated or understaffed facilities—or continue to receive inadequate health care due to a lack of health care services in their area.

Finally, it's about achievement! Let us make the commitment to achieve new incentives for our veterans. As I talk to veterans in my district, I become increasingly concerned that their needs are simply not being met. As you know, the Department of Veterans Affairs is directing an initiative—the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES)—to redirect resources within the department and address the changing needs of veterans. Recently, the CARES Commission released its report, which the Secretary is in the process of reviewing. While I am pleased that the report effectively recognized access and capacity concerns, I am hopeful that the VA Secretary's final report will provide additional incentives for our veterans.

Specifically, I urge the Secretary to provide not only an expansion of the Fayetteville VA

Medical Center and the expansion of the Wilmington VA Clinic to a satellite outpatient clinic, but also two community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) for my district—one in Supply (Brunswick County) and one in Lumberton (Robeson County). If we could achieve these vital expansions and new facilities, access to care would no longer be a problem and veterans would not be forced to drive long distances to receive vital health care services. This would be a real achievement for the veterans in my district, and I am confident that these initiatives will provide the services that they are lacking now.

Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that timely access to health care is an important national priority to provide veterans the benefits they earned in military service to our country. As we find ourselves in times that threaten our very freedom, our nation must never forget those who have fought so hard to ensure that our freedom endures. Therefore, I say to my colleagues, let us join together today with a new and positive attitude towards health care for veterans, and let us work together to put forth the necessary actions to help us to achieve our goal! Our veterans are counting on us! And may God's blessings be with you!

IN RECOGNITION OF THE FORTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TIBETAN NATIONAL UPRISING

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, on March 10, 2000, the United States Senate passed a resolution (S. Res. 60) to recognize this day in commemoration of the Tibetans who suffered and died during the Lhasa uprising, which began on this day in 1959. The resolution also reserves this day as an occasion to renew calls by the President, Congress, and other U.S. Government officials on the Government of the People's Republic of China to enter into serious negotiations with the Dalai Lama or his representatives until a peaceful solution, satisfactory to both sides, is achieved.

It has now been 55 years since the Chinese Army invaded Tibet, forcing the then free and independent country to accept the infamous Chinese 17-point agreement in which Tibet was incorporated into China. Under the agreement, China promised to preserve all aspects of freedom in Tibet, including the role of the Dalai Lama. Today, the Chinese Government continues to commit gross violations of human rights in Tibet as well as to show total disregard for their agreement. During the time of Chinese occupation, more than 6,000 monasteries have been destroyed and the monks and nuns who resided in these places have been displaced, exiled, tortured and killed. Not only are the religious leaders persecuted, but the people of Tibet are forced to live in fear of arbitrary arrest, torture and imprisonment without trial.

I would like to use this day to ask the leaders of this country to unite in calling on China to end its abuses against the people of Tibet and to submit the statement made today by his Holiness the Dalai Lama for the RECORD.

STATEMENT OF HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA ON THE FORTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF TIBETAN NATIONAL UPRISING DAY

Today we commemorate the 45th anniversary of the Tibetan People's Uprising of 1959. I pay tribute to the many brave Tibetan men and women who have sacrificed their lives for the cause of Tibetan freedom. They will always be remembered. This year marks 50 years since my visit to mainland China in 1954 to meet with the then Chinese leaders, especially Mao Tse-tung. I remember very well that I embarked on the journey with deep concerns about the future of Tibet. I was assured by all the leaders I met that the Chinese presence in Tibet was to work for the welfare of the Tibetans and "to help develop" Tibet. While in China I also learned about internationalism and socialism which deeply impressed me. So I returned to Tibet with optimism and confidence that a peaceful and mutually beneficial coexistence could be worked out. Unfortunately, soon after my return China was embroiled in political unrest unleashed by radical political campaigns. These developments impacted the Chinese policy on Tibet resulting in more repression and rigidity leading finally to the Tibetan People's Uprising in March 1959.

My hope is that this year may see a significant breakthrough in our relations with the Chinese Government. As in 1954, so also today, I am determined to leave no stone unturned for seeking a mutually beneficial solution that will address both Chinese concerns as well as achieve for the Tibetan people a life in freedom, peace and dignity. Despite the decades of separation the Tibetan people continue to place tremendous trust and hope in me. I feel a great sense of responsibility to act as their free spokesman. In this regard, the fact that President Hu Jintao has personal knowledge about the situation and problems in Tibet can be a positive factor in resolving the Tibetan issue. I am therefore willing to meet with today's leaders of the People's Republic of China in the effort to secure a mutually acceptable solution to the Tibetan issue.

My envoys have established direct contact with the Chinese government on two trips to China in September 2002 and in May/June 2003. This is a positive and welcome development, which was initiated during the Presidency of Jiang Zemin. The issue of Tibet is complex and of crucial importance to Tibetan as well as Chinese peoples. Consequently, it requires careful considerations and serious deliberations on both sides before taking any decisions. It will take time, patience and determination to lead this process to a successful conclusion. However, I consider it of highest importance to maintain the momentum and to intensify and deepen this process through regular face-to-face meetings and substantive discussions. This is the only way to dispel existing distrust and misconception and to build trust and confidence.

Consequently, I have instructed my envoys to visit China at the earliest date to continue the process. I hope that they will be able to make this trip without much delay. This will help in building trust and confidence in the present process among Tibetans as well as among our friends and supporters around the world—many of whom remain strongly skeptical about the willingness of Beijing to engage in a genuine process of rapprochement and dialogue.

The current situation in Tibet benefits neither the Tibetans nor the government of the People's Republic of China. The development projects that the Chinese Government has launched in Tibet—purportedly to benefit the Tibetan people—are however, having