

every nation on earth would make pilgrimages to the holy city of Jerusalem to visit its revered sites and offer their heartfelt prayers.

Every stone in Jerusalem is saturated with Jewish history, every street has some story and saga of biblical times and modern times. Even though Jerusalem is a city laden with rich archeological artifacts, and remnants of ancient times, it has become a thriving city that has preserved its historic nature and adapted to modern life. Beautiful shopping malls, fresh food markets and restaurants are commonplace in Jerusalem, which emphasize the cultural advancements Israel has made in such a short period of time.

Perhaps one of the most moving aspects of modern day Jerusalem is its abundance of Yeshivas, Kollels and the prominence of Jewish religious life. It is truly inspiring to see Jews, young and old immersed in the deep study of Jewish texts. Many Hasidic sects and other Orthodox institutions based in my district have satellite branches in Jerusalem and quite a few of my young constituents study Judaism in Jerusalem and return to the United States invigorated from their experiences.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize this very jubilant day and reaffirm my unflinching support for the City of Jerusalem and the State of Israel.

IN HONOR OF THE CALIFORNIA
STRAWBERRY COMMISSION

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 8, 2005

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an extraordinary organization based in my community: the California Strawberry Commission. Since 1994, the Commission's California Strawberry Scholarship Program has awarded numerous students with scholarships to show the industry's appreciation to the farm workers whose jobs are a vital part of the strawberry industry's success.

Students receiving a scholarship from the Commission are entering their first year in colleges and universities throughout the nation. To qualify, applicants must have at least one parent who has been employed as a strawberry farm worker for the past two consecutive seasons. The California Strawberry Scholarship Program has awarded over \$183,000 to 264 children of strawberry farm workers, giving these students the opportunity to achieve their full potential. This year alone, they have awarded \$32,500 to 34 high school seniors. Each student has tremendous potential and these scholarships give them the opportunity to excel as first-year students in colleges and universities throughout the nation.

In addition to the Strawberry Scholarship Program, in 1995 the Strawberry Commission implemented the California Strawberry Growers' Scholarship Fund. The California Strawberry Growers' Scholarship Fund is funded by California strawberry farmers and allied industry members to help children of strawberry farm workers to continue their college education. To date, the Fund has awarded over \$349,000 to 165 students. This year 65 continuing college students were awarded a total of \$68,000 by the California Strawberry Growers' Scholarship Fund.

Through the hard work of California's strawberry farm workers, generous contributions from strawberry industry leaders, and the commitment of the California Strawberry Commission, a new generation of students is able to achieve its dreams. Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honor to recognize the California Strawberry Commission today.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF MR.
SPALDING WATHEN

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 8, 2005

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Mr. Spalding Wathen of Fresno, California. Mr. Wathen served his country and his community with remarkable distinction. He is survived by his wife Della Ann Wathen and five daughters, Judy, Shelley, Leslie, Terry and Cindy. On this day, we mourn his passing, but also celebrate his life.

Born in Fresno on March 1, 1925, Mr. Wathen attended Roosevelt High School. Upon graduation he joined the military and served as a Navy pilot in World War II. After the war, Mr. Wathen returned to California where he continued his education at the University of California, Berkeley and received a Bachelor of Science in civil engineering. Mr. Wathen was a member of the Chi Epsilon and Tau Beta Pi Engineering Scholastic Fraternities and graduated at the top of his class.

Upon returning to Fresno, Mr. Wathen received his contractor and real estate broker licenses. His life is a fitting example of the motto: "Hard work pays off." Mr. Wathen was Chief Executive Officer of Wathen Brothers, Headliner Homes and Mansionette Homes. His businesses are well known and respected for their committed effort to combine fine workmanship with affordable housing.

Mr. Wathen's business endeavors and civic mindedness brought him into contact with many community groups who recognized and applauded his efforts. He served as the President of the Builders Industry Association four times and was inducted into the West Coast Builders Association Hall of Fame in 1996. Mr. Wathen was also one of a select number of builders who were granted the Oscar Spano Award for Lifetime Achievement.

Within the community, Mr. Wathen will be remembered as a true visionary and a strong employer of local citizens. While Mr. Wathen had a keen eye for business ventures, he was also a community advocate who dedicated himself to giving back to the community that had allowed him to succeed. His numerous donations include the Fresno State University Tennis Center, the 33 acres of land upon which St. Agnes Medical Center was built, and the 10-acre site for the new Holy Spirit Catholic Church. Mr. Wathen was also a founding member of the Board of Directors for the Bank of Fresno.

The passing of Spalding Wathen has left a community in mourning. We have lost a passionate businessperson, a true leader and a committed advocate. His memory will live on, however, in the many lives he touched along the way.

PUBLIC SAFETY TAX CUT ACT

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 8, 2005

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Public Safety Tax Cut Act. This legislation will achieve two important public policy goals. First, it will effectively overturn a ruling of the Internal Revenue Service which has declared as taxable income the waiving of fees by local governments who provide service for public safety volunteers.

Many local governments use volunteer firefighters and auxiliary police either in place of, or as a supplement to, their public safety professionals. Often as an incentive to would-be volunteers, the local entities might waive all or a portion of the fees typically charged for city services such as the provision of drinking water, sewerage charges, or debris pick up. Local entities make these decisions for the purpose of encouraging folks to volunteer, and seldom do these benefits come anywhere near the level of a true compensation for the many hours of training and service required of the volunteers. This, of course, not even to mention the fact that these volunteers could very possibly be called into a situation where they may have to put their lives on the line.

Rather than encouraging this type of volunteerism, which is so crucial, particularly to America's rural communities, the IRS has decided that the provision of the benefits described above amount to taxable income. Not only does this adversely affect the financial position of the volunteer by foisting new taxes about him or her, it has in fact led local entities to stop providing these benefits, thus taking away a key tool they have used to recruit volunteers. That is why the IRS ruling in this instance has a substantial deleterious impact on the spirit of American volunteerism. How far could this go? For example, would consistent application mean that a local Salvation Army volunteer be taxed for the value of a complimentary ticket to that organization's annual county dinner? This is obviously bad policy.

This legislation would rectify this situation by specifically exempting these types of benefits from federal taxation.

Next, this legislation would also provide paid professional police and fire officers with a \$1,000 per year tax credit. These professional public safety officers put their lives on the line each and every day, and I think we all agree that there is no way to properly compensate them for the fabulous services they provide. In America we have a tradition of local law enforcement and public safety provision. So, while it is not the role of our federal government to increase the salaries of these, it certainly is within our authority to increase their take-home pay by reducing the amount of money that we take from their pockets via federal taxation, and that is something this bill specifically does as well.

President George Bush has called on Americans to volunteer their time and energy to enhancing public safety. Shouldn't Congress do its part by reducing taxes that discourage public safety volunteerism? Shouldn't Congress also show its appreciation to police officers and firefighters by reducing their taxes? I believe the answer to both of these questions is

a resounding “yes” and therefore I am proud to introduce the Public Safety Tax Cut Act. I request that my fellow Members join in support of this key legislation.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 25, 2005

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1815) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2006 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2006, and for other purposes:

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I rise today with grave concerns in regard to the deficiencies of this National Defense Authorization Act. It is truly unfortunate that the brave men and women of our Armed Forces are fighting around the world while the Department of Defense is in the current state it is in. Leadership must be accountable for the actions of the Armed Forces; the unfortunate events taking place in Iraq have caused our Nation irreparable harm.

I am most outraged by the fact that there will be no consideration of the Taylor amendment on TRICARE for reservists, the Salazar amendment on ending the Military Families Tax, and the Marshall amendment on ending the Disabled Veterans Tax. These amendments are three key provisions in the GI Bill of Rights for the 21st Century, which House Democrats unveiled in March. It seems blatant, that the Rules Committee would not allow the full body to consider these vital amendments which could have greatly strengthened this Defense Authorization.

H.R. 1815 authorizes \$441.6 billion, slightly less than the President's request and the total provided for by the budget resolution for FY 2005. The total is \$21 billion, 5 percent more than the current regular authorized and appropriated level. This does not even include the \$75.9 billion in FY 2005 emergency supplemental defense funds appropriated last month for operations in Iraq. In addition, this measure also authorizes an additional \$49.1 billion in expectation of another supplemental budget request for the war in Iraq later this year. This brings the bill's authorization total to \$490.7 billion.

This measure continues the spending by providing \$79.1 billion for weapons procurement, a full \$1.1 billion more than the president's request; \$69.5 billion for research and development, another \$113 million more than the request; \$124.3 billion for operations and maintenance, \$2.6 billion less than the president's request; \$108.8 billion for personnel, slightly less than requested; \$12.2 billion for military construction and family housing; and \$17 billion for weapons-related and environmental-cleanup activities of the Energy Department.

If Congress provides the full amount in the FY 2006 budget resolution—including the \$50 billion in emergency spending for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan—defense spending in FY 2006 will total about 55 percent of the entire

federal discretionary budget. The percentage could rise even higher if more than \$50 billion is provided for operations in Iraq later this year. If the administration's request is approved, overall defense spending, in real terms, would be more than 20 percent higher than the average Cold war budget.

The sad truth is that when compared to other nations around the world, you quickly realize that our military spending is not about defense needs as much as it is about overkill. The nearly \$500 billion expected to be provided for defense this year—assuming another supplemental—is only slightly less than the \$527 billion estimated by the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation as currently being spent by other nations combined, including China (\$56 billion), France (\$40 billion), Great Britain (\$49 billion) and Japan (\$45 billion). Furthermore, when comparing U.S. defense spending to those countries determined by the Defense Department as most likely to threaten the United States, the difference is even greater. Such rogue states, including Iran (which spent \$3.5 billion), North Korea (\$5.5 billion), Syria (\$1.6 billion), Cuba (\$1.2 billion) and Sudan (\$500 million). Clearly, we are not only the world's leader in military spending, but now we are determined to lap the field many times over.

It's just disgraceful that many so-called advocates of fiscal responsibility talk about discretionary spending for federal programs when they represent only a tiny sliver of spending compared to our military spending. While we continue to allocate funds for this costly war, our federal debt continues to soar and that debt continues to be owned by foreign nations. We are now borrowing \$1 trillion every 20 months and the federal debt will soon exceed \$8 trillion. The Japanese own more than \$800 billion of that debt, the People's Republic of China more than \$250 billion and all our foreign debt continues to explode.

It is truly unfortunate that this Defense Authorization continues this Administration's policy of having misplaced priorities. Instead of directing more money for proper planning in Iraq, or for greater protection equipment for our troops, or maybe for greater pay raises for our troops; this Authorization provides \$7.9 billion for ballistic-missile defense programs—\$100 million more than the administration's request. Missile defense systems are not new, in fact they have been discussed for decades. The truth is that missile defense systems have proven to be overly complex, unreliable, and often been little more than pipe dreams. Why in good conscience, in this time of budget constraints and increased need, would we allocate even more money for failed programs? There are more responsible ways to budget this money. Money from the Defense Authorization should go to our men and women in the Armed Forces who actually defend our Nation instead of into programs that just waste needed funds.

I am heartened by a few provisions of this legislation. This Authorization provides an average 3.1 percent pay increase for military personnel in FY 2006, equal to the President's request, and extends certain special pay and bonuses for reserve personnel. Our men and women in the Armed Forces deserve these pay increases, in fact they deserve much more for the sacrifice they are making for our Nation abroad. The bill provides added funds for increased protection for U.S. troops in Iraq,

including funding for up-armored Humvees, tactical wheeled-vehicle recapitalization and modernization programs, night-vision devices, and improvised explosive device (IED) jammers. The war in Iraq gets more dangerous by the day and the Pentagon won't even give this Congress a timeline for our exit. As always, this leaves our brave men and women of the Armed Forces and their families in the lurch. We as a Congress owe it to them to give them more answers, instead of only providing more questions. Unfortunately, while this Authorization gives a little comfort to our Armed Forces abroad, it really falls far short of what we owe to our Nation's bravest.

A TRIBUTE TO GERALDINE BAKER

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 8, 2005

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Geraldine Baker for her academic accomplishments and contributions to the field of education.

Geraldine “Gerry” Baker was born in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York, and is one of the twin daughters of Marie G. and the late Henry W. Baker. Ms. Baker was raised in the Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn. Here she was greatly influenced by the Reverend Dr. Gardner C. Taylor's ministry of activism and leadership and studied classical music under the tutelage of the late John T. Lucas, organist. Following the tradition of great Black families, Ms. Baker's parents inspired her life-long pursuit of excellence.

Ms. Baker is a distinguished alumna of the New York City Public School System. At an early age she exhibited leadership skills when she was elected class president at Eastern District High School. She was later selected to participate in a pilot program under the auspices of the Carnegie High School Language program, and won a National Defense Foreign Language Fellowship in Chinese for the summer program at Columbia University. She then pursued a Bachelor of Arts in anthropology and linguistics at CUNY Richmond College.

Ms. Baker culminated her education at Pace University, where she received a Master of Science in Education Administration and Supervision and was accepted into the Phi Delta Kappa organization. She has also participated in Harvard University's Graduate School of Education in the Principals' Center for Critical Issues of Urban Education, completed a three-year Partnership for the Prevention of Violence Training Program at the Harvard School of Public Health, and studied at NOVA Southeastern University.

Ms. Baker is now a senior staff member at the Edward R. Murrow High School Special Education Department. Her teaching career has spanned the spectrum of the education profession from teaching the gifted and talented to the emotionally, neurologically and physically challenged. In addition, she has been certified by the New York State Department of Education, as an Impartial Hearing Officer, to adjudicate cases on special education problems. In her spare time, Ms. Baker taught at CUNY La Guardia Community College in a specially funded program to provide academic