

Cuba. Yet we must not let our emotions overwhelm our judgment in foreign policy matters, because ultimately human lives are at stake. Economic common sense, self-interested foreign policy goals, and humanitarian ideals all point to the same conclusion: Congress should work to end economic sanctions against all nations immediately.

The legislation I introduce today is representative of true free trade in that while it opens trade, it prohibits the U.S. Taxpayer from being compelled to subsidize the United States government, the Cuban government or individuals or entities that choose to trade with Cuban citizens.

TRIBUTE TO MAYOR PATRICIA S. MEARNS

HON. STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2005

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mayor Patricia S. Mearns has distinguished herself in the Shaker Heights community, as a loyal public servant and volunteer for the numerous organizations she is a member of and causes that she actively works to support. For these reasons Mayor Patricia S. Mearns has been honored with the first Martin Luther King, Jr. Human Relations Award.

Mayor Patricia S. Mearns civic involvement in the Shaker Heights community began as President of the Malvern School PTA in the late 1970s and later climaxed as Mayor of Shaker Heights. Her dedication and complete belief in racial equality played a major role in her social and family policies.

Mayor Patricia S. Mearns has worked hard to strengthen neighborhood organizations by encouraging members of cultural and racial minority groups to become involved in all aspects of city life. As a member of the Shaker Family Center, Fund for the Future, Shaker Heights Meals on Wheels and Shaker Youth Center boards of trustees, she has led by example and has an outstanding reputation for accomplishing her goals. Two excellent examples of her effectiveness as a leader are the successful campaigns of the Shaker Heights Levy of 1981 and the more recent levy of the Shaker Heights Library.

Mayor Patricia S. Mearns continues her involvement in numerous organizations locally even after her tenure as the mayor of Shaker Heights concluded. Her public service, community service and organizational interest areas include: children, education, families, and race relations. Her involvement in the St. Luke's Foundation, Shaker Square Kiwanis Club, Housing Research and Advocacy Center, Cuyahoga County Task Force on Elder Friendly Communities and the Shaker Square Area Development Corporation, has and continues to positively affect the lives of Shaker Heights residents.

On behalf of the United States Congress and the citizens of the 11th Congressional District, Ohio, I extend my congratulations to an outstanding public servant, a fantastic and talented woman, the Honorable Mayor Patricia S. Mearns.

INTRODUCTION OF THE "VICTIMS COMPENSATION FUND EXTENSION ACT"

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2005

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, today I along with Representatives NADLER, BISHOP, OWENS, MCCARTHY and SERRANO are introducing the "Victims Compensation Fund Extension Act."

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks the Congress created the Victims Compensation Fund (VCF) to provide compensation for victims of 9/11. This fund provided aid to the families of 9/11 victims and to individuals who suffered personal injury. Among other things, aid from the fund pays for medical expenses and lost wages. In return for accepting these funds, recipients relinquished rights to any future litigation. The fund had a deadline for applicants of December 22, 2003.

At the deadline, close to 100 percent of the families who lost a loved one had filed with the fund, but many individuals who were injured as a direct result of 9/11 had not. After the filing, many of the injured were denied benefits, despite a clear need.

The main reasons for not filing applications included people who did not know they were eligible as well as others whose injuries were late-onset. There are literally hundreds of individuals who are now just developing career-ending injuries—such as pulmonary and respiratory ailments—but are not eligible to receive assistance because they developed their symptoms after the deadline.

Largely as a result of the VCF's restrictions on applicants, 1,755 of the 4,430 personal injury claims considered were denied. While there was some leeway, the rules required workers to have arrived at Ground Zero within 96 hours of the attack and would have needed to seek medical treatment within 72 hours. This is reasonable for rescue workers who suffered immediate injuries, but leaves no recourse for individuals with late-onset injuries or who arrived after September 15, 2001 to assist in the recovery effort and are now suffering from injuries.

In order to care for the individuals who are now just developing physical injuries and to provide an opportunity for injured individuals who did not know they were eligible, we are re-introducing the Victims Compensation Fund Extension Act (H.R. 5076 in the 108th Congress).

This bill would:

Amend eligibility rules so that responders to the 9/11 attacks who arrived later than the first 96 hours could be eligible if they experienced illness or injury from their work at the site.

Amend eligibility rules so that those who did not seek immediate medical verification for their illness or injury from the disaster, but who have since obtained medical evidence, would be eligible.

Extend the deadline for applications to allow those with either late-onset illness from the disaster or those who were never informed of their eligibility for the Victim Compensation Fund to consider applying.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF ELAINE T. VALENTE

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2005

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge a good friend and a hard-working public servant, Ms. Elaine Valente. Elaine is retiring as a Commissioner for Adams County, Colorado after 16 years of dedicated service.

Commissioner Valente was born and raised in Adams County Colorado. She and her husband Larry own the successful Valente's Deli, are proud parents of two accomplished children, and are passionate community activists.

Elaine's interest in her community began long before assuming her role as County Commissioner. She served on the Adams County Planning Commission, the City of Westminster Urban Renewal Authority, the Westminster Planning Commission, the Citizen's Evaluation for Retention of Judges, and the School District 50 Superintendent's Parent Advisory Committee.

Her deep passion to give something back to her community and to help improve Colorado is what motivated her to run for County Commissioner in 1988. Elaine was victorious in that election and quickly became an outspoken advocate for Adams County's communities. As Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners she took an interest in many issues affecting her constituency, helping pave the way for future economic development, transportation improvements, air traffic investments and reform of county services. When I was elected to Congress in 1998 I knew that one of my first objectives was to learn as much as I could from Elaine, not only about one of Colorado's fastest growing communities, but also about effective public service.

Elaine is the kind of person who speaks her mind with a blend of honest bluntness and old-school graciousness. As a daughter of Italian-Americans she also established a reputation for leadership on behalf of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Ms. Elaine Valente and in wishing her success in all her future endeavors. It has been a true privilege to work with such a remarkable woman.

IN RECOGNITION OF NICHOLAS GEORGE RICHARDSON UPON HIS ACHIEVEMENT OF EAGLE SCOUT COURT OF HONOR

HON. ELLEN O. TAUSCHER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2005

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to my constituent Nicholas George Richardson of Eagle Scout troop #204 in Lafayette, California, as he receives the distinguished honor of the Eagle Scout rank.

The honor of Eagle Scout is given only to those young men who have demonstrated that they have fulfilled its rigorous requirements, including living by the Scout Oath and Law, rising through the Boy Scout ranks, earning 21 merit badges, serving as a leader, and

planning and leading a service project for their community. This is not an honor given out lightly: this young man is becoming an Eagle Scout because he is intelligent, dedicated, and principled.

I am proud to call Nicholas George Richardson my constituent, for he is a shining example of the promise of the next generation. Indeed, he represents the best of the young people in our country. I extend my sincere congratulations to him and his family, on this momentous occasion.

CONGRATULATING THE 2004 FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION CLASS 1A STATE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2005

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the 2004 Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) Class 1A State Football Champion Fort Meade Middle-High School Fighting Miners from the 12th Congressional District of Florida.

This was an incredible season for the Fighting Miners as they finally became the best football program in Class 1A and one of the elite teams in Florida under Head Coach Michael Hayde.

I commend the champion Fort Meade Middle-High School football team for a wonderful and magical run this year. The people of Florida and all of Polk County are proud of you. You have all demonstrated that hard work, perseverance and unity are the foundation of success.

I applaud the entire Fort Meade football coaching staff for their commitment and dedication to their players and for proving that hard work, sportsmanship and determination pay off.

I pay tribute to Fort Meade Middle-High School students, teachers, coaches and the entire football team on their achievement as victors of the Class 1A state championship football game.

NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS BURIAL FAIRNESS ACT OF 2005

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2005

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Native American Veterans Cemetery Act of 2005. I first introduced this bill in the 108th Congress, and I am optimistic about its prospects during the 109th Congress.

The Native American Veterans Cemetery Act makes all Native American tribes eligible to apply for state cemetery grants. Under current law, only states are eligible for these grants. The bill would not give preference or special exceptions to Native American tribes that apply for the state cemetery grants. It would simply put tribes on equal footing with state governments—consistent with tribal sovereignty—by allowing them to apply for grants

to establish, expand or improve tribal veterans cemeteries. Moreover, if a Native American tribe were awarded a state cemetery grant, the cemetery would be open to all veterans.

Historically, Native Americans have the highest record of service per capita of any ethnic group. New Mexico is home to almost 9,800 Native American Veterans, making it one of the top five states in the country with regard to its Native American veteran population. I believe it is time that Native American veterans who have served our country so honorably are allowed to pursue a decent, dignified resting place on their tribal lands.

Last year, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony Principi stated in writing that he strongly supported this bill's enactment, and because it does not extend any special exceptions or benefits to Native American tribes that apply for state cemetery grants, this bill is budget neutral. The bill is also supported by the Navajo Nation, the largest federally recognized tribe, as well as National American Indian Veterans, Inc (NAIV). In addition to a resolution adopted by the Navajo Nation Council, the New Mexico and Arizona state legislatures have both passed memorials urging Congress to adopt this measure. I have included with this statement support letters from the VA, Navajo Nation, and NAIV.

I would like to thank my colleague Representative TOM COLE of Oklahoma for his strong and early support of this bill, as well as the other 24 original cosponsors. I look forward to working with all of my colleagues to move this bill during the 109th Congress.

THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS,
Washington, July 29, 2004.

Hon. TOM UDALL,
Member, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. UDALL: We are pleased to present our views on H.R. 2983, 108th Congress, a bill, "[t]o amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for eligibility of Indian tribal organizations for grants for the establishment of veterans cemeteries on trust lands." This bill would authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make grants to tribal organizations to assist them in establishing, expanding, or improving veterans' cemeteries in the same manner and under the same conditions as grants to states are made under 38 U.S.C. 2408.

The cemetery-grants program has proven to be an effective way of making the option of veterans-cemetery burials available in locations not conveniently served by our national cemeteries. H.R. 2983 would create another means of accommodating the burial needs of Native American veterans who wish to be buried in tribal lands, and we strongly support its enactment.

While we are unsure of the number of grant applications that may be prompted by the bill's enactment, we do not assume its passage would result in the appropriation of additional funds for the cemetery-grants program. Hence, we estimate its enactment would be budget neutral.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the submission of this report from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Sincerely yours,

ANTHONY J. PRINCIPI.

NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN VETERANS, INC.,

Mitchell, SD, October 7, 2004.

DEAR CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE: The National American Indian Veterans, Inc. is writing to respectfully request your sup-

port of H.R. 2983, the Native American Veterans Cemetery Act of 2003 (Act). The Act will authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make grants available to tribal organizations for establishing, expanding, or improving Veterans cemeteries on trust land owned by, or held in trust for tribal organizations. The Act has been referred to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Veterans Affairs, Sub-Committee on Benefits.

Today, American Indian Veterans cemeteries in Indian Country are either non-existent or are filled to capacity. As a result, our deceased brothers and sisters in arms are either laid to rest in State Veterans Cemeteries far from their homelands and families, or in cemeteries without the identifying honor of distinguished service in defense of our great nation.

During his second inaugural address, President Abraham Lincoln spoke to the mission of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to "care for him who shall have borne the battle and his widow and orphan." On a population per capita basis, no one has borne the battle more than the American Indian Veteran and their widows and orphans. American Indian Veterans have served in the defense of the United States in all its military conflicts throughout the 20th and 21st Century.

Your support of H.R. 2983, the Native American Veterans Cemetery Act of 2003, will honor American Indian Veterans by establishing Veterans Cemeteries in Indian Country.

DONALD E. LOUDNER,
National Commander.
ANDERSON MORGAN,
Junior Vice Chairman.
CASSANDRA MORGAN,
Treasurer.
MICHAEL PAVATEA,
Senior Vice Commander.
JOEY STRICKLAND,
Chief of Staff.
BRYCE IN THE WOODS,
Secretary.

RESOLUTION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

APPROVING AND SUPPORTING THE NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS CEMETERY ACT OF 2003 (H.R. 2983) INTRODUCED BY U.S. REPRESENTATIVE TOM UDALL OF NEW MEXICO THAT THE BILL WILL MAKE ALL TRIBES ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR STATE CEMETERY GRANTS FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)

Whereas:

1. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §§821 and 824(B)(5), the Intergovernmental Relations Committee is hereby established as a standing committee of the Navajo Nation Council and is to coordinate with all committees, chapters, branches and entities concerned with all Navajo appearances and testimony before Congressional committees, departments of the United States government, state legislatures and departments and county and local governments; and

2. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §§601 and 604(B)(1), (3) and (5), the Human Services Committee is established and continued as a standing committee of the Navajo Nation Council, and is empowered to promulgate regulations for the enforcement and implementation of the labor laws and policies of the Navajo Nation and laws relating to veterans services; to recommend legislation regarding employment, training, and veterans services; and to serve as the oversight authority for the Division of Human Resources, including the Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs (DNVA); and