

Subcommittee as well as Chairman LEWIS of the full Committee for their hard work and dedication to our Nation's service members and veterans. Working with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the conference report accompanying H.R. 2361, the fiscal year 2006 appropriations act for the Department of Interior, addresses the urgent need in VA with an additional \$1.5 billion allocated to the Veterans Health Administration. These funds are especially critical for VA to treat new veterans, those returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans.

Year after year, the annual budget for the Veterans Health Administration is the subject of great debate. On February 16, 2005, VA Secretary Nicholson and other VA officials stood before the VA Committee and justified the Administration's budget request. Subsequently, we learned that all the hard work and tough choices Congress has made to increase VA health care funding—by no less than 42 percent in just the last four years—has now been overshadowed by a “discovery” of inadequate funding. Since then, the VA Committee has held three separate hearings over the past month and a half to understand and examine VA's methodologies for forecasting health care costs and utilization projections, to identify the breakdown in the budget process, and to bring to light the serious flaws in VA's usage assumptions.

Equally important, the conference report demands new levels of accountability inside VA. In fact, the VA Committee is seeking to institutionalize accountability in the budget process at VA to ensure that similar circumstances can be averted in the future. There is but one constant we can all agree upon: the VA must ensure a continuity of care for our severely disabled veterans.

While \$1.5 billion seems to be the right figure at this point in time, there are only two months left in the fiscal year. This means that the Department of Veterans Affairs has the ability to roll over into fiscal year 2006 whatever sums remain unspent in fiscal year 2005; I expect department officials to spend wisely. With this particular provision, we are not only seeking to meet the urgent needs for the remainder of this year, but are providing a significant down payment on the shortfall we anticipate in fiscal year 2006.

Mr. Speaker, again, I applaud the work of Chairman LEWIS and Chairman TAYLOR of the Appropriations Committee, as well as the leadership of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees.

IN HONOR OF JAMES FLANNERY

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 26, 2005

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor and recognition of James Flannery, a statesman dedicated to his family, his church, his community and his country. Named Cleveland's “Man of the Year” in 1981, his life of service continued for more than two decades and will be carried on by the friends and family whose lives he touched through his generosity and enthusiasm.

While he was always ready for a game of basketball or football, Jim was more of a math

wiz than an athlete. He earned his degree in accounting at the University of Notre Dame before turning to politics and serving Ohio's 48th district as a State Representative from 1967 to 1972. But his service did not end there. He served on the Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio Accountancy Board before becoming the Chairman of the City of Lakewood Financial Review Commission and the Charter Review Commission. Jim also served as a member of the Board of Revision for the Cuyahoga County Treasurer's Office and was the founding president of both the University of Notre Dame National Alumni Board and the St. James Parent Teacher Union.

As those closest to him know, even with his extensive community involvement, Jim's family was his true calling and passion, and was always a huge source of pride—and with good reason. His extensive family (33 grandchildren) known by many as “The Flan Clan,” has had quite an effect on their community. Almost a dozen of his family members have followed his footsteps at St. Edward's High School to receive a Holy Cross education, and the family's local political involvement goes back three generations.

Mr. Speaker and Colleagues, please join me in honor and recognition of James Flannery and the family he leaves behind, for their outstanding service to their community. Jim's life of service will be remembered and he will be greatly missed by the many people whose lives were blessed by his presence.

INTRODUCTION OF THE TEACHER TRAINING EXPANSION ACT OF 2005

HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 26, 2005

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, currently, too many of our nation's “special needs” children are underserved due to inadequate training of general education teachers. It was recently reported that approximately 80 percent of students with learning disabilities receive the majority of their instruction in general education classrooms. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 50 percent of disabled students between the ages of 6 and 11, and 30 percent of disabled students between the ages of 11 and 12, are taught in regular classrooms.

These figures reflect the mandate under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities . . . are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. IDEA 612(a)(5)(A).

As more children with disabilities enter general education classrooms, it is critical that general education teachers and personnel are adequately trained to adapt curricula to suit their needs. Regular education teachers and personnel must be equipped to collaborate with special education teachers to ensure that the best individualized approaches are utilized for the successful integration of disabled students into the classroom.

For these reasons, I am reintroducing the Teacher Training Expansion Act of 2005, legislation that would address this crucial area of teacher development. Specifically, this legislation would authorize the Secretary of Education to give preference, in the distribution of certain grants under IDEA, to local educational agencies and certain public or private nonprofit organizations that provide training to regular education personnel to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

Under current law, institutions of higher education are already granted such a preferential status in the distribution of these grants. However, I firmly believe local educational agencies and public or private nonprofit organizations that are at the forefront of training teachers who work with disabled students, must be eligible to receive equal consideration in provide this vital type of professional development and training.

Mr. Speaker, by supporting this legislation we will help our teachers gain the skills they need to work effectively with disabled students in general education classrooms and help make good on our promise to provide a quality education to all students.

Lastly, as we celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act today, let us be ever mindful to continue to level the playing field for our disabled and special needs communities in any way that we can. This bill would help in furthering this goal and I urge my colleagues to cosponsor the Teacher Training Expansion Act of 2005.

FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 26, 2005

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, today marks the fifteenth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Signed into law by George H. W. Bush on July 26th in 1990, and enacted with bipartisan support in the Congress, the ADA served as the world's first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities.

Following in the footsteps of civil rights legislation from the 1960s, this landmark legislation has sought to end discrimination against people with disabilities in the workplace and encourage full integration into American society, particularly through enabling independent living.

In its fifteen years of existence, the ADA has accomplished much. Access ramps, curb cuts, Braille signs, and assistive listening devices at movie theaters now appear in communities around the country. Transit and communications systems have become more accessible. Indeed, the ADA has contributed to a greater awareness among Americans as to the needs and potential of people with disabilities.

Yet despite this progress, I remain deeply concerned that the promise of the ADA has not been fulfilled for many of America's 54 million citizens with disabilities. For example, empirical evidence demonstrates that there has been little change in the employment rate of people with disabilities. Only 32 percent of

working-age people with a disability are employed. Today, people with disabilities are three times more likely than those without disabilities to live in poverty. There is much progress still to be made.

Unfortunately, in recent years the federal courts have narrowly interpreted the ADA and have not enforced key provisions of the Act, especially in regards to the workplace and the applicability of ADA to state law. Moreover, the Administration has proposed funding cuts to key programs—Section 8 housing, Medicaid, and vocational rehabilitation and assistive technology—which enable many people with disabilities to achieve self-sufficiency and live independently.

On this anniversary of the American with Disabilities Act, we must make sure that we fulfill the promise made to our disabled brothers and sisters fifteen years ago. Indeed, the goals of the ADA could not be more pertinent than they are today, when thousands of soldiers are returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan with severe injuries. It is my hope that we can move forward today to fully realize the goals of equality and integration set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

IN HONOR OF THE REVEREND
VASILIJ BUDIMIR SOKOLOVIC
AND THE LEGACY OF HIS FA-
THER, SAINT BUDIMIR
SOKOLOVIC

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 26, 2005

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the Reverend Vasilije Budimir Sokolovic, pastor of St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral in Parma, Ohio, for his thirty-five year ministry with the church. I also rise today to honor the life and spiritual legacy of his father, Priest martyr Saint Budimir Sokolovic of Dobrun, recently canonized by the Serbian Orthodox Church, who was executed by communist oppressors for his religious beliefs.

Tyranny and violence took the life of Saint Budimir Sokolovic, yet his legacy of strength, spirit, faith and ministry to others continues to live on in the life and works of his son, Reverend Vasilije Sokolovic. Reverend Sokolovic was just a young boy when his father was jailed and executed, shortly after the end of WWII. Saint Sokolovic's vocation directed him to the battlefields in Yugoslavia, where he provided spiritual guidance to Serbian freedom fighters battling the German occupation. He lived to see the Nazis expelled from his homeland, only to be felled under the violence of the ensuing communist regime.

Oppression and poverty dominated Eastern Europe after the war, magnifying the fear and loss for Saint Budimir Sokolovic's wife and two young boys. Rather than shrinking from his father's great legacy, young Vasilije carried his father's life and memory within his heart, following the path of ministry and service cultivated by Saint Budimir Sokolovic. Equipped with the spiritual guidance of his father and his own unwavering faith, Reverend Sokolovic entered the seminary, becoming the 42nd generation of Sokolovics to dedicate their lives to the priesthood.

Mr. Speaker and Colleagues, please join me in honor and tribute of Reverend Vasilije Budimir Sokolovic, whose ministry and leadership continues to provide faith and support to countless individuals and families of the St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church, and serves as an instrument of spiritual connection to the life and works of his father, Priest martyr Saint Budimir Sokolovic of Dobrun. With courage and steadfast conviction in his faith, Saint Budimir Sokolovic paid the ultimate sacrifice in his quest for religious freedom.

Reverend Vasilije Sokolovic continues to carry the faithful torch of his father—a blazing legacy of freedom from tyranny, a burning reminder of the fragility of democracy, and a light of hope and inspiration for people around the world searching for the light of liberty.

COMMEMORATING THE FIFTEENTH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERIC-
ANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 26, 2005

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, fifteen years ago today, our Nation enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act, giving civil rights protection to individuals with disabilities. This landmark legislation can be described as nothing less than monumental and groundbreaking for those with disabilities as it brought this community into the mainstream folds of our Nation.

The ADA has brought about many changes in workplaces, transportation, schools, public buildings, parks and telephone services. Closed captioning, sidewalk curb cutouts, accessible entrances and restrooms, equal employment opportunities—all are a direct result, making the ADA one of the most far-reaching pieces of legislation ever enacted by our Nation. Perhaps more important than removing physical barriers, the ADA has been successful in changing the way society views our members with disabilities. Society understands and now demonstrates that people with disabilities could, and should, fully participate in all aspects of life.

Mr. Speaker, despite the progress achieved through the ADA, there is still a long way to go before we truly achieve “full participation” for people with disabilities. In 1985, the widely regarded Harris poll determined that two-thirds of working age Americans with disabilities are unemployed, the highest unemployment rate by far of any group, and much of the impetus for enacting the ADA. The U.S. Census Bureau shows that little has changed in the last 20 years. Today, only 42% of working-age men, and 34% of working-age women, with disabilities are employed.

The ADA levels the playing field, but it cannot ensure that an individual with a disability is actually able to apply for that job, or to that university. As technological advances continue to close physical gaps for people with disabilities in and out of the workplace, let us also be mindful to provide the tools needed to cross the mental gaps they may face.

Confidence and recognition of self-worth are absolutely necessary to taking those big steps toward employment, or education. To promote this, we need legislation like the Medicaid

Community-Based Attendant Services and Supports Act, H.R. 910, a bill introduced by my colleague Rep. Danny Davis and which I have cosponsored. This bill would provide individuals with disabilities equal access to community-based attendant services and supports, taking many out of institutional care and placing them back into their homes, families and communities where they belong. In supportive and familiar environments, people with disabilities will be better prepared to take advantage of education and employment opportunities.

We must continue to educate the public, and help inspire employers to seek out qualified employees with disabilities. We must fight to broaden, not narrow, the scope of the ADA as we continually redefine the meaning of “disability.” America has become more accessible to people with disabilities. This fact rightfully deserves 3 celebration today. However, Congress must continue to level the playing field and continue the promise to push for full, unrestricted access and participation for our disabled communities.

INTRODUCTION OF BILL DEALING
WITH CLAIMS FOR RIGHTS-OF-
WAY UNDER R.S. 2477

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 26, 2005

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I am today again introducing a bill to establish a process for orderly resolution of a problem that affects private property owners and the sound management of the Federal lands.

What is involved are claims for rights-of-way under a provision of the Mining Law of 1866 that later was embodied in section 2477 of the Revised Statutes, and so is usually called R.S. 2477. It granted rights-of-way for the construction of highways across Federal lands not reserved for public uses. It was one of many 19th-century laws that assisted in the opening of the West for resource development and settlement.

More than a century after its enactment, R.S. 2477 was repealed by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, often called “FLPMA,” and was replaced with a modern and comprehensive process for establishing rights-of-way on Federal lands. However, FLPMA did not revoke valid existing rights established under R.S. 2477—and, unfortunately, it also did not set a deadline for people claiming to have such rights to file their claims.

As a result, there is literally no way of knowing how many such claims might be filed or what lands might be affected—including not just Federal lands but also lands that once were Federal but now belong to other owners. But it is clear that R.S. 2477 claims could involve not only thousands of square miles of Federal lands but also many lands that now are private property or belong to the states or other entities.

This is obviously a serious problem. It also is the way things used to be with regard to another kind of claim on Federal lands—mining claims under the Mining Law of 1872. However, that problem was resolved by section 314 of FLPMA, which gave people 3 years to record those claims and provided that any