

A strong and productive workforce is key to our Nation's future. According to the Department of Labor, nearly 8 million Americans and 120,000 Marylanders are unemployed. But this Congress is poised to slash more than \$400 million from job training and employment services funding.

It will also cut State unemployment insurance and employment service offices by \$245 million, and assistance for approximately 1.9 million people will be jeopardized.

This bill also cuts by \$250 million the Community College Initiative, which is President Bush's initiative to help community colleges train prospective workers for high-skill jobs. The conference report cuts funding for that effort by \$125 million and rescinds \$125 million from fiscal year 2005 funds.

A healthy America is key to our Nation's future. We have more than 45 million Americans without health insurance. Many of them rely on networks of community health centers to receive much needed care. I was encouraged by the President's initiative to increase the number of community health centers around the country, but the conference report provides \$238 million less than the President's request. The Republican leadership supports this conference report, despite the fact that this House passed in July a resolution stating that community health centers are "vital to the nation's communities." Surely, the dedicated workers at our health centers will find the words of that resolution hollow if this conference report is passed. This conference report cuts health care access for underserved areas of the country. It eliminates the community access program, which provides lifesaving and life-enhancing health care to many regions that lack a sufficient number of health care facilities.

This bill cuts title VII health professions programs by 69 percent and it eradicates several programs entirely. This is particularly outrageous coming from a Congress that claims to want to end health disparities. Johns Hopkins Institutions in my home town of Baltimore receive more than \$2.5 million in funding for title VII grants. These programs serve different spheres of the health care system, from the Schools of Nursing, Public Health and Medicine. All of this funding is jeopardized by the bill before us today.

The National Institutes of Health is headquartered in my home State of Maryland. Over the past year, I have met with dozens of representatives from patient groups. They are aware that the President's budget for fiscal year 2006 proposed the smallest increase for NIH in 36 years. The paltry increase in this bill does not even keep pace with inflation. What does it mean in real terms? Not only will we not be able to increase our efforts to fight diabetes, HIV/AIDS, cancer, brain injury, Alzheimer's and other pernicious diseases, we will actually see a reduction in the number of grants and the number of research projects funded by NIH.

Improvements in education are key to our Nation's future. This Congress speaks often about the need to hold our schools accountable, yet this conference takes away the funding our school districts need to improve students' achievement levels.

Title I funding for low-income children are given a 0.8 percent increase—the smallest increase in 8 years, and only a fraction of the increase requested by the President. Special

education grants receive a 0.9 percent increase—the smallest increase in 10 years.

We talk a lot about the need to increase education technology, yet this conference report cuts that funding by nearly half. We speak of the need to protect our children from violence and illegal drugs, but this bill cuts Safe and Drug-Free Schools by one-fifth, and provides no increase for after-school programs for the fourth consecutive year.

Everyone in this House can agree that the cost of higher education is soaring, but this conference report fails to provide any increase whatsoever for Pell grants, without which so many college students could not continue their education. President Bush proposed a \$100 increase, the House passed a \$50 increase, but the conferees did not even provide that. Instead, they froze the maximum Pell grant amount at \$4,050 for the fourth consecutive year.

Finally, our goodness as a nation is measured by how we treat the most vulnerable Americans. If we are to truly be a great nation, we must care for those who are less able to care for themselves. It is disappointing that this conference report slashes funding for the Social Security Administration, which is entrusted with processing disability claims for millions of Americans. In my district, the Third Congressional District of Maryland, I represent many employees of the Social Security Administration. They are hardworking, dedicated staffers, but they can only do so much without adequate funding for personnel and technological support. In the Ways and Means Committee, we have had several hearings about the backlogs of cases at SSA, and Commissioner Barnhart has sought congressional assistance in bringing her processing systems up to date. Unfortunately, this bill will not make SSA employees' jobs any easier nor will it help reduce the backlog of pending cases. In fact, the backlogs will get worse. The House failed to provide the President's request, it provides even less than the House- or Senate-passed bills.

Some of my colleagues have defended these cuts as necessary to restore fiscal discipline to our budget. When combined with a planned 1 percent across-the-board cut, this bill will save approximately \$3 billion over last year's spending, and \$15 billion over the next 5 years. But at the same time, the congressional leadership is advancing an agenda of tax cuts that exceed \$70 billion. They are asking us to believe that it is necessary to eliminate programs and inflict pain on American families, but they are doing this not to balance the budget, but to make room for tax cuts.

Mr. Speaker, when this House defeated the Labor-HHS bill prior to the Thanksgiving recess, it was because a majority of this House believed that it would jeopardize vital services for millions of Americans. The revisions in today's conference report are minimal and keep us on the same track toward wiping out key safety net programs. Therefore, I rise again in opposition to this conference report and urge my colleagues to do the same.

TRIBUTE TO GLADYS
TANTAQUIDGEON

HON. ROB SIMMONS

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 15, 2005

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the achievements of Gladys Tantaquidgeon, whose life's work greatly enhanced the Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut.

On November 1, the woman who was rightly known as the "keeper of the Mohegan culture" died at the age of 106. Gladys Tantaquidgeon was a woman of uncommon integrity and cheerful determination. Throughout her life she devoted her skills, talents and knowledge to the revival of the Mohegan Tribe and countless lives have been enriched by her steadfastness.

Gladys Tantaquidgeon was an anthropologist and ethnobotanist. She wrote extensively about Native Americans and her knowledge was wide-ranging. She played a key role in establishing the Mohegan tribal museum. Her flawless record-keeping and her encyclopedic knowledge of the history of her tribe were instrumental in helping the Mohegans win Federal recognition in 1994.

In the Hartford Courant, Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel, Gladys's grandniece, pointed out that much of the artwork in the tribe's Mohegan Sun Casino, in Montville, was inspired by the collection of the "keeper of Mohegan culture." Ms. Zobel recently remarked, "We all have to wonder, would we be where we are today without her? She was an image from another world. It would be dishonorable not to celebrate her passing."

The Mohegan Tribe today is successful by any measure and they most certainly would not be where they are today without the perseverance and stamina of this incredible woman. Supported in no small measure by her work, the tribe has preserved its heritage and history and has created economic security for the future.

The Mohegan Sun Casino has created jobs throughout the region, has provided economic assistance to its host community and works with vendors throughout the State.

And while the tribe and the entire region mourns her death, we surely celebrate the extraordinary life of this great woman who was a descendent of Uncas, the famous Mohegan chief.

She demonstrated that the Mohegan's history is an integral and essential part of Connecticut's history. The Hartford Courant said it well, observing that Gladys Tantaquidgeon was "the living link between past and present whose diligent record-keeping led to federal recognition for the Mohegans. They are now running one of the world's most lucrative casinos and are fabulously rich. It is telling that they are prouder of their heritage than their wildly successful business venture."

The Mohegan Tribe and the State of Connecticut are better off because of Gladys Tantaquidgeon. She did much more than enable her people to secure the recognition they deserved. She taught, by word and example, that our lives as Americans are deeply entwined and that history is not something that happened in the past. History is alive and even as it reminds us of who we were, it also reminds us of what we might become.

Gladys Tantaquidgeon was an exceptional woman. The Mohegan Tribe and Connecticut are fortunate that for more than a century she was among us. She will be missed.

**TORTURE VICTIMS RELIEF
REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2005**

SPEECH OF

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 6, 2005

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Torture Victims Relief Reauthorization Act (H.R. 2017). The Torture Victims Relief Act (TVRA) has provided critical support to thousands of survivors of torture since it was first authorized in 1999. The sad fact is that torture is still used by governments around the world and the need for the bill is as pronounced as ever. With revelations of the U.S.'s own use of torture making waves around the world, we can ill afford to take a step back in the field of torture treatment.

The United States must renew its commitment against the use of torture. And it must support efforts to ease the pain and suffering of those living in parts of the world where there are no other resources—not to mention political motivation—to help survivors of torture.

Currently, 27 programs in 17 states including Illinois receive assistance for torture treatment in the U.S. Treatment provided by these programs enables survivors of torture to recover their lives and become productive members of their communities. Many of these centers, including the center in Illinois, also train mainstream professionals. This increases the ability of health care providers, attorneys, leaders of faith, and others, to provide for the special needs of torture victims and contribute to the prevention of torture.

The TVRA is at work in my district, supporting the work of the Marjorie Kovler Center of Heartland Alliance. The Center provides medical, mental health and social services to more than 300 torture survivors every year. While these services are provided for people across the state and into Indiana and Wisconsin, the Center receives more referrals from my Congressional district than any other. These individuals make their way to our community at great personal cost. They come seeking safety, only to be confronted with the difficulties of adjusting to life in the United States. They each carry a heavy burden from the trauma they have suffered, and many would not become the productive members of the community that they want to be if it not for the services supported by the TVRA.

In addition to the people in my district that the Center serves, I am proud to say that dozens of my constituents volunteer and work at the Marjorie Kovler Center. I have had the opportunity to meet many of them at events in the district over the past several years and am aware of their skill and commitment. The fact is that volunteer and in-kind donations worth more than \$400,000 annually leverage funds from the TVRA spent in my district. This amounts to a one-to-one match of Federal funds provided by my community.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support the Torture Victim Relief Re-

authorization Act, and I urge my colleagues to support funding for torture treatment centers.

**OPPOSING SECTION 3145 OF THE
RECONCILIATION SPENDING
CUTS CONFERENCE REPORT (H.R.
4241)**

HON. DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN

OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 15, 2005

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to Section 3145 of H.R. 4241, the proposed Reconciliation Spending Cuts Conference Report, and to express my unequivocal opposition to that provision and the base bill. That section will just provide added cause to reject the report, because it would require everyone—everyone—applying for Medicaid to produce a birth certificate or passport to prove citizenship.

Supporters of this provision talk a good game. And, on the surface, their rationale seems plausible and reasonable. They claim that Section 3145 will save a great deal of money by restricting undocumented residents from lying about their citizenship and falsely obtaining Medicaid services. However, Mr. Speaker, proponents of Section 3145 do not discuss a comprehensive study by the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Inspector General. This July 2005 study found no compelling evidence that illegal residents were lying about their citizenship status in order to qualify for Medicaid.

So it is nothing more than another barely veiled attack on immigrants—our fellow human beings—and it would also have adverse impacts on other American citizens as well.

For many of us here, the idea of obtaining a passport or a copy of a birth certificate does not sound difficult. However, for many Americans—particularly low-income Americans in rural communities, low-income racial and ethnic minorities and elderly Americans—getting a passport or a copy of a birth certificate is very difficult and sometimes even impossible. Even the cost is a barrier for some.

But further complicating the process for some Americans, particularly those who are low-income, racial and ethnic minorities and/or born in rural areas, is the fact that when they were born, their families may not have had access to hospitals—they may not be able to get birth certificates and therefore passports simply because they were born at home.

As you know, during much of the last century, many hospitals and health clinics—especially in the south and in areas entrenched in segregation and discrimination—would not admit minorities, especially African Americans. This long history of discrimination created barriers to health care access that continue to affect the health and health care of racial and ethnic minorities today. It is the same discrimination that now still makes it difficult for so many low-income African Americans senior—and other seniors of color—to obtain the required documentation they would need under this provision to obtain Medicaid services. Mr. Speaker, let's not be a part of allowing discrimination to create additional barriers to health care for immigrants or other Americans of color.

Further, were section 3145 to pass, it will be states and counties who will determine how to

enforce it and who to ask for the additional documentation.

My concern is that this provision will put low-income Americans at the mercy of individuals whose assumptions about their status put them at great risk for discrimination. It would attack everyone's civil liberties.

Mr. Speaker, Section 3145 is based on a completely false and slanderous assumption about immigrants in this country, and it is nothing more than another anti-immigrant provision among the many egregious ones that are being debated on the floor today.

There are repercussions for health in general. If enacted this provision would also have extraordinarily detrimental effects on the health and health care of many American citizens, it will increase the already unacceptably high numbers of uninsured Americans, and consequently, it will exacerbate health disparities—both racial and ethnic, and rural—as well as worsen the health and well being of many American citizens.

In our focus on section 3145, we don't want anyone to get the wrong impression that this is one bad provision in an otherwise good bill. Nothing could be further from fact. What it does is just make a conference report that is shaping up to be a terrible bill already, even worse.

Just today I received a letter from the national Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. It read in part:

"The role of government is to protect its people and work for the common good. This is not the time for the budget reconciliation process to create greater hardships for those who are already experiencing great suffering. To do so is not only unjust; it is a sin. It violates all the fundamental Christian principles of loving thy neighbor, caring for the poor, and showing mercy. As religious leaders, this violation is unacceptable to us."

This is a reference to the entire budget reconciliation bill, and whether one is Baptist, Catholic, Jew or Moslem the words ring true.

It is rotten to the core, and this country, which pledges to be one "under God", should not let the Immigration/Border Security Bill or any part of the inhumane budget reconciliation or spending cut bill as it is now written become the law of this land.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 15, 2005

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 638, had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

CONGRATULATING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF JERIOUS NORWOOD

HON. CHARLES W. "CHIP" PICKERING

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 16, 2005

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Speaker, Mississippi State University has much to be proud of: excellence in academics with a reputation for top agriculture and energy research. This year, I