

My state of Connecticut loses almost \$5 million a year due to the VOCA cap. This money could make all the difference in thousands of people's lives. In a letter to me, Connecticut's State Victim Advocate James Papillo wrote, "The programs funded by the VOCA fund benefit crime victims in Connecticut through direct financial support and crime victim support services. These funds help crime victims when they most need it. Given the substantial reduction in the amount of funds available to the states caused by federal earmarks, and the real need for increased services to crime victims in Connecticut, it is clear that removal of the cap is necessary to ensure that Connecticut will be able to meet the needs of crime victims."

The Victims of Crime Fairness Act is common sense legislation. I ask my colleagues to join me in helping victims of crime by eliminating the VOCA fund spending cap.

MILITARY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 14, 2005

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation which will improve the lives of thousands of our troops and their families. As our troops serve us so well in Iraq, the war on terrorism and on countless other missions around the world, we honor their service. At the same time, however, we should do more to help our troops and their families handle the emotional toll that service can take.

The Military Mental Health Services Improvement Act, which I am introducing with 18 of my colleagues, will improve the ability of servicemembers and their families to access mental health care and overcome the stigma that is too often associated with mental health services. I am especially pleased that the National Military Families Association has lent its support to this important legislation.

Since the beginning of the Iraq War, more than 900 servicemembers have been evacuated from Iraq due to mental health concerns, and a new study by the New England Journal of Medicine confirms that more than one-quarter of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom veterans seeking care at Veterans hospitals are doing so for mental health treatment. While we have made good progress since the Vietnam era in diagnosing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other forms of combat stress, much more remains to be done.

Specifically, my bill will: Ensure that troops deploying to combat theaters get the mental health screening they need before and after deployment. The bill requires that military mental health screenings be done in person. The 1997 Defense Authorization Act required pre- and post-deployment screenings, but the Defense Department elected to use paper self-evaluation forms which are widely viewed as insufficient to identify possible combat-stress cases.

Create a new program designed to alert dependents of servicemembers about the options for and availability of mental health treatment services. The bill requires the DOD to operate a web site and toll-free number that

servicemembers and families can use to get information about the availability of mental health services. Many military families complain of being unable to determine where to go for mental health services. This problem is particularly acute for Guardsmen and Reservists, whose families may not live close to a military installation and thus do not have easy access to a military health care facility.

Reduce the stigma associated with mental health treatment. According to a 2004 New England Journal of Medicine study of troops returning from Iraq, fear of stigmatization was "disproportionately greatest among those most in need of help from mental health services."

Improve coordination between DOD and the Department of Veterans Affairs in treating mental health cases. As the youngest veterans, OIF/OEF veterans will be long-term users of VA health services, and so proper diagnosis and treatment are important to reduce their long-term mental health services needs.

Allow recently-deactivated Guard and Reserve members and their families to obtain mental health services through TRICARE for up to 24 months after the servicemember returns. This is a priority for the National Military Families Association, and 24 months was selected because that is the time-frame in which PTSD usually presents itself.

Allow colleges, universities and community hospitals to play a constructive role in helping to diagnose and treat combat stress in our servicemembers by permitting the Defense Department to partner with these organizations to carry out the programs prescribed in the bill.

Mr. Speaker, we owe a debt of gratitude to our troops and their families. Part of this debt can be paid by giving them the resources they need to get through deployment, including combat and long stretches away from loved ones. Supporting this legislation will be a good step in that direction.

I have long been interested in the issue of mental health among our men and women in uniform and their families, but it was brought home for me last year, during the deployment to Iraq of the 439th Quartermaster Company, an Army Reserve unit headquartered in New Haven, Connecticut. Over the course of that deployment, I saw a group of families overwhelmed by the stress and uncertainty caused by the deployment of their loved ones. These families did not know where to turn for help. The situation, unfortunately, did not improve when the soldiers returned from their 19 months on active duty, 14 of which were spent in the Middle East. I would like to read into the RECORD the speech given Monday by the leader of the 439th family support organization, Kelly Beckwith. Kelly's words speak volumes about the emotional toll of deployment on families. I hope my colleagues will take the time to read them:

SPEECH BY KELLY BECKWITH AT THE AMERICAN LEGION POST 89, EAST HAVEN, CONN. ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE DeLAURO MILITARY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2005

"Hello. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Kelly Beckwith. I am the wife of an OEF/OIF Veteran and mother to four young children. My husband, Sgt. Chris Beckwith, served on active duty with the 439th Quartermaster Company from New Haven for over 19 months. I served "unofficially" as the 439th Family Readiness Coordinator during the last few months of their deployment.

"Deployment is an extremely difficult time for our soldiers and their families. While there is a sense of pride in serving your country, the stress of separation can be devastating, even more so when there is no structuralized, formal support system. Reserve support relies heavily upon volunteers, most of which are struggling with the deployment of a loved one themselves. Soldiers are not the only ones making sacrifices. . . .

"If you will allow me to paint you a picture . . . Close your eyes . . .

"Imagine four young, bright-eyed children. Christopher is eight years old and in the third grade. He likes to play with trucks and cars, and loves to build with his legos. Julia is five and just started kindergarten in the fall. She loves to draw and tell stories. Shaun is three years old and very shy and quiet. He just started learning to use the potty. He is loving and holds tightly onto his mom and admires his dad. He wants to be a fireman when he grows up. Olivia just turned two and is eager to learn all that she can and cause mischief of one kind or another.

"Now picture soldiers, dressed in BDUs, filing onto the busses. Picture those same bright-eyed children standing at the gate, with tears in their eyes, hoping to have one last chance to wave goodbye to their Daddy.

"Imagine being the mother of those children, seeing the fear and confusion in their eyes as they know their father has to go away, but they do not understand why or know for how long.

"Imagine losing that one person you had to hold you, to comfort you, to talk to in the middle of the night. Imagine the overwhelming stress as the burden of the household quickly falls on those left behind. Imagine being that wife and realizing that you will now be raising four children on your own. Imagine watching helplessly as the terror of what your loved one is enduring unfolds right before your eyes on the television . . . the sudden onset of anxiety attacks as you wait endlessly for the phone to ring, hoping to hear from him, and dreading when the phone does ring, fearing the worst. Imagine the wife . . . holding tightly onto herself to ease her fears as she cries herself to sleep.

"Those bright-eyed children have all had to grow up entirely too fast.

"The oldest boy, Christopher, assumes the role as father figure to his younger siblings. He no longer wants to go to a friend's house to play. Instead, he prefers to stay home, in case his mother "needs" him. Five year old, Julia, is now six and in the first grade. She pours herself into schoolwork and immerses herself into books. She continues to draw and write. She now keeps a journal in which she writes, "Why can't my Daddy come home?"

"Quiet and shy Shaun, who was once so loveable, is now so full of anger and hate. Because he does not know what words to use to express his feelings, he starts lashing out. He bites, hits, kicks, screams, and breaks anything that catches his eye—three windows, four figurines, and a bed within one week's time. Shaun blames his mother for his father's extended absence and shouts to her "I hate you!" at least three times a day. Then cries, "Mommy, please let my Daddy come home."

"Little Olivia now only knows her father through photographs. When other fathers pick up their children at preschool, Olivia asks, "When is my Daddy coming to get me?"

"Now, if you will, flash forward to over a year and a half later.

* Christopher is now ten years old and is in the fifth grade.

* Julia is seven and in second grade.

* Shaun, who had just started learning to use potty at the beginning of deployment, is now five and in kindergarten.

* Little Olivia is four years old and is one of the "big kids" at her preschool.

* Mom has finally started to sleep at night. "After all this time, Daddy finally comes home, only to hear his youngest child ask, 'Are you my Daddy?'"

"For many families, reintegration is harder than the actual deployment itself. Sadly, many families fall apart during the deployment, and far too many soldiers return home divorced. For those families that have endured the trials and tribulations of separation, the arduous journey has just begun.

"Soldiers have witnessed and endured unspeakable cruelties. Their everyday life had become a series of safety checks and "trust no ones." Yet within a week of leaving the combat zone, the soldiers are back with their families with nothing more than a slap on the back and a "thank you, buddy."

"At first, everything is wonderful—the "honeymoon stage." You're just so grateful to have him back home, to have your family together again. Then comes the transition. People change over time, especially more so during a traumatic experience such as deployment. Soldiers come home to someone they feel is completely different from who they left behind. Often times, families do not recognize the person coming home to them. We have to learn how to live with another person again. In truth, it's almost as if you're learning to live with a stranger, only his face is so familiar. You have to learn to share the bed again. Even the simplest things, such as emptying the trash or remembering to put the toilet seat down can cause such a large, deep rift. The smallest misunderstandings can, and do, spiral into large disagreements and screaming matches.

"Unfortunately there are several factors hindering soldiers and families from seeking the help they so desperately need. Some do not know what options are available to them, others do not know where to go or whom to call. Some are too stubborn to realize they need help, thinking if they got through the deployment, they can get through anything.

"For those soldiers who do come forward to seek help, there is a good chance it will be held against them in their future military career. Even something as simple as going to marital counseling will be taken into consideration for security clearance. Sometimes more drastic measures, such as pushing the soldier out of military service, are taken.

"This is no way to thank our soldiers for defending and protecting our freedoms. It is time we do right by our soldiers and their families. There is no choice but to offer them the support they need not only to serve this country, but to reintegrate into their families as well.

"This is a matter of the utmost urgency, and we'd all be fools if we failed to do something about it. If we fail just one, then we have failed them all.

"It's time to do right by our soldiers . . . And that time is now."

WELCOMING HOME THE 2ND BATTALION, 24TH MARINE REGIMENT

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 14, 2005

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday at All State Arena in Chicago, it was my honor to participate in welcoming home some of America's most recent heroes—the brave men and women of the 2nd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment—to their families, friends and a deeply grateful nation.

Following a seven-month tour in Iraq, it was a privilege to join in thanking these intrepid Marines for their service and sacrifice to our Nation. They served at the center of one of the most unstable and dangerous regions in Iraq known as the "Triangle of Death." The unit compiled an impressive service record, including the capture of more than 600 insurgents, and secured the delivery of life-saving medicine and humanitarian supplies. Those who observed that this particular unit never appeared to sleep while seemingly defending every position in the area understood why these Marines are known as the "Mad Ghosts."

The reunion I attended at All State Arena was filled nearly to capacity with proud Illinoisans awaiting their loved ones. Welcoming them home, however, was incomplete as thirteen Marines of the 2nd Battalion did not return to their families. This void is a solemn reminder of the unit's sacrifice to fight for democracy in Iraq.

I look forward to the day when all of the men and women of our Armed Forces return home to the same kind of warm reception that the 2nd Battalion received this past Saturday. Until that day, we will continue to commit our complete and unwavering support to our troops as they continue fighting for liberty and to preserve today's fragile democracy in Iraq. We will keep them in our thoughts and prayers and continue working to bring them home to their families.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Fifth Congressional District of Illinois, I thank each of the Marines we just welcomed home for their valor and service, and I remind my colleagues that the freedoms we hold dear depend on the courage and honor of U.S. troops like those who follow the example set by the Mad Ghosts of the 2nd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment.

ROBERT MATSUI COURTHOUSE RESOLUTION

SPEECH OF

HON. NANCY PELOSI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 13, 2005

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this resolution to name the United States courthouse in Sacramento, California after my dear friend and our beloved former colleague, Bob Matsui, who passed away so suddenly on New Year's night.

Time and time again, Bob's constituents elected him to serve as their Representative in the United States Congress. As all of us know, he rose to national prominence as a senior member of the powerful Ways and Means Committee, a national spokesman for Social Security, and as the first Asian American in leadership of the Congress.

Bob was a living combination of intellect and passion—someone who understood the complexities of the Social Security system, and who never forgot what it meant to the lives of America's seniors. As an architect for a better America, Bob expanded opportunities for our county's children, built a more secure future, and protected precious freedoms for all of us.

In our more than 30 years of friendship, I deeply admired Bob's personal courage. De-

spite being imprisoned in an internment camp as a very young boy during World War II, Bob always had hope in the promise of America. He loved America enough to want to make it better. In fact, he worked tirelessly to pass legislation that awarded payments and an apology from the government to Japanese Americans who had been sent to internment camps.

When it came to politics, Bob was a maestro, orchestrating campaigns across the country that addressed the aspirations of the American people, particularly on his signature issues of economic opportunity, civil liberties, and retirement security.

It seems like only yesterday that Bob was among us, doing the people's work here in Congress. Bob's spirit and energy have been greatly missed. We are saddened by the loss of our dear friend and colleague, but we are fortunate to have his wife Doris here to continue and build on Bob's outstanding work.

President Bush rightly called him a "dedicated public servant and a good and decent man who served with distinction and integrity." I know that our friends on the other side of the aisle miss Bob as well, and join in paying him this tribute.

Bob Matsui was a true patriot who had a dream for a better America. I urge my colleagues to support naming this courthouse in his beloved Sacramento in his honor.

TRIBUTE TO TENNESSEE WILLIAMS AND THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

HON. LINCOLN DAVIS

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 14, 2005

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of playwright Tennessee Williams and the University of the South.

In 1983, following the death of the great American playwright, Tennessee Williams, the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, received the most generous bequest of the playwright in honor of his grandfather, Walter E. Dakin. Since then the university, known as Sewanee, utilizing the income from the bequest and subsequent revenues from the hundreds of productions of Tennessee's award-winning plays, has established the Sewanee Writers Conference, which supports the work of emerging writers in all disciplines. In addition, the university has constructed the Tennessee Williams Center, a monument to the vision and craftsmanship of the late playwright, where each year gifted young writers develop their talents aided by artists from all over the world who visit the center as Tennessee Williams Fellows in Theatre.

This month, the Tennessee Williams Festival, an annual event featuring new works by established artists as well as students in the university, will present the premieres of two important theatrical productions.

The first, The Poetry of Tennessee Williams, will bring to dramatic life the poems of the great playwright. In the poems, we often hear "Tom" Williams at his most intimate and lyrical. Audiences will discover this powerful aspect of Williams' artistic life, very much the work of a master dramatist and storyteller.

The second, The Cherokee Lottery, is adapted from the book of the same name by