

community service, personal development, and citizenship. To earn a Congressional Award, as the gentlewoman from North Carolina said, participants set and achieve individual goals in the areas of public service, personal development, physical fitness and expeditions.

We in New Jersey are particularly proud of the Congressional Award because the sponsor of the bill originally, 26 years ago, here in the House of Representatives, was Representative Jim Howard of New Jersey. The award is so good because all young people are equally able to earn the Congressional Award because the goals set are based on individual interests and ability. The young person is not selected to receive the Congressional Award; she or he earns it.

The Congressional Award facilitates neighborhood networks, enabling disadvantaged youth to become part of a community. It attracts youth from all backgrounds. The Congressional Award program fits nicely with extracurricular activities in schools and various youth programs, including Key Clubs, Service Clubs, Scouting, 4-H, and so forth. I have seen the program provide an opportunity for young people to learn from adults who will encourage and support them along the way to earning the Congressional Award.

The award program looks to teachers, guidance counselors, leaders of school and youth groups to spread the word about the program. The award can act as an important component for the personal development of young people. The program establishes a sense of self-confidence and helps enhance problem-solving skills. And perhaps the most important lesson, certainly one of the most important lessons that people can learn, is how to set achievable goals and then how to achieve them.

Created by Congress 26 years ago, the Congressional Award receives no Federal funding. It is fully funded by charitable contributions. However, Congress has assisted the program by authorizing the U.S. Mint to strike medals presented to the recipients. Members of the House and of the Senate recognize their constituents who earn Bronze, Silver and Gold medals. The winners of the Gold Medal Award participate in a ceremony here in Washington held annually.

This year, the number of Gold Medal recipients represented more than 25 States. The 12th Congressional District of New Jersey, my district, is pleased and proud to have 1,004 active participants, more than any other district in the country. There were five Gold Medalists from the 12th District in 2005. There is already a Gold Medalist approved for 2006, and I expect more. I look forward to presenting the awards to them and to dozens of Bronze and Silver Award winners.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Congressional Award Act.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise today in support of the re-authorization of the

Congressional Awards Program and to express my appreciation for the outstanding benefits it brings to my constituents and community. Congress established The Congressional Award in 1979 to recognize initiative, achievement and service in young people. The enabling legislation (Public Law 96-114) established the Congressional Award as a private-public partnership, receiving all funding from the private sector.

Program participants choose what they will do to earn the award based on their own interests and abilities. Participants are honored for achieving their goals. Participants earn Bronze, Silver and Gold Congressional Award Certificates and Bronze, Silver and Gold Congressional Award Medals. Each award level involves setting goals in four program areas: Volunteer Public Service, Personal Development, Physical Fitness, and Expedition/Exploration.

Members of Congress usually present the Award in a ceremony within their Congressional District, but the highest award, the Congressional Award Gold Medal, is presented in the Capitol in Washington, DC. I have been delighted to present 8 Gold Medals to constituents over the last 4 years. Not only have I seen young people from my district participate in the program, but many adults, teachers, guidance counselors, youth leaders, and friends have served as Congressional Award advisors and mentors.

Regardless of the situation, youth can earn the Congressional Award. The program is open to young people from 14- to 23 years old and it accommodates people with special needs or disabilities. There are no minimum grade point average requirements. Participants must select an unrelated adult to act as their advisor. There are more than 13,000 young people presently working to earn a Congressional Award—a number that is growing rapidly.

The Congressional Award is about challenge. Awards are earned—not won. Participants work entirely at their own pace over an extended period of time so that the value of volunteer service, staying fit, learning new skills and exploring new places and activities are made part of the young person's lifestyle. The Congressional Award fosters service, initiative and achievement. The Award builds leadership, confidence and self-esteem in countless young people as they grow into product citizens in all walks of life.

For those who sincerely want to promote positive activities among the youth of our Nation the Congressional Award Program is an ideal national vehicle. That so few Members of the House and the Senate sponsor candidates is a shameful tragedy. Certainly the program would not be experiencing its present fiscal difficulties if the private sector discerned that their Washington legislators really cared. We are missing a golden opportunity to do a great amount of good at a very low cost.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Congressional Award Program as a significant instrument in our efforts to reach out to young people across the Nation and encourage them to get involved in community service. I encourage my colleagues to support the Congressional Award not only by re-authorizing the program for another 5 years, but also by Members becoming involved in their districts.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support a congressional program that builds

character and fosters community service, personal development and citizenship in young Americans—the Congressional Award program. Established in 1979, the Congressional Award is the highest honor Congress bestows upon young people.

Any interested, motivated youth age 14 to 23 may participate. The Congressional Award adapts to meet the needs of each participant. Students set goals according to their own interests and level of abilities. Congressional award recipients represent the best of America. They are required to have committed to bettering themselves and to giving back to the communities in which they reside. It is the making of fulfilling of that commitment that makes these young people so extraordinary.

Over 650 young people in Mississippi are actively pursuing a Congressional Award. Many of these participants are currently involved with Hurricane Katrina relief efforts as a part of their volunteer service commitment. Last year 15 Mississippi youths earned the Congressional Award Gold Medal by serving over 400 hours of volunteer community service and 200 hours each in personal development and physical fitness.

2005 Gold Medal recipient William Fleming of Vardaman, MS, says this of his experience: "I gained a renewed sense of accomplishment and self worth that cannot be replaced. I got all of this from the activities that I completed in the Congressional Award program."

Participation in this program is growing rapidly. Over 2,700 Congressional awards were earned in fiscal year 2005—an increase of 100 percent from just 5 years ago. On June 22, 2005, Members of Congress presented 242 young people with Gold Medals—our highest number to date. In 2006, that number will most likely exceed 300. As a long time supporter of the Congressional Award, I encourage my fellow colleagues to reauthorize this outstanding program.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CONAWAY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 335.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### TO PROVIDE CERTAIN AUTHORITIES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4436) to provide certain authorities for the Department of State, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4436

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

**SECTION 1. REDI CENTER.**

(a) **AUTHORIZATION.**—The Secretary of State is authorized to provide for the participation by the United States in the Regional Emerging Diseases Intervention Center (in this section referred to as “REDI Center”) in Singapore, as established by the Agreement described in subsection (c).

**(b) CONSULTATION AND REPORT.—**

(1) **CONSULTATION.**—Prior to the review required under Article 6.3 of the Agreement described in subsection (c), the Secretary shall consult with the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate.

(2) **REPORT.**—In connection with the submission of the annual congressional budget justification, the Secretary shall report on efforts undertaken at the REDI Center with regard to bioterrorism concerns.

(c) **AGREEMENT DESCRIBED.**—The Agreement referred to in this section is the Agreement between the Governments of the United States of America and the Republic of Singapore Establishing the Regional Emerging Diseases Intervention Center, done at Singapore, November 22, 2005.

**SEC. 2. RETENTION OF MEDICAL REIMBURSEMENTS.**

Section 904 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (22 U.S.C. 4084) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(g) Reimbursements paid to the Department of State for funding the costs of medical care abroad for employees and eligible family members shall be credited to the currently available appropriation account. Such reimbursements shall be available for obligation and expenditure during the fiscal year in which they are received or for such longer period of time as may be provided in law.”

**SEC. 3. ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW BOARDS.**

Section 301(a) of the Diplomatic Security Act (22 U.S.C. 4831(a)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking “paragraph (2)” and inserting “paragraphs (2) and (3)”;

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

**“(3) FACILITIES IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ.—**

“(A) **LIMITED EXEMPTIONS FROM REQUIREMENT TO CONVENE BOARD.**—The Secretary of State is not required to convene a Board in the case of an incident that—

“(i) involves serious injury, loss of life, or significant destruction of property at, or related to, a United States Government mission in Afghanistan or Iraq; and

“(ii) occurs during the period beginning on October 1, 2005, and ending on September 30, 2009.

“(B) **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.**—In the case of an incident described in subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall—

“(i) promptly notify the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate of the incident;

“(ii) conduct an inquiry of the incident; and

“(iii) upon completion of the inquiry required by clause (ii), submit to each such Committee a report on the findings and recommendations related to such inquiry and the actions taken with respect to such recommendations.”

**SEC. 4. INCREASED LIMITS APPLICABLE TO POST DIFFERENTIALS AND DANGER PAY ALLOWANCES.**

(a) **REPEAL OF LIMITED-SCOPE EFFECTIVE DATE FOR PREVIOUS INCREASE.**—Subsection (c) of section 591 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2004 (division D of Public Law 108-199) is repealed.

(b) **POST DIFFERENTIALS.**—Section 5925(a) of title 5, United States Code, is amended in the third sentence by striking “25 percent of the rate of basic pay or, in the case of an employee of the United States Agency for International Development,”

(c) **DANGER PAY ALLOWANCES.**—Section 5928 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking “25 percent of the basic pay of the employee or 35 percent of the basic pay of the employee in the case of an employee of the United States Agency for International Development” both places that it appears and inserting “35 percent of the basic pay of the employee”.

(d) **CRITERIA.**—The Secretary of State shall inform the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate of the criteria to be used in determinations of appropriate adjustments in post differentials under section 5925(a) of title 5, United States Code, as amended by subsection (b), and danger pay allowances under section 5928 of title 5, United States Code, as amended by subsection (c).

(e) **STUDY AND REPORT.**—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall conduct a study assessing the effect of the increases in post differentials and danger pay allowances made by the amendments in subsections (b) and (c), respectively, in filling “hard-to-fill” positions and shall submit a report of such study to the committees specified in subsection (d) and to the Committee on Government Reform of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate.

**SEC. 5. CLARIFICATION OF FOREIGN SERVICE GRIEVANCE BOARD PROCEDURES.**

Section 1106(8) of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (22 U.S.C. 4136(8)) is amended in the first sentence—

(1) by inserting “the involuntary separation of the grievant (other than an involuntary separation for cause under section 610(a)),” after “considering”;

(2) by striking “the grievant or” and inserting “the grievant, or”.

**SEC. 6. PERSONAL SERVICES CONTRACTING PILOT PROGRAM.**

Section 504(c) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107-228) is amended by striking “December 31, 2005” and inserting “December 31, 2006”.

**SEC. 7. OFFICIAL RESIDENCE EXPENSES.**

Section 5913 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(c) Funds made available under subsection (b) may be provided in advance to persons eligible to receive reimbursements.”

**SEC. 8. COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS EDUCATION BENEFITS.**

Section 305(a) of the United States International Broadcasting Act of 1994 (22 U.S.C. 6204(a)) is amended by inserting after paragraph (18) the following new paragraph:

“(19)(A) To provide for the payment of primary and secondary school expenses for dependents of personnel stationed in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) at a cost not to exceed expenses authorized by the Department of Defense for such schooling for dependents of members of the Armed Forces stationed in the Commonwealth, if the Board determines that schools available in the Commonwealth are unable to provide adequately for the education of the dependents of such personnel.

“(B) To provide transportation for dependents of such personnel between their places of residence and those schools for which expenses are provided under subparagraph (A), if the Board determines that such schools

are not accessible by public means of transportation.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I want to point out to my colleagues and remind them that last July, July 20 to be exact, by a vote of 351-78, the House passed a very comprehensive piece of legislation, H.R. 2601, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for fiscal years 2006 and 2007. That bill, regrettably, is stalled over in the other body, so this is a much scaled-down version that will provide some very important authorities to the Department of State, and I will just briefly outline that bill at this point.

First, H.R. 4436 provides for U.S. participation in the Regional Emerging Disease Intervention Center, or REDI Centers, in Singapore. This provision will allow the U.S. Government to detail Health and Human Services infectious disease experts to the center to work with their Asian counterparts, by providing training and research to prevent and respond to disease outbreaks and bioterror attacks, such as the avian flu and SARS. Not only will this help prevent the spread of the epidemic abroad, it will also be a vital step in protecting American citizens at home from this and other deadly viruses.

Second, H.R. 4436 addresses key personnel issues which will strengthen the Department of State's ability to manage its people and resources. I have always believed, Mr. Speaker, that personnel is policy, and how we take care of our foreign service officers abroad, many of whom operate under dangerous and difficult conditions, has great impact on how the U.S. is perceived abroad. H.R. 4436 increases the maximum post-differential and danger pay allowance that may be given to an FSO of the Department of State to 35 percent of base pay, bringing it in line with allowances offered to USAID personnel.

Other provisions will restore grievance rights to those being separated for cause and provides funding for educational expenses for dependents of the Broadcasting Board of Governors personnel stationed at the Northern Mariana Islands if the board determines that the commonwealth schools are unable to be recognized as an adequate education.

I would just point out that, earlier, we had a very good briefing with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who spoke to that very issue of the difficulty of attracting experienced State Department personnel for those overseas missions that have great risk affixed to them. She was very glad to hear that this bill would be coming to the floor, as my good friend and colleague, Mr. LANTOS, who was there at that briefing, heard as well.

Third, the bill makes discretionary the convening of an Accountability Review Board in the case of an incident involving serious injury, loss of life or significant destruction of property at or related to a U.S. Government mission in Afghanistan or Iraq. In lieu of such a board, the Secretary of State may conduct an inquiry and submit a report on the incident to the House International Relations and Senate Foreign Relations Committees.

Lastly, the bill amends section 904 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 to enable the State Department to retain medical insurance reimbursements in the year in which they are collected, strengthening the Department's management tools and ability to provide emergency medical services for its employees abroad.

In conclusion, I urge my colleagues to support this bill. It gives our diplomatic service the resources it needs in this post-9/11 environment to promote U.S. interests and values abroad and to protect American citizens right here at home.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise in support of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this simple and straightforward bill amends certain authorities of the Department of State so that the Secretary can better manage that global institution.

Many of the provisions have already passed the House in one form or another. One provision of note is the authority for the United States to become a member of the Regional Emerging Diseases Intervention Center which is being established in Singapore. This regional institution, originally designed to address the threat of SARS that was recognized at the end of 2003, now can be a focal point for addressing issues arising out of the avian flu outbreaks that we have seen earlier this year.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, to conclude, before yielding back, I do want to thank Chairman DAVIS from the Government Reform Committee for his cooperation because there were some issues of jurisdiction, and he acted in a very cooperative and collegial way to help make this legislation possible.

I would also like to thank Kristen Gilley for her fine work in working on this legislation, and to my good friend and colleague Mr. LANTOS as well.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr.

SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4436, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4436.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

#### SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING NICARAGUA

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 252) expressing the sense of Congress that the Government of the United States should actively support the aspirations of the democratic political and social forces in the Republic of Nicaragua toward an immediate and full restoration of functioning democracy in that country, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

##### H. CON. RES. 252

Whereas the United States is strongly committed to promoting democracy and the rule of law through the democratically elected government and the civil society of Nicaragua;

Whereas the Democratic Charter of the Organization of American States, of which the United States and Nicaragua are signatories, stipulates that "[t]he peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it";

Whereas after experiencing a revolution, loss of personal liberties, destruction of property, and economic instability a quarter century ago, the people of Nicaragua are committed to maintaining a democratic form of government that functions democratically and whose branches of government respect the rule of law and human rights;

Whereas in November 2001, during the last national election, approximately 90 percent of voters in Nicaragua turned out to vote, indicating a strong commitment to a free electoral process and self determination;

Whereas international observers, including representatives from the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, the Carter Center, and the Organization of American States, monitored the Nicaraguan elections of November 2001 and determined that the elections met minimum international standards and that the outcome reflected the will of the Nicaraguan people;

Whereas ex-President Arnaldo Aleman and Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) leader Daniel Ortega entered into an agreement, which is widely known throughout Nica-

ragua as "the Pact," to exploit the legislative powers of the National Assembly to undermine the Nicaraguan Constitution, the Presidency of Enrique Bolaños Geyer, and key institutions of representative democratic governance;

Whereas polls indicate that an overwhelming percentage of Nicaraguans oppose the Aleman-Ortega Pact, and tens of thousands of Nicaraguans have taken to the streets in the past year to call for an end to the Pact;

Whereas in September 2005, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States warned that the attempt by the Nicaraguan national legislature to strip President Enrique Bolaños Geyer's ministers and other senior government officials of their official immunity had created circumstances that would have made the country ungovernable and generated endless conflict;

Whereas with regard to the attempt by the National Assembly through the operation of the Aleman-Ortega Pact to undermine the privileges of the Nicaraguan executive branch, the Organization of American States urged, in the strongest possible terms, that "the parties concerned enter into a broad and constructive dialogue, free of pressures and threats" and that the parties "respect the mandate freely conferred upon President Enrique Bolaños Geyer and the other elected officials by the Nicaraguan people";

Whereas the National Assembly, in reaction to pressure from the international community, in October 2005, voted unanimously to delay until after the term of President Enrique Bolaños Geyer expires in January 2007, the enactment of these constitutional amendments by approving the Framework Law for the Stability and Governability of the Country (Framework Law);

Whereas, although the enactment and implementation of the Framework Law has reduced the political tensions in Nicaragua, the practical effect of the Pact remains largely intact as Arnaldo Aleman and Daniel Ortega continue to wield near total control over the National Assembly, the Supreme Court, the Electoral Council, and the Comptroller's Office, and the Human Rights ombudsman's office;

Whereas free, fair, transparent, and inclusive electoral processes, in conjunction with strong adherence to the constitution and democratic institutions, are the bulwark against anti-democratic forces;

Whereas presidential and legislative elections in Nicaragua are scheduled to be held in October 2006; and

Whereas the prerequisites for free, fair, transparent, and inclusive elections have not yet been met, including securing a sufficient number of credible national and international observers, completing the distribution of voter identification cards, and ensuring that all qualified and willing candidates are permitted to contest the elections: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That—*

(1) Congress—

(A) condemns the continued operation of the Aleman-Ortega Pact as detrimental to democracy in the Republic of Nicaragua, the future of democracy in Nicaragua, and the stability of the entire region;

(B) denounces the previous attempts by the National Assembly to encroach unconstitutionally upon the powers of the executive branch, undermine the governability of the country, and advance the personal ambitions of some of its current and former members;

(C) applauds the diplomatic efforts of the Organization of American States (OAS) and