playoff bracket. They won the next four games and this outstanding group of athletes earned the right to be called State Champions.

The Grizzlies have trained intensively while maintaining a standard of academic excellence throughout the season. It is my pleasure to honor their championship, and to wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

TRIBUTE TO JUDGE RONALD H. TILLS

HON. THOMAS M. REYNOLDS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 8, 2005

Mr. REYNOLDS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to honor a respected jurist, a dedicated public servant, a valued mentor and a trusted friend upon the occasion of his retirement from the New York State Court of Claims.

A native of Hamburg, New York, and a veteran of the United States Army Reserves, Judge Ronald H. Tills began a career in public service that spanned five decades when he joined the Zoning Board of Appeals in 1960. An Assistant Town Attorney and Town Justice, Ron Tills was elected to the New York State Assembly in 1968, where he served his community and his State with distinction, becoming Chairman of the Assembly's Select Committee for Revision of Corporation Law.

It was in his capacity as Member of the State Assembly that Judge Ron Tills took a chance on a young college student with little political experience to help run his re-election campaign in 1972. Joining his Assembly staff following that election, my own career in government and public service was launched, and I will be forever grateful for Ron's guidance, counsel and friendship.

Judge Tills' service to his community culminated when he was nominated by Governor George E. Pataki, and confirmed by the New York State Senate, to the New York State Court of Claims in July of 1995, where he has served as a Court of Claim Judge and Acting Supreme Court Justice for the past decade.

Mr. Speaker, Ron Tills involvement in a variety of civic and community organizations, and the awards and recognitions he has received over the years are too numerous to list. Whether it was the Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, Hamburg Volunteer Fire Company, or so many others, Ron Tills involved himself as he did in each endeavor throughout his life and career, with passion, leadership, and commitment.

One of his great loves is the largest and oldest fraternal organization in the world. As a Mason, Ron Tills has held numerous responsibilities within the Masons and the organizations within it, including Proctor of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York, Potentate of the Ismalia Shrine Temple, Director and President of the Shrine Oasis and Director of the Buffalo Court 22 of Jesters.

In addition to the Masons, gardening and travel, Ron Tills' greatest love of all is the former Elizabeth Clarkson. Ron and Betty were married on May 6, 1960, and are parents of Thomas and Suzanne and grandparents of Dale Jr. and Diane Goodridge, and Timothy and Abigail Tills.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of and in gratitude for his service, leadership and patriotism, I ask that this Honorable Body join me in honoring Judge Ronald H. Tills upon the occasion of his retirement, and wish him great health and happiness in the days and years ahead.

RECOGNIZING THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION'S COLORADO DISTRICT OFFICE AND THE LEADERSHIP OF DISTRICT DIRECTOR PATRICIA BARELA RIVERA

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 8, 2005

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize and congratulate the U.S. Small Business Administration's Colorado District Office, under the leadership of District Director Patricia Barela Rivera, for directing a record $520 million into Colorado's economy through its lending programs during 2005. The SBA approved 2,255 loan guarantees, a 20 percent increase over 2004, which is the highest number of loans ever approved in Colorado. This critical investment will help strengthen Colorado's economy and create jobs.

Many women and minority-owned businesses are the beneficiaries of these SBA loans. Of the total number of loans, 1,010 worth $214.6 million went to women and minority firms, and 188 loans worth $38.7 million went to small businesses owned and operated by veterans. Access to capital is critical in starting and maintaining a business and these loans will ensure that women, minorities and veterans will be part of a robust economy and they will be able to live the American dream.

In addition, I am also pleased at the level of outreach that the Colorado District Office has done in rural Colorado. A large portion of the loans distributed in 2005 went to small businesses in rural areas, which oftentimes are left out during good times and hurt even more when the economy takes a downturn. Every area of the state should be able to share in the success of our economy, and through the tireless efforts of the Colorado District Office staff many rural areas in the State are not being forgotten.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the steadfast leadership of SBA District Director Patricia Barela Rivera. Patricia understands that small businesses are the backbone of America's economy. She is one of the most talented public servants in Colorado who is always striving for excellence, always coming to the aid of those individuals in need, and always working to make our State a better place to live, work, and play. The SBA is lucky to have Patricia as its ambassador in Colorado. I salute her for her unswerving dedication and I know she and her staff will continue to make all of us proud.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3010, DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 17, 2005

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Chair, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 3010, the FY 2006 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill. I voted against this bill when it passed the House and the conference report before us today is even more objectionable.

The Republican leadership has proposed severe cuts to services that keep our families and communities strong. At a time when consumers are expecting to pay nearly 30 percent more for home heating, the majority has refused to include an increase for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which helps to keep our seniors and children safe during the winter.

This bill also shortchanges important health care programs. Although slightly better than the House-passed bill, this proposal cuts health professions programs by 69 percent at a time when we are struggling to provide health care access in many areas of this country. It also cuts funding for the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant and forces a 24 percent cut to block grants for State health departments. Most striking, while we ask our local public health departments to do more to prepare for a possible pandemic, this bill instead imposes an 11 percent cut on local health departments.

The conference report also cuts overall funding for the Department of Education for the first time in over 10 years. It cuts and guts programs from early childhood education through college. Our Nation's public schools will see budget cuts totaling more than $784 million, despite the promise to fully fund No Child Left Behind at the time of its enactment in 2002. Since then, NCLB has been underfunded by more than $39 billion. Our public schools and our students deserve better. This bill underfunds critical programs for the most vulnerable students, providing $217 million less for Title I Education for Disadvantaged Children program than in fiscal year 2005. In addition, Safe and Drug Free Schools will receive a cut of $87 million—a decrease of 20 percent. Several other education programs and services will see their budgets frozen, despite increased program costs, greater needs, and inflation.

Pell grants for low-income college students are frozen for the fourth straight year in a row, despite promises by the administration to increase the maximum Pell grant award. While Congress underfunds student financial aid, students and families continue to struggle to pay for a college education that is increasing faster than the rate of inflation.

Investments in health and education are important to our families, our communities, and our country. This conference report does not reflect the values of Minnesotans or Americans. I will vote to reject this conference report and urge my colleagues to do the same.