

Native American, Native Hawaiian and Native Alaskan veterans have unique needs. This legislation would expand VA's health care presence in these rural and remote communities.

Rural America has always answered the call to service. We should do everything we can to ensure that rural veterans have the same reasonable access to the high quality care available through the VA as veterans in suburban and urban areas. I urge my colleagues to support the Rural Veterans Health' Care Act of 2006.

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, June 5, 2006.

Hon. MICHAEL MICHAUD,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE MICHAUD: On behalf of the 2.7 million members of The American Legion, I would like to express our support for your legislation addressing rural veterans health care.

The American Legion understands the dire straits that many veterans who reside in rural and highly rural areas find themselves. As the Global War on Terror and the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq continue to escalate, the need for the nation's Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve service members to deploy not once, twice, but three times is becoming the rule and not the exception. The need for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to reach out to these veterans, many of them in rural communities, has reached an unprecedented scale. The time is now for VA to take responsibility to bring those veterans in and provide them the services they not only need, but also earned.

Adequate and directed outreach, rural mental health services, trained medical staff, rural health research and homeless rural veterans are all key components of your legislation that address the growing dilemma that is access to rural health care.

The American Legion believes this legislation will go a long way in addressing this crucial issue and we thank you for your continued leadership and support of America's veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

STEVE ROBERTSON,
Director,
National Legislative Commission.

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA,
Silver Spring, MD, June 2, 2006.

Hon. MIKE MICHAUD,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN MICHAUD: Vietnam Veterans of America applauds your initiative in introducing a bill—a bill that is sensible, necessary, and long overdue—that promises to significantly improve health care delivery to veterans living in rural areas. These veterans have been underserved for far too many years; your bill, when passed, can correct this oversight.

We are particularly pleased that your bill calls for an expansion of the very effective Vet Center program into rural areas; the establishment of a Rural Veterans Advisory Committee; additional rotations of medical residents to rural areas; and programs to enhance the education, training, recruitment, and retention of health care professionals in rural America.

With more than four in ten enlistees coming from rural areas, passage of your legislation will serve to send a clear message: that their needs, when they become veterans, will not be overlooked.

On behalf of VVA members and their families, I thank you for your concern about

rural veterans and your desire to ensure that they get better access to the quality health care they have earned by virtue of their military service.

Sincerely,

JOHN ROWAN,
National President.

MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART,
Springfield, VA, June 5, 2006.

Hon. Mike Michaud,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. MICHAUD: The Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), whose membership is comprised entirely of combat-wounded personnel, is pleased with your efforts to improve health care for veterans in rural areas. Health care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs should be available to all those enrolled in the system without regard to the area in which they live. For too long those veterans living in rural areas have been neglected.

MOPH thanks you for this effort and will assist you in any way possible to help enact this legislation.

Respectfully,

JAMES D. RANDLES,
National Commander.

HONORING THE AVIATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF JOE HAWKINS

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 6, 2006

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of Joseph C. Hawkins, a resident of my hometown of Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Joe recently became the first Tennessean to receive the prestigious National Aviation Maintenance Technician of the Year award, which is sponsored by the Federal Aviation Administration and the General Aviation Manufacturers Association. Recipients of this award must demonstrate exceptional generosity and a keen knowledge of professionalism.

For nearly 30 years, Joe has been an airframe and power plant technician. He currently dedicates his time as an Assistant Professor in the Aerospace Department at my alma mater, Middle Tennessee State University, where he teaches a wide variety of classes and practical labs and also serves as an advisor for students interested in careers in the field.

This is not the first time Joe has been recognized for his outstanding accomplishments in aviation. In 2006, Joe received the Professional Aviation Maintenance Association's Award of Merit for his demonstration of safety and professionalism.

Joe's achievements and service in the aviation field are exceptional. He serves as an inspiration to other Tennesseans in the department of aviation and education. Once again, I congratulate him on this prestigious award.

CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF ZACHARY CHARLES STICKNEY

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 6, 2006

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, today I am happy to congratulate LCDR and Mrs. Charles Stickney USN of Prattville, Alabama, on the birth of their new baby son. Zachary Charles Stickney was born on April 15, 2006, at 8:00 a.m., weighing 7 pounds and 11 ounces. He has been born into a loving home, where he will be raised by parents who are devoted to his well-being and bright future. His birth is a blessing.

RICHARD C. MERRYMAN

HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 6, 2006

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, owning a home is an important part of the American dream. It is more than a roof over our heads; home ownership builds economic stability and, over the long term, creates equity to finance education, business startups and retirement. People with equity in their homes not only take greater pride in them, they also become more involved in their communities.

Richard C. Merryman recently joined the nearly seventy percent of Americans who enjoy the satisfaction of owning their own home. Richard is a handicapped individual who obtained a 502 Direct loan along with a West Virginia Housing Development Fund (WVHDF) leveraged loan to build a new handicap accessible home. It was the first leveraged loan in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia.

The nationally known partnership between the WVHDF and West Virginia Rural Development (WVRD) has provided critical gap financing for many homeowners who otherwise could not qualify for a homeownership loan. WVHDF specializes in providing affordable mortgage financing for residents of West Virginia, as well as financing for developers to rehabilitate or construct affordable apartments and subdivisions. The Rural Housing Programs of West Virginia work to improve the quality of life for rural Americans by ensuring that they have access to safe, well-built, affordable homes.

Richard exemplifies the spirit and determination of those who have risen above significant adversity in order to achieve the dream of homeownership. He was previously on Social Security disability but is now employed as a greeter at the Wal-Mart in Martinsburg, WV. Richard moved into his new home in April 2006.

I applaud Richard and the men and women who work to achieve the dream of homeownership and who have built better lives and greater opportunity for all Americans.

RECOGNIZING CONGRESSMAN
JOHN LEWIS

HON. JAMES P. McGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 6, 2006

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank and praise Congressman JOHN LEWIS for visiting New Bedford, MA, this past week, to discuss his important involvement with the American Civil Rights Movement, and to remind all of us how we need to find the courage to continue the Movement.

I'd also like to thank Congressman BARNEY FRANK for inviting Congressman LEWIS to speak. The two Congressmen are friends of more than 40 years, and as Congressman FRANK states, Representative LEWIS continues to be "one of the great moral forces in this country."

Representative LEWIS, a great hero of the American Civil Rights Movement, spoke to 1400-plus students and teachers at New Bedford High School, sharing his experiences growing up in the segregated South, and his eventual involvement with nonviolent protests.

Congressman LEWIS told the students "that it was the young, like himself and many others who formed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee," who led the way in the Civil Rights Movement.

I would like to place into the RECORD the following editorial, Timely Message from John Lewis, which appeared in the June 1, 2006, edition of the New Bedford Standard-Times.

[From the New Bedford Times, June 1, 2006]

TIMELY MESSAGE FROM JOHN LEWIS

Whether it was the hand of the almighty or simply the good sense of our local congressman, Barney Frank, yesterday's visit to New Bedford by U.S. Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., one of the great heroes of the American Civil Rights Movement, could not have been timed more perfectly.

The 56-year-old Rep. Lewis, who is the son of a sharecropper born in segregated Alabama, brought a message of hope and healing to a city preparing to bury Bernadette DePina, who was shot to death in her home last week, just day's after her 23-year-old son David DePina II's arrest on charges of murdering a 29-year-old man.

Rep. Lewis didn't talk about crime or punishment or politics. He talked about growing up poor in the segregated South, about being inspired as a 15-year-old listening to the radio by the actions of the late Rosa Parks and the soaring words of a young black minister, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., to stand up for the dignity of all and "to find a way to get in the way" of those who would deny others that dignity.

And that's what he did. Arrested scores of times in nonviolent protest of discriminatory voting practices, segregated schools, lunch counters and public transportation, he was threatened, beaten, spit upon and hated by Southern whites trying to maintain the legalized segregation of the Jim Crow south. He has faced trouble, counted losses and continued his fight as what Congressman Frank—his friend for more than 40 years—calls "one of the great moral forces in this country."

"I am not bitter today, and I am not going to be bitter tomorrow," Rep. Lewis said.

And then he said something important to the community of New Bedford, which some fear has split along racial, ethnic, neighborhood and economic fault lines.

"We are one people," he said in the soaring voice of the preacher he grew up wanting to be, with the same simple conviction that powered Dr. King. "We all need each other. We all live in the same house."

He cautioned 1,400 sophomores and juniors at New Bedford High School not to grow bitter but to become involved in their own mission to make things better for all. He urged the students to register to vote and to vote when they turn 18, a privilege he marched for four decades ago.

The congressman told the students that it was the young, like himself and many others who formed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, who led the way in the Civil Rights Movement.

"And it will be the children in New Bedford who will say, 'We're going to live in peace because we are all brothers and sisters.'"

His words inspired a standing ovation in the packed high school hall. They stirred the imagination of Stephanie Houtman, 15, a sophomore. "He was talking about how they burned his back with cigarettes," Yet he did not relent. He did not stir from the segregated lunch counter.

Dominick Baptiste, 16, walked out of the auditorium with a broad smile on his face at the end of the speech. "It made me feel good to know that people can fight racism," he said. "The fact that he was able to find the courage to sit at the white table. The fact that he was able to go back again and again."

The congressman's visit reminded the city of what we all know.

What happens to a family on Ash Street or at Monte Park or the United Front or County Street happens to all of us. An unless we let our own bitterness go, unless we reach across the way to our neighbor, we will never be what we want to be, what we should be.

It ought not take a visit by a congressman from Georgia to remind us of that. Deep down, we all know it. Having the courage to do something about it is the real test.

THE BURNING OF AFGHAN
SCHOOLS

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 6, 2006

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my deep concern about reports that schools in Afghanistan continue to be destroyed. I recently met with Dr. Sima Samar, chair of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, who reported to me that since 2005, dozens of schools have been burned. Dr. Samar works courageously every day, under threat of personal attack, to ensure that the rights of Afghan citizens, including women and children, are protected. I strongly agree with her that to truly be empowered, Afghan women and girls must be educated.

I urge the U.S. State Department to take immediate action to ensure that Afghan children and women can be educated without fear of violence. This is truly vital to the future of Afghanistan. Although the lives of some women are improving, for far too many, the situation has remained the same. They continue to endure hardships including targeted violence, limited mobility, illiteracy, and a high rate of maternal mortality. By giving women access to the skills and opportunities that they need to become partners in creating Afghanistan's future, we will ensure that women will no longer

be second-class citizens. We cannot afford to wait.

HONORING THE LIFE OF AMY
BRYANT KIRKPATRICK

HON. RUBÉN HINOJOSA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 6, 2006

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute, on the anniversary of her passing, to Amy Bryant Kirkpatrick of Granbury, Texas. Mrs. Kirkpatrick passed away June 6, 2005 after a long and fierce battle with cancer at the age of 27.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick was born April 20, 1978 in Denton, Texas to parents Donald and Becky Bryant of Valley View, Texas. She was raised in Valley View and graduated from Valley View High School in 1996. Amy was the spiritual and kinetic center of her family, and was always a beam of light for her family to center around. As a devoted daughter, Amy served her parents as a shining example of caring upbringing through her awards and accolades and most importantly her character. She also served as an inspiring and loving sister to her brother Dustin Bryant. Through thick and thin, Amy always let her character and love for her family guide her through life and this outlook would lead her through struggles later on.

Amy's contagious character and spirit was a draw for many, and it is no doubt that this led to her to the destiny of meeting the love of her life. She met and later married Lance Kirkpatrick of Burleson, Texas on May 23, 1998. They shared a love that stayed true to the vows made at their wedding. Through sickness and in health, for richer and poorer, till death do them part, Lance and Amy personified these vows in the seven years of their marriage.

Answering the call of the passion in her life, Amy sought in her studies a chance to help others, particularly children. After graduating from Tarleton State University in 2000, Amy taught special education for Granbury ISD in Granbury, Texas. She chose to teach students with emotional and behavioral disorders, as it was up to her to guide these children who many had neglected. She saw in them what many others chose to look past, and that was hope. Through her sickness, Amy would only miss a day a week during her chemotherapy treatments to be away from her students. She did instill stability as well as earn the trust of these previously ignored children. During her second year of teaching, the Masonic Lodge of Granbury honored Amy as the Outstanding Teacher of Granbury ISD. In 2005, Amy was once again honored as Outstanding Teacher of the Year by Wal-Mart. The recognition of these awards truly highlights the dedication and devotion that Amy had toward disadvantaged students. She has made a long and lasting impact on many children she taught, as well as her colleagues. Beyond her awards and recognition, Amy will be remembered as a teacher who cared about her students when society was not as compassionate.

Fulfilling her life's dream, Amy gave birth to a precious daughter, Hannah Grace on December 19, 2003. As a child she was told she would never have, Hannah was truly the calm