

TROOPS TO TEACHERS
IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2007

HON. DORIS O. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2007

Ms. MATSUI. Madam Speaker, my colleague, Mr. PETRI, and I are reintroducing the Troops to Teachers Improvement Act. I am proud to bring this bipartisan effort before the House in the newly-elected 110th Congress. I first learned about the Troops to Teachers program at a California Purple Heart Veterans Day event in my district. Two different veterans who are participating in Troops to Teachers spoke with me about how the program offered them the chance to continue to contribute to our country. After serving their country in the Armed Forces, they were now able to teach in high-need school districts.

With a slogan like, "Proud to Serve Again," Troops to Teachers is a unique program that provides stipends to military retirees to obtain the necessary certification for a second career in teaching. Equally important, the program places much-needed math, science and special education teachers in the classroom. In fact, over 55 percent of Troops to Teachers participants teach in these critical areas. Right now, our country is seeing 7 percent of its teaching force leave every year, and we have a need for highly-qualified science and math teachers. Additionally, veterans who participate in the Troops to Teachers program fill another void for male and ethnic minority teachers. Qualities learned in the military including: discipline, problem solving and leadership skills make veterans ideal role models for our students. Simply put, the Troops to Teachers program has never been more important.

Since first learning about the Troops to Teachers program, I have had the pleasure of hearing many stories of how participants' lives have changed after transitioning from the military to the classroom. One of my constituents has such a story. After 21 years in the Air Force, Kelly Sullivan retired from the military, with two young children to care for. Using a \$3,000 award from Troops to Teachers, she was able to pay for graduate school classes, as well as nine required teaching certification exams. Needless to say, the award was a financial relief for her, especially as she set out to begin her second career.

Kelly is now teaching English at Hiram Johnson High School in Sacramento. She has found that her two decades in the Air Force gave her the maturity, wisdom and life experiences that enable her to motivate and encourage her students to succeed in school. These skills are especially important as gangs and increased violence are all too prevalent in her school's neighborhood. One thing is for sure, when her students need help Kelly is there—thanks to Troops to Teachers.

Kelly is a prime example of the goal of the Troops to Teachers program, which was authorized in 1993 to help members of the military obtain teaching credentials to teach in large districts with low-income schools. A variety of retired, separated, active duty and transitioning military members and veterans—including disabled veterans—are eligible to participate. Those who are interested are required to have a bachelor's or advanced degree. If applying for a vocational or technical

teaching position, candidates are required to have at least 6 years of experience in the field. The program has successfully recruited and placed almost 10,000 veterans in school districts since it was created. In my home state of California, 571 veterans are currently participating in the program.

Unfortunately, a small change under the No Child Left Behind Act, NCLB, of 2001 greatly affected where veterans could fulfill their teaching obligation. In some areas of the country, retiring military and veterans interested in the program now have to drive 50 to 100 miles to find an eligible school. This has resulted in a 20–30 percent drop-off in veteran participation, which has seriously hindered this productive and necessary program.

The bill that my esteemed colleague Mr. PETRI and I are reintroducing today would fix this error. It would allow participants to fulfill their teaching obligation at any school considered high-need under NCLB, meaning that the school receives Title I funding. Prior to the NCLB change, participants were able to fulfill their teaching obligation in any school within my district in Sacramento, as they all receive Title I funding. However, under the more restrictive rule, only 211 of the 350 schools in my district are eligible. Currently, 61 percent of the high schools in my district are not eligible.

I continue to believe in this program and want to see disabled and retiring military offered a second chance at serving our country. Just last week, the Troops to Teachers program had a conference in Washington, DC. Once again, we heard stories of participants' dedication to serving our country and the sense of fulfillment they receive from educating future generations. Additionally, the program brings important math, science, and foreign language expertise to our classroom and fills a critical need among our educators. These characteristics make Troops to Teachers an excellent source of highly-qualified educators.

Mr. PETRI and I are committed to fulfilling the intent of this program, and we introduce this bill so that more veterans, like my constituent Kelly, will continue to be able to serve our country—whether in the military or in the classroom. I look forward to swiftly passing this bipartisan bill in the 110th Congress and urge my colleagues to continue to work to support the Troops to Teachers program.

DISDAIN OF AIR PASSENGER
DELAYS

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2007

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, recently, I received an offer from American Express entitled, Travel Delay Protection. That's right for \$9.95 per person per trip you can get an insurance plan to safeguard against flight delays and their associated hassles and costs. Has American aviation really been brought to this level Madam Speaker? Like Lloyds of London of old responding to sinking ships, American Express simply sees a modern opportunity in a far too sinking industry.

We have been told that the recent debacle in Texas in which passengers were held hostage for almost a day, was an anomaly. We

are told that to legislatively address the basic rights of air passengers is an overreaction.

Well, Madam Speaker, if American Express, no dummy of a company, sees profit in the misfortunes of America's airline industry, I think Congress at least should listen to the collective voice of countless aggrieved passengers. Especially, Congress should hear passengers who suffer regularly from flight delays and disruptions, but because they are not caught up in the major anomaly of the season, they don't get to air their disdain on the national news. They just suffer.

RECOGNIZING THE CAREER AND
RETIREMENT OF MARGARET
BLACKSHERE, PRESIDENT OF
THE ILLINOIS AFL/CIO

HON. JERRY F. COSTELLO

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2007

Mr. COSTELLO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the career and retirement of Margaret Blackshere, President of the Illinois AFL/CIO.

Margaret Blackshere, who has been an effective leader and advocate at all levels of organized labor, began her career as a kindergarten teacher in Madison, Illinois in the 1960's. Her first involvement in organized labor began with the efforts of her district's teachers to secure both just compensation and more of a voice in the decisions that directly influenced the educational processes in their district.

From that early involvement, Ms. Blackshere would become president of her local union and then Statewide Vice President of the Illinois Federation of Teachers. She served as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Illinois AFL/CIO before winning election as the first woman President of that organization in 2000, the position from which she is now retiring.

As president of the Illinois AFL/CIO, with 1,500 local affiliates and over 1 million members, Margaret Blackshere has had significant influence in the direction of organized labor, not only at the state and national level, but internationally as well. As president, Ms. Blackshere has been responsible for maintaining unity within the Illinois AFL/CIO even though there have been signs of discord in other locations during recent years.

In addition to her tireless work for her labor organizations, Ms. Blackshere has been involved in a number of civic and political organizations as well. These organizations include the Alliance for Retired Americans Labor-Management Cooperation Council, United Way of Illinois, Voices for Illinois Children, Workers Compensation Advisory Board, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the American Red Cross of Greater Chicago. She has also been a delegate to the Democratic National Convention and has been a member of the Democratic National Committee.

While Ms. Blackshere is retiring from her position as President of the Illinois AFL/CIO, she has indicated that she will continue to consult, assist and volunteer her time for the causes that have been important to her. For those in organized labor and for everyone who appreciates the positive impact that the labor movement has had in our overall quality of

life, Margaret Blackshere has been a true champion.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in an expression of appreciation to Margaret Blackshere for her years of dedicated service to the working men and women in Illinois and our nation and to wish her the very best in the future.

HONORING THE USA TAP DANCE TEAM ON THEIR SUCCESS AT THE WORLD TAP DANCE CHAMPIONSHIPS

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2007

Ms. DeLAURO. Madam Speaker, it is with the greatest pride that I rise today to extend my sincere congratulations and very best wishes to the USA Tap Dance Team, based out of the Greater New Haven area, as they celebrate their tremendous success at the 2007 World Tap Dance Championships recently held in Reisa, Germany. In all, 51 dancers ranging in age from 10 to 20 years old made the trip and returned with a total of 11 medals! Our communities certainly have cause for celebration with the wonderful accomplishments of these young people.

Participating in three divisions, the USA Tap Dance Team has worked very hard over the last several months to be able to compete in this year's competitions. Coming together from across Connecticut and even New York, the dancers practiced for countless hours for solo, duo, small group, and formation events. The commitment these young people have demonstrated is truly inspiring. They have worked so hard to master the required high-level skills and the necessary symmetry of their movements.

I had the distinct honor of joining them for a very special evening as they prepared to leave for Germany and, as a former tap dancer myself, I was truly impressed with the level of dedication, passion, and talent of the team. It was this combination of drive and spirit that led to the team to come home with three gold medals, seven silver medals, one bronze medal, and several other finishing places—placing and medaling in each of three divisions—a remarkable showing!

I am also pleased to recognize the incomparable Gloria Jean Cuming for her outstanding leadership and instruction as well as the six choreographers who worked with the dancers and traveled to Germany with them. Their work with individuals and groups helped to secure this outstanding triumph. In addition, I would also extend a note of thanks and appreciation to the parents and volunteers whose support has enabled the dancers to practice and travel for their competitions. Without their efforts, the success of the USA Tap Dance Team would not be possible.

I am thrilled to stand today to join our local communities in extending my sincere congratulations to the USA Tap Dance Team on their great success at the 2007 World Tap Dance Championships. You have all made us proud!

A TRIBUTE TO MR. CARLOS LEZAMA—PRESIDENT EMERITUS OF THE WEST INDIAN AMERICAN DAY CARNIVAL ASSOCIATION

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2007

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life and legacy of Carlos Lezama, West Indian community leader who left this world at the age of 83 years and to enter into the RECORD an article in the Daily News by Bill Hutchinson entitled "West Indian Carnival Founder Carlos Lezama Dies at 83."

Carlos Lezama was born in Trinidad and spent his formative years on the island. He played the Cello and was nicknamed "Celloman" a name and position he enjoyed while working on a passenger ship before migrating to the USA in the early fifties. He joined the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority, in the mid-sixties. At NYTA he moved up steadily for the next twenty years until he became a Machinist. In 1989, he retired from that Agency.

Lezama long ago recognized the cultural significance of Carnival, since he played Mas' in Trinidad. When he came to New York he naturally gravitated towards the Carnival which took place in Harlem. In the mid-nineteen sixties, he directed his efforts to firmly establish Carnival in Brooklyn with his friend Rufus Goring, who brought the celebration to Brooklyn.

Under the stewardship of Lezama, the Brooklyn Caribbean Carnival grew from a five-block affair to the status of the largest outdoor parade in the United States. It attracts in excess of three million people on Eastern Parkway every year on the first Monday in September. Over the years the West Indian American Day Carnival Association has grown to a full-fledged community service organization and provides scholarships and a host of annual calendar events of cultural and educational events.

Lezama has been officially recognized and honored by scores of organizations, four New York State Governors (Govs. Rockefeller, Carey, Cuomo, and Pataki), and numerous awards from Mayors John Lindsay, Abe Beame, Ed Koch, David Dinkins and Rudy Giuliani for his efforts in promoting the rich culture of Caribbean people and thus enriching the cultural life of New York City. In 2001, the Carnival route—Eastern Parkway was renamed Carlos Lezama Parkway.

Even though Carlos Lezama passed away on January 22, 2007, his contributions to the diversity of the United States of America will continue to resonate through the Annual Brooklyn Carnival held each Labor Day Monday.

[From the New York Daily News]

WEST INDIAN CARNIVAL FOUNDER CARLOS LEZAMA DIES AT 83

(By Bill Hutchinson)

Carlos Lezama, who transformed the West Indian American Day Carnival from a five-block affair into one of the city's biggest events, died yesterday. He was 83.

Lezama, a retired machinist for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, died at Kings County Hospital after a brief illness.

"Throughout our lives, my siblings, as well as my mother, have been privileged to share

my father with the millions who are part of the carnival family," said Lezama's daughter, Yolanda Lezama-Clark.

"I am grateful that he has left an impressive legacy of which we all as Caribbean people can be proud," added Lezama-Clark, president of the West Indian American Day Carnival Association.

Born in Trinidad, Lezama grew up playing the steel pan and the cello, garnering the nickname "Celloman" while working on a cruise ship.

When he immigrated to America, he gravitated to the annual carnival event in Harlem. In the mid-1960s, he and a friend, Rufus Goring, brought the celebration to Brooklyn, and in 1967 he was elected the first president of the carnival association.

"He was a major force with respect to the West Indian Day parade, which now has millions of people," former Mayor Ed Koch said of Lezama yesterday. "It's really not a parade. It's a mass of people, having a great time together."

Former Mayor David Dinkins said it was Lezama's "vision and foresight" that turned the parade into a city cultural icon.

"I thought he was terrific," Dinkins said. "He had a drive, he was determined that the parade was going to go off and he didn't particularly care about the politics of it. I thought he did a great job."

Besides his daughter, Lezama is survived by his son, Kenwyn; four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

WATER QUALITY FINANCING ACT OF 2007

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2007

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, in 1972, the passage of the Clean Water Act secured the nation's commitment to rescuing our waters and expelling the pollutants that were killing our water supply and the wildlife that depended on it. Today, Mr. YOUNG, former Chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment, Congresswoman ELLEN TAUSCHER, and I introduce bipartisan legislation that definitively renews our commitment to these waters and authorizes increased funding for wastewater infrastructure through a reauthorization of the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund program.

The Water Quality Financing Act of 2007 authorizes \$20 billion in Federal grants over five years to capitalize Clean Water State Revolving Funds. These funds provide low interest loans to communities for wastewater infrastructure. This bill also provides additional subsidies, including principal forgiveness and negative interest loans for communities that meet a state's affordability criteria, for individual ratepayers that will experience significant hardship from potential rate increases, and for the construction and implementation of innovative or alternative processes, materials, or technologies to meet the nation's wastewater treatment needs. It encourages long-term asset management planning and financing that will ensure sustainable systems and the potential to reduce overall capital and operation and maintenance costs and it promotes communities to consider alternative and innovative processes, materials, and technologies (including "green infrastructure") that