

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 211, THE
CALLING FOR 211 ACT OF 2007

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Ms. ESHOO. Madam Speaker, I'm very proud to introduce the Calling for 211 Act of 2007, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Energy and Commerce Committee to move this legislation through Committee and bring it to the House floor. I have cosponsored this bill in previous Congresses with former Rep. Mike Bilirakis, and I'm confident that we now have the momentum to pass this legislation and send it to the President.

Every hour of every day, someone in the United States needs essential services for themselves or someone close to them. These services can range from finding an after-school program for a child, to securing care for an aging parent, to finding drug or alcohol counseling. Faced with a myriad of agencies and help lines, many people end up going without services they need just because they don't know where to begin.

When someone calls 2-1-1, an information and referral specialist assesses the caller's needs and determines which service provider is best equipped to handle their problem or crisis. These specialists are also trained to determine whether a caller may be eligible for other programs. 2-1-1 service providers maintain comprehensive databases of resources, including federal, state, and local government agencies, community-based organizations, and private non-profits.

In 2000, the FCC designated 2-1-1 for community information and referral purposes. Today, 2-1-1 reaches 193 million Americans—about 69 percent of the U.S. population—with call centers operational in 41 states and the District of Columbia. However, inadequate funding prevents universal access to 2-1-1 service in every state. 2-1-1 service is currently available statewide in only 17 states. The goal of the Calling for 211 Act of 2007 is to ensure that all Americans have access to quality community information and referral services through 2-1-1 wherever they live.

The largest barriers for communities seeking to implement 2-1-1 are funding and awareness. In many states, limited resources have slowed the process of connecting communities with this vital service. Current funding where 2-1-1 is operational comes from diverse sources including non-profits, state governments, foundations, and businesses.

The Calling for 211 Act is strongly supported by the United Way and builds on existing efforts to make it easier to connect people with important community services and volunteer opportunities. The legislation provides federal matching grants to enable much-needed changes to the way people connect to community social services, including:

Providing the infrastructure to connect individuals with precise information and social services that address their needs;

Empowering the nation to better respond to large-scale emergencies and homeland security needs by relieving pressure on overwhelmed 9-1-1 call centers. During the Hurricane Katrina disaster, 2-1-1 served as a cru-

cial backup in areas where 9-1-1 centers went down;

Providing aggregated data from 2-1-1 systems nationwide to better assess the needs of our communities.

I believe the 2-1-1 system has great potential; this legislation will establish a federal partnership with states and local communities to give more Americans access to 2-1-1 services. By augmenting existing funding from state and local governments, nonprofits, and the business community, we can ensure that 2-1-1 can finally be a truly national system. A small investment at the national level would pay immediate dividends in terms of faster, more efficient responses to non-emergency but still critical situations.

In a crisis no one has time to flip through their phonebook. When an urgent medical or safety issue arises, we dial 9-1-1 knowing we can get help anywhere and at anytime. We should expect the same when it comes to tracking down important social services as well.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and help to implement this critical safety net for all Americans.

CONGRESSIONAL INTEGRITY AND
PENSION FORFEITURE ACT, H.R. 14

HON. MARK STEVEN KIRK

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the Congressional Integrity and Pension Forfeiture Act, H.R. 14, which would deny Members of Congress their pension should they be convicted of a felony. I feel strongly that taxpayers should not be responsible for funding the pension of one of us if we have broken the law, broken the public's trust, and been convicted of a felony.

I introduced the same bill in the 109th Congress and a portion of it was included in the Lobbying Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, H.R. 4975. Unfortunately, this bill was never considered by the Senate. So I am reintroducing it today.

I based my bill almost exclusively after Congressman Randy Tate's bill from the 104th Congress, H.R. 4011. This bill, with 74 cosponsors, passed the House of Representatives on September 26, 1996 by a vote of 391-32 and 1 Present. It was never considered by the Senate.

The very first version of this bill was introduced by my predecessor, Congressman John Edward Porter, in 1990 during the 101st Congress. Congressman Porter had successfully passed a similar bill in the Illinois General Assembly prior to coming to the U.S. Congress. In the mid-1970s, two Members of the Illinois General Assembly were convicted of felonies, resigned, but were still allowed to receive their state pension. State Representative John Porter did not think that was right. Luckily, his bill passed the Illinois General Assembly and reform began.

An elected official should not be permitted to draw a publicly funded pension after violating the very law he or she took an oath to uphold. We should be held to a higher standard than others. We swore to uphold the constitution and if we fail to do that, we should not

receive anything back from the public. A breach of law by a Member of Congress is a very serious offense that should have very serious consequences.

A TRIBUTE TO DALE DEMERS

HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dale E. Demers on the occasion of his retirement from the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office at Togus, Maine after more than 30 years of dedicated service. Dale will be greatly missed, and I join his many friends, co-workers and the veterans he served in wishing him the best of luck in the next phase of his life.

Dale's service to our country began in 1968, when he joined the U.S. Air Force. He began his VA career at the Togus Regional office in 1972 as a GS-1 Clerk. Dale has held several positions at Togus including Adjudicator, Supervisory Adjudicator, Assistant Service Center Manager, Service Center Manager, Assistant Center Director for Regional Office Activities, and most recently as the Director for the Regional Office.

While working full time at Togus, Dale went back to school and in 1977 received a bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Maine.

During Dale's career, he has been involved in many VBA initiatives. He was instrumental in Togus being chosen as a resource center site. The Togus Resource Center has been a huge success and has exceeded its goal every month since its inception. Dale was also extremely involved in the development of the current Claims Processing Improvement (CPI) Initiative, which has assisted VBA national in reducing both the duration of the response and backlog of claims processing.

Dale will be missed for his dedication and for his compassion by the veterans of Maine. I am pleased to join his colleagues, his family, and his friends in congratulating Dale on this milestone. I wish him a rewarding and enjoyable retirement.

REINTRODUCTION OF
LEGISLATION

HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, I am pleased on this first day of the 110th Congress to introduce several pieces of legislation that I have been pursuing over the years, and for which I will continue to advocate these next 2 years.

Ultrasound technology provides us with a fascinating "womb with a view," allowing doctors to better treat their pregnant patients. But many underprivileged pregnant women cannot afford this important option. These women desperately need access to these free services to safeguard their health and prenatal well-being. That's why I am reintroducing the "Informed Choice Act," which authorizes the Secretary of Health and Human Services to

make grants to community-based, non-profit health clinics that do not charge for their services, for the purchase of ultrasound equipment. The centers that receive these grants will be better able to offer free examinations—under medical supervision—to women who might otherwise have no access to such critical care.

I respect our code of law and our society founded on religious freedom for all Americans. I believe the Ten Commandments are a concise set of values that represent the historic foundation of our nation's laws and our common view of what is right and wrong. Stories of murder, rape, drug abuse, and school violence dominate the media and reveal our society's need to be reminded of our moral compass. That is why I am reintroducing my legislation to have the Ten Commandments prominently posted in the Capitol building as a symbolic reminder of our heritage and the values we aspire to govern by.

I am reintroducing my Right to Carry Reciprocity bill that would allow for a person to carry in all 50 states if he possesses a valid permit in his home state. I believe that a person's right to self-defense should not be limited to within a state line. Today, 46 states have laws permitting concealed carry of firearms, and 38 states, accounting for two-thirds of the U.S. population, have Right to Carry laws, which dramatically reduces their incidence of violent crimes. In fact, the FBI statistics show 9 of the 10 states with the lowest violent crime rates are RTC states. It is important to note this bill would not create a federal licensing system, but merely requires states to recognize each others' carry permits, just as they recognize drivers' licenses and carry permits held by armored car guards. This bill has enjoyed bipartisan support in the past with 102 cosponsors, and I look forward to again working with my esteemed colleagues for its passage in the 110th Congress.

I am also reintroducing two bills pushing further reforms to the United Nations. On March 15, 2006, the U.N. replaced the discredited Human Rights Commission with a new Human Rights Council. Unfortunately, the new Council looks set to fail just as miserably as its predecessor. While making superficial structural changes, no reforms were implemented. The new elected membership includes such human rights violators as China, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, and Russia. My legislation would require the Secretary of State to withhold from the U.S. contribution to our U.N. dues an amount equal to the U.S. percentage of the cost of the Council (approximately \$500,000 a year). The U.S. should not support the U.N. Human Rights Council until it upholds the ideals of the U.N. Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and its membership is made up of free and democratic nations.

My other U.N. reform legislation deals with financial accounting for the renovation of the United Nations building in New York. There have been numerous reports of wasteful spending in this project, and my legislation would prevent U.S. federal funds from being used for this endeavor unless the President submits a report to Congress affirming the United Nations is abiding by internationally recognized best practices in contracting and resource management.

I am excited to again introduce legislation to help all American savers. My legislation, the

Simple Savings Tax Relief Act of 2007, simply eliminates the taxation of interest earned in savings accounts, such as passbook savings accounts or bank certificates of deposit. I think at least some of this interest should be tax-free, as we have been working towards other forms of non-earned income. This legislation would end a punitive tax, especially assist low and middle-income earners, and ultimately contribute toward the goal of encouraging individual responsibility and taking charge of one's own financial destiny.

Because I believe that health care access for all begins with tax parity, I am pleased to again sponsor the Health Care Tax Deduction Act of 2007. This would allow deductions for amounts paid for health insurance premiums and unreimbursed prescription drugs. This would provide much needed relief to individuals struggling with the high cost of health insurance and prescription drugs through a tax deduction, and tax parity with those of us who have employer-provided tax-deductible health insurance. Expansively, this benefit extends to all IRS-defined health insurance premiums such as an HMO, PPO, a traditional indemnity plan, a new HSA, and also long-term care premiums. Right now, under the current tax code, in order to claim health care expenses individuals must file an itemized tax return. My bill would simplify and extend this tax preference for all filers.

Because Members of Congress should put our money where our mouths are, I am pleased to reoffer my Deficit Accountability Act of 2007. It would prevent any automatic pay adjustment for Members of Congress in the year following a fiscal year in which there is a Federal budget deficit. It is needed to hold Members accountable for the Federal budget, and any resulting deficits.

My last piece of legislation is one of inspiration, the Museum of Ideas Act of 2007. It would create a commission to develop a plan for establishing a Museum of Ideas. In our Nation's Capital, we are enriched with museums exhibiting arts, natural sciences, modes of transportation, musical instruments, tools of industry and production, live plants and live animals, and other such tangible artifacts of our universe, we lack a museum of the conceptual, of thoughts, concepts, and philosophies throughout the history of the world.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on all these important pieces of business for the Nation.

IN CELEBRATION OF ERMA CRAVEIRO TROWE'S 90TH BIRTH- DAY

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 90th birthday of Ms. Erma Craveiro Trowe, a wonderful friend and loving community member.

Erma's life story is quite fascinating. She was delivered by her grandmother on January 8, 1918 in Lanare, California. She was a graduate of Caruthers High School and California State University Fresno, formerly known as Fresno State College. Upon the completion of her studies, she pursued a successful career

as a teacher at Madison Grammar School, Ahwahnee Middle School and St. Anthony's School in Fresno, California.

On February 21, 1938 Erma married Joe Craveiro. Their home was in Fresno's Kearney Park neighborhood, where they raised their four children: Audrey, Jerry, Bob and Thomas. They also operated a dairy and grew alfalfa, cotton and sugar beets.

Aside from her commitments to her family, career and the ranch, Erma has a lifelong involvement in various community activities. She is a member of the Fig Garden Women's Club, served as a Cub Scout Mother, and volunteered on the Parent Teacher's Association (PTA). Erma was also instrumental in the development of the Houghton-Kearney Elementary School.

Further, Erma has been a very dear friend to the Costa family. She was my belated mother's best friend and actually drove her to the hospital at the time of my birth.

Erma's life has been an exceptional role model for all women. She attained a higher education degree, had a career in an important field, is a person who has demonstrated endless devotion to her family and has cared deeply about the welfare of her community. It is for these reasons that I join Erma Craveiro Trowe's family and friends in wishing her a blessed 90th birthday and continued health and happiness in the years to come.

PRESIDENT'S SURGE AND ACCELERATE POLICY

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, President Bush's war in Iraq has now gone longer than America's involvement in World War II. Now we learn President Bush intends to escalate the number of American troops in Iraq. The great question across the land today is: is more of the same, the answer? Will more of the same stabilize Iraq, or for that matter the Middle East?

In all this long war in Iraq, we cannot help but wonder, what if?

What if we had not gone to war?

What if we had listened to that very important and vocal minority who stood against the war when the President lead us down that misbegotten road? Oh yes, I agree we are where we are today and we need to get out of this mess together. I have been patient since my "no" vote on this war four years ago and my "yes" vote almost 17 years ago for the first Gulf War.

Of course, there are others who are also asking what if. They are the family and friends of the young men and women who served their country. They are the loved ones of those who have not been lucky enough to make it home. They are those who sacrificed marriage, children, jobs, all in the name of a war many now casually say was a mistake.

They are those, like my son-in-law, who sacrificed seeing the birth of his and my daughter's first child.

These moments are painful for families across the country as we recently celebrated the holiday season. These moments make us want to dwell in the hope of the question, what if?