

Jackets kept their spirits up by singing their anthem, much to the joy of their loyal fans who heard “Don’t Stop Believing” resonating from the dugout.

Lady Jacket Amber Anderson was awarded the MVP award of the State tournament; was named the Texas High School Softball Player of the Year and was one of two Lady Jacket players, along with Alexis Joseph, named Texas Girls Coaches Association all State player of the year. Coach Newsom was named Texas Girls Coaches Association Coach of the Year 2008.

All graduating seniors on the Lady Jackets team are planning to continue their involvement in organized softball at the collegiate level. Madam Speaker, I again extend my congratulations to the players and coaches of the Lady Jackets and insert the Lady Jackets championship roster into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

2008 ALVIN LADY JACKETS

Jessica Savage, Amber Anderson, Vanessa Eng, Alexis Joseph, Tiffany Denham, Britni Wells, Kelsey Nichols, Megan Potts, Natalie Farias, Kelsi Kettler.

Megan Knippa, Meghan Gomez, Megan Garza, Amber Brooks, Adela Gomez, Maci Meyer, Nicole Powers, Lauren Denny, Alicia Smith.

Head Coach: Carla Newsom; varsity assistant: Kelly Bembry; assistant coaches: Jennifer Dominguez, Paula Tafelski; trainer: Eric Nuncio; manager: Brady Hudson.

Athletic Director: Mike Bass; Alvin High School Principal: Kevon Wells; Superintendent: Dr. Robby McGowen.

INTRODUCTION OF THE 21ST CENTURY COMMUNICATIONS AND VIDEO ACCESSIBILITY ACT

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mr. MARKEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, along with my colleague Representative HEATHER WILSON (R-NM). Madam Speaker, telecommunications technologies have a proven ability to empower individuals with the necessary tools of the information age. These technological tools can animate the personal use of communications for work or enjoyment, but also impact health care delivery, educational opportunities, the prospects for employment, and job creation. The goal of the legislation is to establish new safeguards for disability access to ensure that people with disabilities are not left behind as technology changes and the United States migrates to the next generation of Internet-based and digital communication technologies.

As the story in today's Washington Post business section makes clear, the practical effect and use of many innovative services and high tech equipment in the marketplace can be diminished or eliminated for individuals with disabilities if accessibility isn't built-in, or factored into the design, of the product or service. This keeps the promise of the information age as just that—a promise. And it often means that to obtain accessible equipment, individuals with disabilities must pay significantly, and in many cases needlessly, more than if standards and accessibility were built in

or adopted earlier in the design process. The provisions of this bill will help to ensure that such accessibility is factored in and manufactured into products and services as a matter of course, which also will have the effect of reducing costs to consumers who rely on such services and products.

In summary, here is what the bill we are introducing today aims to do. First, Section 102 of the bill extends the Federal law that currently requires hearing aid compatibility on newly-manufactured and imported telephones, to comparable equipment used to provide IP-enabled communication service. The purpose of this section is to make sure that people with hearing loss have access to telephone devices used with advanced technologies, including cell phones or any other handsets used for Internet-based voice communications. (This section is not intended to extend to headsets or headphones used with computers.)

Section 103 of the bill, addressing relay services, clarifies that telecommunications relay services (TRS) are intended to ensure that people who have hearing or speech disabilities can use relay services to engage in functionally equivalent telephone communication with all other people, not just people without a hearing or speech disability. It revises Section 225 of the Communications Act of 1934, which has been interpreted at times (by the FCC) to authorize only relay services between people with disabilities and people without disabilities. This section also expands the relay service obligation to contribute to the Telecommunications Relay Services Fund to all providers of IP-enabled communication services that provide voice communication.

Sec. 104 of the legislation, designed to address access to Internet-based services and equipment, builds upon authority contained in Section 255 of the Communications Act of 1934, which generally requires telecommunications service providers, as well as interconnected VoIP providers and manufacturers, to make their services and equipment accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. This section creates new safeguards for Internet-based communications technologies (equipment, services and networks) to be accessible by people with disabilities, unless doing so would result in an undue burden. Where an undue burden would result, manufacturers and providers must make their equipment and services compatible with specialized equipment and services typically used by people with disabilities. (The term “undue burden” has the same meaning given it in the Americans with Disabilities Act.)

In addition, this section also contains measures to improve the accountability and enforcement of disability safeguards under Section 255 and the new Section 255A, including directives for new FCC complaint procedures, reporting obligations for industry and the FCC, the creation of a clearinghouse of information on accessible products and services by the U.S. Access Board and National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), and directives for enhanced outreach and education by the FCC and NTIA.

Sec. 104 also clarifies that the transmission and receipt of text messages sent by radio to and from mobile wireless devices are telecommunications services, and therefore must comply with the accessibility obligations under Section 255 and the new accountability measures under Section 255B.

The bill also contains a modest section on universal service. This provision makes consumers with disabilities—as a distinct group—eligible to receive universal service support through two specific measures. First, it grants the FCC authority to designate broadband services needed for “phone communication” by people with disabilities as services eligible to receive support under the existing Lifeline and Linkup universal service programs. For example, this would include deaf individuals who are otherwise eligible for Lifeline and Linkup support, but who rely on Internet-based video relay services or point-to-point video for their telephone communications. Second, it grants authority to the FCC to designate programs that distribute specialized equipment used to make telecommunications and Internet-enabled communication services accessible to individuals who are deaf-blind, as eligible for universal service support. Such support, however, is capped at \$10 million per year.

Section 106 of the bill contains a specific requirement for real-time text support, to ensure that people with disabilities, especially individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing or who have a speech disability, are able to communicate with others via text in an IP environment with the same reliability and interoperability as they receive via the public telephone network when using TTYS. A primary goal of this section is to ensure that individuals who rely on text to communicate have equal access to emergency services during and after the migration to a national IP-enabled emergency network.

Section 201 of the legislation directs the FCC to conduct three inquiries within 6 months of passage of the Act, and to report to Congress on the results of such inquiries within 1 year: (1) to identify formats and software needed to transmit, receive and display closed captioning and video programming provided via Internet-enabled services and digital wireless services, including ways to transmit televised emergency information that is accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired; and (2) to identify ways to make user interfaces (controls—e.g., turning these devices on and off, controlling volume and select programming) on television and other video programming devices—including the receipt, display, navigation and selection of programming—accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired, and (3) to identify ways to make video programming guides and menus (typically on-screen) accessible in real-time to people who cannot read those guides or menus.

Section 202 expands the scope of devices that must display closed captions under the Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990 from the present requirement of television sets with screens that are 13 inches or larger, to all video devices that receive or display video programming transmitted simultaneously with sound, including those that can receive or display programming carried over the Internet. The section also requires these devices to be able to transmit and deliver video descriptions. Video description is the provision of verbal descriptions of the on-screen visual elements of a show provided during natural pauses in dialogue.

The next section of the bill addresses video description and closed captioning. Section 203 reinstates the FCC's modest regulations on

video description. Those rules, originally promulgated in 2001, were struck down by a U.S. Court of Appeals for lack of FCC authority. This section also authorizes the FCC to promulgate additional rules to (1) ensure that video description services can be transmitted and provided over digital TV technologies, (2) require non-visual access to on-screen emergency warnings and similar televised information and (3) increase the amount of video description required. Finally, this section adds a definition for video programming to include programming distributed over the Internet to make clear that the existing closed captioning obligations (and future video description obligations) contained in Section 713 apply to video programming that is distributed or re-distributed over the Internet.

This section is also intended to ensure the continued accessibility of video programming to Americans with disabilities, as this programming migrates to the Internet. It further tasks the FCC to create captioning rules for three types of programming: (1) pre-produced programming that was previously captioned for television viewing, (2) live video programming, and (3) programming (first published or exhibited after the effective date of the FCC's regulations) provided by or generally considered to be comparable to programming provided by multichannel programming distributors.

Section 204 requires devices used to receive or display video programming, including devices used to receive and display Internet-based video programming, to be accessible by people with disabilities so that such individuals are able to access all functions of such devices (such as turning these devices on and off, controlling volume and select programming). The section contains requirements for (1) audio output where on-screen text menus are used to control video programming functions, and (2) a conspicuous means of accessing closed captioning and video description, including a button on remote controls and first level access to these accessibility features when made available through on-screen menus. The final section of the legislation requires multichannel video programming distributors to make their navigational programming guides accessible to people who cannot read the visual display, so that these individuals can make program selections.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to working with all of my House colleagues on this important legislative initiative in the coming weeks.

**HONORING PAMELA SONNENMOSER**

**HON. SAM GRAVES**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, June 19, 2008*

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Pamela Sonnenmoser of Northwest Missouri. Pamela is active in the community through work and in her spare time and she has been chosen to receive the YWCA Women of Excellence Award for Emerging Leader.

Pamela Sonnenmoser is a multi-talented individual as a floral designer, artist, journalist, and public speaker. She is also reaching out with Christian love and the desire to enrich the lives of others. Whether through daily inspira-

tional radio messages on our St. Joseph Christian radio or by speaking at retreats or seminars, she focuses on spiritual and/or personal and professional development of women. As a Certified Personality Trainer, Pamela helps women improve relationships with family, friends and coworkers and find their niche in the workplace by learning and developing the strengths of their temperament. Pamela is a contributing author to three books in the Christian non-fiction genre.

Her talents to train and guide others have been further recognized by her appointment to the training faculty of the Christian Leaders Authors and Speakers Services (CLASS). Her volunteer efforts include being a staff member at God's Mountain Youth Camp, speaking for church groups at no cost, organizing teen groups to feed the hungry of the inner city, and teaching creative writing workshops on poetry at the Atchison Public Library for home school groups.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in recognizing Pamela Sonnenmoser. She has made an amazing impact on countless individuals in her community. I am honored to represent her in the United States Congress.

**STATEMENT CONCERNING THE VOTE ON HOUSE AMENDMENTS TO THE SENATE-PASSED VERSION OF H.R. 2642, THE SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL**

**HON. BRAD SHERMAN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, June 19, 2008*

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I voted for a provision that would provide funds for Iraq and Afghanistan when, under the rules governing the legislation, that funding would be tied with a specific mandate for an orderly redeployment of troops from Iraq.

Today, June 19th, I voted against providing funds for the conduct of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan when such funding was not linked to such a mandate.

**HONORING THE MEMORY OF NORTH CAROLINA STATE TROOPER DAVID SHAWN BLANTON, JR.**

**HON. HEATH SHULER**

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, June 19, 2008*

Mr. SHULER. Madam Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to honor the memory of North Carolina State Trooper David Shawn Blanton, Jr. Trooper Blanton was a 2-year veteran of the North Carolina State Patrol and a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

While performing a traffic stop in Canton, NC, on the evening of June 17th, 2008, Trooper Blanton was shot twice and killed in the line of duty. He was 24 years old.

Trooper Blanton gave the ultimate sacrifice to serve and protect our community. He showed true courage through his determination to uphold the law and keep our highways safe. He leaves behind his wife and one child.

I offer my sincere condolences to them and the rest of his family and friends. They are in my thoughts and prayers.

I would also like to offer my gratitude to the law enforcement officers of the Haywood County Sheriffs Office and the Canton Police Department who risked their lives to apprehend the man who shot Trooper Blanton and bring him to justice.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in expressing remorse at the passing of Trooper David Shawn Blanton, Jr. Trooper Blanton's life was an example of service for all of us to follow. I am grateful to his fellow State Troopers and all of North Carolina's law enforcement community for their dedication to keeping our communities safe every day.

**COMMEMORATING JUNETEENTH**

**HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, June 19, 2008*

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate and recognize Juneteenth as a pivotal moment in our nation's history when the last American slaves learned of their freedom and the legal practice of slavery in the United States officially ended.

On June 19, 1865, Union General Gordon Granger arrived with over 2,000 troops on Galveston Island to deliver the news of freedom and enforce the two-year-old Emancipation Proclamation. The news came in the aftermath of the deadliest war in American history and a nation fractured by loss and resentment. However, in the midst of social and political turmoil, a new opportunity for all people to share the quintessential American experience of freedom emerged. 90 years after gaining independence, our young nation took a crucial step toward finally ensuring that the value of freedom was not simply rhetorical, but a right to be given to all Americans.

Sadly, the legal abolishment of slavery has not guaranteed the legal abolishment of inequality and unequal representation. As we all know, it would be another century before African Americans were given the same rights as white Americans.

In the years after emancipation and Jim Crow, the United States has made serious improvements in drafting and implementing laws and policies that encourage equality. However, serious economic, health and educational disparities persist for many in the black community and other communities of color. These inequities threaten to exacerbate the division between those who have and those who do not.

Today, we are confronted with two contrasting images of black America that are really two sides of the same coin. The countless sacrifices and efforts of previous generations have made it possible for blacks and other minority groups to excel and break boundaries from our nation's classrooms to the space program. And, for the first time in our history, the idea of a black president is not simply a fantastic dream, but a serious hope and possibility.

Yet, in this same land and era of opportunity, black people across the socioeconomic spectrum have a lower life expectancy, higher instances of heart disease, greater rates of infant mortality and hypertension, and receive