

me. Federal workers, like those in the private sector, should also have the option of adopting or giving birth to their own child without having to go 12 weeks without a paycheck, which few families in our country can afford to do.

Study after study shows that enabling working mothers and fathers to care for and bond with newly-adopted children and newborns lays the foundation for healthy child development and a safer, brighter future for our Nation. Paid leave makes it possible for workers to take time off without having to worry about a paycheck.

Additionally, paid parental leave will help the federal government recruit and retain dedicated and talented workers. As the federal workforce ages, our government will be looking for new, younger workers. In order to attract and retain the best workers, federal benefits must be competitive.

This paid leave would also save the government money by reducing turnover and avoiding costs associated with replacing and training new workers, which is approximately 25 percent of one worker's salary, making turnover-related costs among the most significant employer expenses.

The Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act will provide federal workers who qualify for leave under the Family Medical Leave Act, FMLA, which guarantees 12 weeks of unpaid leave, with four weeks of full pay for the adoption or birth of a new child, allowing parents to care for their newborns while continuing to make ends meet.

This legislation takes a strong step toward creating a more family-friendly workplace in the United States. Hopefully, in my lifetime I will see federal paid sick and parental leave for every worker in every industry in the United States. I look forward to working with my colleagues to achieve this goal. As a father who spends every week away from his family serving here in the U.S. Congress, I understand how hard it is not to be with loved ones and to miss important events in their lives because of one's job.

I urge my colleagues to pass this legislation and show American workers that we are committed to helping them balance their work and home responsibilities.

EDWARD BYRNE MEMORIAL JUSTICE ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM AUTHORIZATION

SPEECH OF

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 23, 2008

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, ensuring that local law enforcement officials are provided with the resources they need to effectively protect our communities requires nothing less than our sustained commitment and dedication. That's why I am proud to support of H.R. 3546, the Byrne-Justice Assistance Grant, JAG, Reauthorization Act.

The Byrne-JAG program provides State and local governments with the tools necessary to prevent and control crime while strengthening our criminal justice system. These grants help fund law enforcement programs targeting school violence, hate crimes, and victims of

violent crimes. Additionally, Byrne-JAG grants enable state, regional, and local agencies to confront and overcome the threats posed by drug trafficking through providing essential funding to improve drug enforcement and treatment programs. By using these grants to develop multi-jurisdictional drug task forces, law enforcement officials from around the country have been able to foster institutional collaboration built on their shared expertise and training.

Last year, the City of Santa Rosa and Sonoma County in my Congressional District were fortunate enough to receive Byrne-JAG grants, which went to support programs designed to assist in the prevention of drug use, treat non-violent offenders, and improve the effectiveness of our criminal justice system. That's why I'm a cosponsor of H.R. 3546, which would reauthorize the Byrne-JAG program until 2012. Despite the Bush Administration's efforts to eliminate funding for this important program, I commend the Democratic Leadership for demonstrating their commitment to full funding for Byrne-JAG by bringing this legislation to the Floor.

Local law enforcement officials depend on Byrne-JAG grants to invest in strategies that combat crime and drugs. Without these resources, State and local law enforcement cannot take the steps they need to protect our families and our country's most precious resources, our children and young adults, from violence and drug abuse. Madam Speaker, it's our responsibility to make certain these brave men and women have the support necessary to perform their jobs. It's the least we can do.

TRIBUTE TO IOWA CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRITONS WRESTLING TEAM

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Mr. LATHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a great achievement by the Iowa Central Community College Tritons wrestling team. This year Iowa Central won their third straight National Junior College Athletic Association, NJCAA, national championship.

Iowa Central is only the third junior college to ever win three straight national titles. At 125 pounds, Terrance Young earned an individual national title. David Greenwald and Brad Lower were runner-ups in their respective weight classes. Matt Burns, Joe Johnson, Carrington Banks and Kevin Kelly placed third, fourth, eighth and eighth in their respective weight classes. Carrington Banks, Brian Drake, David Greenwald, Kevin Kelly, Joe Johnson and Terrance Young were all named academic All-Americans as well.

The example set by these young men and their coach, Luke Moffitt, demonstrates the rewards of hard work, dedication and determination. They scored victories on the mat as well as in the classroom. Their triumph in both arenas is an honor that we all can admire and be proud of.

I am honored to represent Iowa Central Community College and their students, staff, faculty, wrestling team and their coaches in the United States Congress. I know that all of my colleagues join me in congratulating the

Tritons on their third straight national championship and wishing all the young men continued success in their future endeavors.

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVISTS DEBT RELIEF ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 23, 2008

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4044, the National Guard and Reservists Debt Relief Act of 2008, a bill I am proud to have authored. Since September 11, 2008, more than 460,000 Reservists and members of the National Guard have been called to active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. These courageous men and women have selflessly left their families and their jobs to fight for our country on the battlefield, often with little or no notice and no time to prepare for the financial challenges that their deployments will present.

In April 2005, the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Act made it harder for individuals to discharge their debts in bankruptcy. That legislation requires debtors who file for bankruptcy to submit to a means test that assesses their eligibility for bankruptcy protection. H.R. 4044 would exempt members of the National Guard and Reserves facing bankruptcy as a result of their service from that means test.

When the changes to bankruptcy law were made, Congress understood the importance of exempting disabled veterans whose debts were incurred while they were on active duty from means testing. However, the men and women of the National Guard and Reserves were left out; their sacrifice was disregarded. That is why I introduced this legislation with my friend and colleague Congressman DANA ROHRBACHER. Those heroes returning from active service in the Guard and Reserves deserve the same flexibility.

H.R. 4044 allows members of the National Guard and Reservists to file for Chapter 7 without the added paperwork burden and obstacles of the means test. The bill would apply to our citizen soldiers who have served in the armed forces for more than 90 days since 9/11 and would grant them an exemption from the test for up to a year and a half after they return home. It also requires a Government Accountability Office report which will help us quantify the hardships our veterans face when they return home by tracking how many apply for bankruptcy protection.

Many members of the Guard and Reserves leave for the war thinking they will only be deployed for 6 to 12 months and end up getting their tours involuntarily extended. One quarter of those soldiers have been deployed more than once. There is almost no way that they can anticipate or prepare for that extension of their service financially.

According to the National Guard, forty percent of Reservists and members of the National Guard lose money when they leave their civilian jobs for active duty. This is especially true for servicemembers who own and operate small businesses who put their businesses on hold while they serve thousands of miles away.

Now Reservists and National Guardsmen and women are coming home to a weak economy and record unemployment levels. Eighteen percent of recently separated servicemembers are currently unemployed. They are disproportionately feeling the pinch of record gas prices, housing foreclosures, and food costs.

We have all heard from constituent servicemembers who have returned home to find their families in financial disarray. Many reservists took a pay cut from their regular jobs to serve overseas; others find that when they are discharged, if they can find work, they are returning home to lower salaries—in many instances, lower than their combat pay. Twenty five percent of servicemembers returning from Iraq or Afghanistan earn less than \$25,000 a year. Some veterans are driven to homelessness—the VA estimates that there are 1,500 homeless veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The means test has a particularly adverse impact on servicemembers. Most servicemembers receive higher compensation in the form of combat pay and have fewer expenses while serving abroad, but upon leaving service they face lower incomes and higher expenses. Because the means test factors in a person's income and expenses for the six-month period preceding the bankruptcy filing, a veteran's income is artificially inflated and expenses are inaccurately low. As a result, veterans risk having their chapter 7 case dismissed and being forced to file under the stricter chapter 13.

The men and women of the National Guard and Reserves have risked their lives to protect us. If servicemembers, through no fault of their own, end up in bankruptcy, they deserve protection from Congress. This bill brings us one step closer to providing them with financial relief when they come home from their service.

I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to Chairman CONYERS and Subcommittee Chairwoman LINDA SÁNCHEZ for their commitment to and work on this bill and to the minority Committee Members for working with us to find a compromise and get this bill on the floor today. And again, I thank my colleague Congressman ROHRBACHER, whose passion and persistence on this issue have made him a wonderful ally.

EDWARD BYRNE MEMORIAL JUSTICE ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM AUTHORIZATION

SPEECH OF

HON. MARK E. SOUDER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 23, 2008

Mr. SOUDER. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3546, a bill to authorize funding for the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program at fiscal year 2006 levels—\$1.095 billion—through 2012. As a cosponsor of this legislation, I know the critical importance of Byrne-JAG funding to law enforcement, and especially drug task forces, throughout the United States. Many of us remain deeply disappointed that the program's FY 2008 appropriation was cut so drastically at the end of last year.

Byrne JAG provides needed funding to drug task forces throughout my district. For exam-

ple, the Allen County Drug Task Force relies on this program's funding to continue its work with the FBI, DEA and ATF targeting drug traffickers. As does the Indiana Multi-Agency Group Enforcement (IMAGE), a drug-enforcement team combining select law enforcement from DeKalb, Noble, Steuben, and LaGrange counties. In 2006 alone, IMAGE worked on 101 drug and prostitution cases, and seized illegal drugs valued at nearly \$3 million. These results speak for themselves, and they demonstrate how critical it is to the safety of Hoosiers in northeast Indiana, as well as Americans nationwide, that the Byrne JAG program is fully-funded.

I was very upset when Congress cut Byrne-JAG funding by 67 percent last December in the FY 2008 Omnibus Appropriations Bill. If the House doesn't act quickly to restore this key funding source, law enforcement programs throughout the Nation will certainly be reduced—or eliminated—likely reversing hard-won gains that have been made over the years at the local level.

We have an opportunity with the FY 2008 Supplemental Appropriations bill to correct that mistake, and I strongly urge the House to accept the Senate language restoring Byrne-JAG funding for the current fiscal year. This measure is necessary in order for local law enforcement agencies to continue their constant pursuit of criminals, especially drug dealers. We will be taking a major step backward if we don't accept the Senate's proposal. The long-term effects of such a move are dangerous.

As we enter the general appropriations season for next fiscal year, I also urge the Appropriations Committee, and the House in general, to fully fund this program in FY 2009. The Byrne JAG program is a proven success that strongly deserves reauthorization, and I urge passage today of H.R. 3546.

GOSPEL MUSIC HERITAGE MONTH

SPEECH OF

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2008

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express support for a resolution designating September as Gospel Music Heritage Month. This resolution recognizes the legacy of gospel music for its invaluable and longstanding contributions to the musical traditions of the United States.

Let me begin by thanking Representative JACKSON-LEE of Texas, the Recording Academy, and the Gospel Music Channel for all of their support to pay homage to this influential and inspirational genre of music. Gospel music is truly an American classic that's gone far too long without being recognized for the significant impact it's made on our culture.

Whether it's swaying with the choirs, tapping along with the quartets, or simply raising hands to the rhythm of soul-stirring crooners, gospel music is a cornerstone of the American musical tradition. Gospel music is more than the sounds that resonate in congregations on Sundays; it's the musical thread that has woven its influence throughout religious and secular musical genres including rock and roll, country, and rhythm and blues. From Ray Charles and Elvis Presley to Aretha Franklin

and Dolly Parton, many of America's greatest recording artists emerged through the historical art form of gospel.

While gospel may have its roots based in the African-American traditions of Negro spirituals, its reach has spanned not only across the ages, but it has grown beyond its established audience to achieve popular culture and historic relevance across the globe. With its use of choral singing in unison and harmony, Gospel has emerged as a distinct category of popular song, with its own supporting publishing and recording firms, and performers appearing in sell-out concerts nationwide.

This resolution allows Members of Congress to celebrate gospel's rich heritage and honor musical pioneers from the likes of Mahalia Jackson and Sandi Patty, and the Hawkins Family, very own constituents: Tramaine, Edwin and Walter Hawkins. Additionally, it allows Members of Congress to pay tribute to this important American legacy and the role it plays in the lives of millions.

Since Thomas Dorsey first stretched the boundaries to create gospel music, choirs, quartets, and powerful vocalists have been singing this same song, albeit in different styles and places. Gospel is here to stay, and I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this measure to honor the gospel community, and create a month designated to annually acknowledge the "good news" it represents.

MEDICARE IMPROVEMENTS FOR PATIENTS AND PROVIDERS ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2008

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of HR 6331. This important piece of legislation will delay the physician payment cut, which is scheduled to go into effect on July 1.

It has been over a decade since the physician fee schedule was put in place to help control increases in Medicare payments to physicians.

The Medicare program reimburses physicians who treat seniors using a complex formula that is based on a number of factors.

Unfortunately, payments for physician services matched the SGR and expenditure targets for only the first 5 years.

Since then, the actual expenditures have exceeded the target by so much that the system is no longer realistic.

As we have learned in recent years the formula reduces payments to physicians when the economy goes down—a time when doctors are least able to absorb the extra costs.

These payment reductions have caused many physicians to hold off on accepting new Medicare patients, withdraw from the program, or retire altogether.

In areas like mine that rely heavily on Medicare and Medicaid, we probably will not be in a situation where doctors stop taking Medicare.

Rather, we will see access problems created by attrition—where the gap created by physician retirements is not filled by new crops of doctors willing to take Medicare patients.