

I'm still a little focused on what happened to my Dannon."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and missed Rollcall vote 18. Had been present, I would have voted "aye" on rollcall No. 18.

"RETRO PAY" FOR DISABLED RETIREE VETERANS

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I wish to submit to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD an article dated December 19, 2007 summarizing the plight of many of our Nation's veterans as they wait for their benefits.

[From the Plain Dealer, Dec. 19, 2007]

DFAS SAYS HIRING TO CLEAR BACKLOG OF DISABLED VETS' BENEFITS CLAIMS

(By Sabrina Eaton)

WASHINGTON.—The federal agency that processes pay for military retirees pledged Tuesday that its contractor will hire an extra 61 workers in Cleveland to clear a backlog of more than 48,000 benefit claims from veterans who are disabled by combat injuries.

The director of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service promised Cleveland Democratic Rep. Dennis Kucinich that the backlog of claims—some of which date to 2003—will be eliminated by April with the extra push from contractor Lockheed Martin.

"Federal benefits are meaningless if the intended beneficiaries do not receive them," said Kucinich, who called it a "tragedy" that so many veterans have waited for years to get money they're entitled to under a pair of programs for disabled veterans.

The payments stem from a law enacted in 2003 that ended a ban on veterans simultaneously receiving military retirement pay and disability compensation for health problems traceable to military service. Before 2003, veterans had to choose.

Disabled veterans have to apply for the simultaneous payments under the "Combat-Related Special Compensation" and "Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay" programs. After they are approved, veterans can get back pay to the date their eligibility began.

DFAS and the Department of Veterans Affairs have already processed more than 130,000 of the cases and paid out more than \$220 million, says DFAS spokesman Thomas LaRock. Average payments to veterans under the program have been \$1,700, he said.

LaRock said the easiest claims were handled first. The more-complex cases were delayed because they require manual computations. He said many of them are affected by special circumstances, like changes in the veterans' disability level.

"These are complicated cases that are left, and we are processing them as soon as we can," agreed Lockheed Martin spokeswoman Emily Simone.

One of the many veterans who has been lobbying DFAS, retired Army pilot Wavie Sharp of San Antonio, Texas, says payments have been handled in a "painfully slow manner," and he noted that some older veterans have died waiting for their money. He blames the problems on DFAS for failing to demand progress from Lockheed Martin until Kucinich intervened.

"I'm angry," said Sharp, who figures he is personally owed between \$10,000 and \$31,000. "They've been dragging their feet for four years. This is a long time to ask for patience. Thank God for Mr. Kucinich. Everyone else gave us lip service."

NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, the critical national security challenges the U.S. faces throughout the Western Hemisphere demand our support of strong allies, like Colombia, in the region. The historic ties between the U.S. and Colombia have only deepened in recent years as our cooperative efforts to surmount security, economic and social concerns have intensified.

With this in mind, I would like to offer my warmest congratulations to Captain Hernando Wills on the occasion of his promotion to Rear Admiral of the Colombian National Navy.

The following excerpts from Colombian Ambassador Carolina Barco's remarks highlight the significance that Rear Admiral Wills' promotion holds for the U.S.-Colombia relationship.

The relations between the United States and Colombia are not only their oldest in this continent, they also reflect a great understanding between our nations. Our relations encompass important historical events, such as the deployment in 1951 of the frigate *Amirante Padilla* and the Batallón Colombia to fight for democracy in Korea alongside U.S. Forces. Colombia was the only Latin American country to deploy troops in that multinational force, which cost the lives of 146 countrymen, with 69 missing and 448 wounded in combat. The participation of our soldiers in the peace keeping forces at the Suez Canal in 1956, the deployment of the Batallón Colombia since 1982 with the peace forces in the Sinai Peninsula, and innumerable episodes, give faith to the integration of our peoples under the flags of democracy and respect for human dignity.

I want to highlight this year as particularly fruitful for the joint work of the Navies of Colombia and the United States: their participation in important exercises such as UNITAS and PANAMAX, the first focused on standardizing procedures among the navies of the hemisphere and to maintain a level of training that will permit a joint defense of this continent, and the second with the purpose of organizing a defense of the Panama Canal.

Because of the nature of our peoples, military action goes beyond defense, successfully engaging in humanitarian endeavors, such as the deployment of the U.S. Navy's hospital

ship *Comfort* to the Colombian coast providing medical attention to thousands of beneficiaries, and the joint participation of Colombia in the Joint Inter-Agency Task Force South in Key West, and the engagement of Colombian river operations' experts training U.S. Navy personnel for their future responsibilities in Afghanistan.

For all the aforementioned, the decision of the Colombian Government to promote Captain Hernando Wills to the rank of Rear Admiral is not an isolated event: it complements the experiences of an inured sailor with the doctrine of National Defense University to defeat narco-terrorism, strengthen democracy, and return to Colombians the possibilities of development in peace, under the mandate of profound respect for human dignity clearly stated in the National Constitution.

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY MODERNIZATION ACT

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Mr. GONZALEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend the chairman and ranking member and my colleagues for their efforts on behalf of H.R. 4040. This hard work and dedicated service has produced a strong, bipartisan Consumer Product Safety Modernization Act. Congress and the American people can be proud of this significant and needed accomplishment.

While this legislation includes many important reforms of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and I strongly support its passage, the bill does not address one important issue that I think deserves further attention in any House-Senate Conference Committee deliberations. That issue involved the labeling or packaging of a product which may reference a product safety standard. It is important we address this issue for the well-being and safety of our citizens.

In some cases a product may bear a label or packaging material referencing a safety standard, when the product was not tested or certified to meet the standard listed on the label or packaging. This deceptive labeling can be a grave threat to the safety of many consumer products on the market, and must be addressed as part of this comprehensive legislation.

I hope that as this important piece of legislation moves its way through the Conference Committee process we will further examine and address this labeling and packaging issue.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Madam Speaker, on January 16, 2008, on Rollcall vote No. 8, during consideration of H.R. 2768, Supplemental Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act of 2007, I incorrectly voted "aye," when I intended to vote "no."

HONORING DR. NANCY J. NIELSEN

HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to extend congratulations to the newly elected President of the American Medical Association, Dr. Nancy J. Nielsen, who hails from the Mountain State.

Dr. Nancy J. Nielsen is the first West Virginia native and second female to hold the prestigious post. She is originally a native of Elkins, WV, located in Randolph County and completed her undergraduate education in pre-medicine at West Virginia University.

She has a doctorate in microbiology from Catholic University of America and received her medical degree from University of Buffalo where she currently serves as senior associate dean for medical education for the school of medicine.

Dr. Nielsen is always proud to mention her West Virginia roots to her friends and colleagues. She maintains her ties to the State by serving on the Board of Advisers to the WVU School of Medicine.

She always makes time for family despite her busy teaching and travel schedule. Her mother, Anne Harshbarger, lives in Elkins and her children, Kristen Bartnik, Robin, David, Kevin Nielsen live in New York and her son, Mark Nielsen, lives in Washington, DC. She is the proud grandmother of 7 grandchildren.

It is an honor to recognize Dr. Nancy J. Nielsen as a trailblazer among women for her accomplished career and leadership roles in the medical profession. West Virginia is proud to call her one of our own.

A TRIBUTE TO THE NEWLY RETIRED ARTHUR BARNES, A PROUD SON OF HARLEM

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today, as we approach his retirement, to recognize the exemplary career of Arthur Barnes, who culminates a career marked by glowing accomplishment and triumph. He, this year, ends an illustrious 15-year stint as the Health Insurance Plan of New York's senior vice president for external affairs and corporate contributions—there, successfully pursuing with great energy and imagination the promoting of the health and well-being of the diverse New York community. Under his direction, the HIP generously doled out aid—in the form of grants, scholarships, contributions, sponsorships, and in-kind services—to those nonprofit organizations actively working to improve the quality of life for New York City residents. Through his efforts, Arthur Barnes empowered community organizations to make a substantive contribution to the education of people who were previously unaware of how they could positively affect their well-being through preventative behavior. This working partnership stands as Arthur's perhaps greatest legacy. It is that legacy of selfless service to the greater good that Arthur leaves behind for all to emulate.

He ably served in an array of influential posts before arriving at HIP: presiding over the New York Urban Coalition as its leader and CEO for 20 years, becoming a vice president at the Institute for Mediation and Conflict Resolution, and rising from file clerk to vice president of administration over a 21-year period at Consolidated Mutual Insurance Companies. His commitment to philanthropy remains a pillar of his public work, serving on the volunteer boards of Black Agency Executives, Associated Black Charities, and New York City Partnership, which he helped found.

A native son of Harlem, he has remained loyal and true to his home. But the benefits of his efforts are far-reaching and innumerable.

HONORING THOR HESLA

HON. DAVID WU

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Mr. WU. Madam Speaker, America has lost a great public servant. Thor Hesla died in Kabul, Afghanistan last night, a victim of the Taliban.

That Thor should pass at the hands of religious extremists is perhaps one of the great ironies of life because he was such a strong proponent of the humane, human virtues in life. He worked in tough places, tough jobs in America, in Kosovo, in Afghanistan, always promoting peace, democracy, and the general public welfare. He worked so many hard, dangerous jobs, and he was such a colorful person that he was larger than life. And I guess there are some of us who came to believe that the bullets would always go around him, and in his own particularly human way, Thor had become a touch immortal.

I owe him a deep debt of friendship and gratitude. He was my 1998 campaign manager, and we won a hard-fought campaign under his leadership. But that was the least of it. It was what he did afterwards. His friendship, his support, and his wise advice, which I was sometimes wise enough to accept, that was what for me set him apart and built our deep relationship. And I believe that there are hundreds of people across this country and perhaps thousands of people around the world who similarly feel this bond of friendship and this debt of gratitude to Thor. America and the world are better for his life and his work.

Earlier, I used the word "victim" in connection with Thor: and I misspoke, because Thor was no one's victim. He chose his life, he chose his work, and he chose Kabul.

Because of events earlier during the recess, I had an opportunity to speak with my son about life and its end. And while there are many ways to live well, to live a good life, there are few, if any, good ways to pass on. But if there are any, it is to pass on in the company of friends and family or to pass on for a cause. Now, Thor wasn't with his family in Atlanta or here in Washington, his sister, his brother-in-law, his niece and nephew, or his father; but he was with a family and a circle of friends, the family of those who care, the friends of those who care for others and who care to risk for others. He died in the cause of ringing some small measure of peace, prosperity, and democracy to those who are in dire need of those things.

So tonight we mourn, we remember, we celebrate the life of Thor Hesla. America has lost a fine public servant, but he is now a public servant for all those in all the ages who care to remember those who care and sacrifice for others.

HONORING SANDY DUNN

HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam Speaker. I rise today to honor the accomplishments of Sandy Dunn, who was recently named the 2008 president of the National Association of Home Builders; making her the first West Virginian and the second female to serve as president of the association.

A native of Mason County, West Virginia, Sandy followed in her father's footsteps by pursuing an interest in public service and taking over their family business, B.J. Builders founded by her father in 1947. In 1974, she additionally opened her own small business, Homestead Realty that grew into the county's largest realty agency.

While remaining dedicated to her community, Sandy emerged in the homebuilding industry as an affective leader with a reputation as a consensus builder. She owes her success to open communication and listening to the concerns of the industry within her state and across the nation.

Her previous experience within the homebuilding industry led her to her current post as president of the National Association of Home Builders. She has been active with the organization for 30 years, where she began on the local level gaining leadership positions, later served as president of the West Virginia Association of Home Builders for 2 years, and also served twice as vice president of the national association. She has received numerous honors including the 1997 Henry E. King Award, the highest statewide honor and was named National Representative of the Year in 1998.

It is an honor to represent such an accomplished, female leader who serves the needs of the homebuilding industry on the national front, while always maintaining her dedication to her community of Mason County. I am proud to call Sandy Dunn, a friend and a fellow West Virginian.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 5087

HON. HARRY E. MITCHELL

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Mr. MITCHELL. Madam Speaker, earlier today my colleague Dr. RON PAUL and I introduced H.R. 5087, the Stop the Congressional Pay Raise Act of 2008, to block the automatic pay raise Members of Congress are scheduled to receive next year.

As you may recall, I introduced a similar bill last year seeking to prevent an automatic pay raise for Members of Congress from taking effect this year.

Unfortunately, despite the support of 29 co-sponsors, last year's bill failed to reach the