

These provisions are unfairly penalizing the men and women who contribute the vital services that sustain and improve our communities.

With the retirement population continuing to grow, this issue is of increasing importance to millions of Americans and is not going to go away. I have been contacted by thousands, representing every segment of our community, and I am continually saddened and angered by the stories that I hear. Those who are affected by the GPO and WEP are hardworking Americans that do not deserve to be denied the benefits of a Social Security system that they have already contributed to.

A widow relayed the story of how she and her husband planned their retirement believing that each would be able to take care of their bills should one of them pass. She was stunned to find out when she became widowed that she would not be allowed to collect her husband's full survivor benefits because she collects a small pension from her job as an elementary school teacher in Marshfield. Sadly, she was forced to sell the home where she had raised her family because she could no longer afford it.

A single mother of three on Cape Cod with two full-time jobs as a nurse and teacher wrote me of her dilemma. She has made many sacrifices to independently support her children. She consistently paid into her teacher's retirement fund and Social Security for decades hoping to be able to eventually retire without worry in her later years. She recently found out she will not be allowed to collect both of the full retirement benefits she earned and was counting on.

I have heard from a 63-year-old widow who works for the City of Quincy. She would like to retire before her 70th birthday but cannot afford to do so. Because of her participation in the City retirement program, her Social Security benefits will be immediately and drastically reduced.

A municipal retiree in Plymouth wrote me about his concerns with the rising price of gas and medical expenses. He supports a repeal of the GPO and WEP so that he may supplement his already meager retirement income with his Social Security benefits.

I have heard from police officers and firefighters from all over my district who put their lives on the line each and every day. These brave men and women will not be allowed to collect their full Social Security benefits upon retirement.

These stories are very real, and are just a small sample of the thousands of letters that I have received on this issue.

This is not just about senior citizens who worked all their lives believing they were responsibly planning ahead for retirement. This is not just about retirees finding themselves unable to make ends meet, concerned that they may not be able to afford to heat their homes this winter or buy the medications they need.

It's about retired and widowed public servants, who are denied access to their deceased spouse's Social Security benefits because they chose public service as a career.

It's about penalizing honest, hard-working people who dedicated their careers to public service. At a time when our Nation is searching for talented and dedicated teachers, nurses and other public servants—this penalty discourages the best and the brightest from

serving in our community. Madam Speaker, the time is long overdue for Congress to resolve this issue.

I want to urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act which would repeal both the GPO and WEP. In addition, I'd like to urge you to support H.R. 2772, the Public Servant Retirement Protection Act, which would eliminate the WEP and establish a more equitable formula for calculating Social Security benefits.

Support for these two pieces of legislation has grown significantly each year and it is imperative that they see long-awaited debate in committee and on the floor of Congress.

#### RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CONGRESSWOMAN MAXINE WATERS TO SOUTH AFRICA

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 1, 2008*

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS on receiving the Order of the Companions of OR Tambo Silver Award.

Since 1980, Congresswoman WATERS has worked tirelessly to improve the situation of the South African people. During the long reign of the apartheid regime, Representative WATERS organized marches, participated in rallies and welcomed countless antiapartheid leaders to the United States. Spearheading the national divestment movement, Congresswoman WATERS persuaded countless American corporations to withhold investing money in South Africa until apartheid ceased to exist. When South Africa held its first free elections 1994, Representative WATERS was asked to be a member of the official U.S. delegation that attended the inauguration of the country's first black president, Nelson Mandela. Clearly, Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS played a vital role in ending apartheid.

In my opinion, there is no one more deserving of one of South Africa's most prestigious awards. Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS devoted her career to ensuring that all people no matter their origin, race or culture, have the chance to experience freedom.

#### IN HONOR OF GABRIELLE THOMPSON OF BUFFALO, MINNESOTA: RECIPIENT OF THE PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARD

**HON. MICHELE BACHMANN**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 1, 2008*

Mrs. BACHMANN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend seventh grader Gabrielle Thompson of Buffalo Community Middle School for her extraordinary commitment to her community and her compassion for young cancer patients. This week, Gabrielle will be one of only 102 state honorees from across the Nation honored with the Prudential Spirit of Community Award.

Gabrielle has turned a difficult personal story into a story of healing and hope for chil-

dren facing a life with cancer. When she was only 4 years old, doctors removed a malignant tumor from Gabrielle's abdomen. Now, with that successful surgery not long behind her, Gabrielle has committed to helping others who find themselves in similar situations.

In addition to raising \$5,000 for cancer research selling luminaries and to drawing public attention to Buffalo's Relay for Life, Gabrielle has written a book to help children cope with cancer, "The ABCs of Childhood Cancer." Her book relates to children as only a young one can and relates to cancer patients as only one who has walked in their shoes can. But, in so many ways, her book demonstrates a young lady of startling maturity, grace, and poise.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards were started in 1995 as a partnership between Prudential Financial and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). It is the Nation's largest youth recognition program based solely on volunteerism. Two high school and middle school students from each state and the District of Columbia are honored each year, with an additional 234 distinguished finalists also receiving recognition for their public service.

This year, in addition to Gabrielle, Shanna Decker, a senior at Plainview-Elgin-Millville High School, will represent the great state of Minnesota as recipients of the award for 2008. Shanna has also had a personal experience with cancer as a young child and has also turned her difficult life lesson into a powerful example of hope and courage for other young people in this situation, spending more than 300 hours a year visiting young cancer patients in the hospital.

An additional six outstanding Minnesota teens will be honored as Distinguished Finalists: Daniel Chahla of St. Paul, Carly Fischbeck of Inver Grove Heights, Joshua Hiben of Bloomington, Carissa Loehr of Eagan, Laura Maciosek of Minneapolis, and Aisha Moghul of Fridley. It is a true privilege to join Prudential, the NASSP, and their communities in honoring these outstanding examples of compassion and service. With all the regrettable news stories about the wayward path of today's youth, these young men and women renew our faith and refresh our hope.

#### HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MR. THOMAS J. COOPER, SR.

**HON. JIM GERLACH**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 1, 2008*

Mr. GERLACH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a dedicated community volunteer from Chester County, Pennsylvania, who recently passed away, but whose service is still lauded and remembered.

Each year, the Downingtown Area Chamber of Commerce recognizes an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the community. This year, the Citizen of the Year Award will be presented posthumously to Thomas J. Cooper, Sr.

Mr. Cooper made substantial contributions to several community organizations throughout our region. He was very active with the Boy Scouts of America, serving as a Cubmaster and Den Leader for Hopewell Pack 8 for a

number of years. He also served as the Scoutmaster for Hopewell Troop 8, as well as a Vigil Member of the Order of the Arrow.

Tom was also very active with the Downingtown High School Band Parents organization, making numerous trips hauling the band instruments to local venues and even Florida for band appearances. He also worked the concession stand at the Downingtown High School stadium for numerous athletic events and band competitions, all part of his committed efforts to support our local youth.

No task was too big or too small for Tom. As long as he knew it would benefit area youth, he was there to help.

All of Tom's work and accomplishments will be acknowledged this weekend at the Downingtown Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner on May 2, 2008, at Whitford Country Club. His wife, Winifred, will accept the Citizen of the Year Award on his behalf and area leaders and residents will pay tribute to the life and work of a selfless man.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me today in praising the work of Thomas J. Cooper, Sr., and all those who give of themselves to help others. The Citizen of the Year Award is an acknowledgment of the full and vibrant life that Tom led, and whose work is still remembered and paving the future for tomorrow's generation.

#### RECOGNIZING THE HOMES FOR OUR TROOPS ORGANIZATION AND PULTE HOMES

#### HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 1, 2008*

Mr. TANCREDO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a program that has provided an invaluable service to our nation's wounded veterans. The Homes For Our Troops organization is a non-partisan, non-profit 501(c)(3) group that provides specially built homes to veterans who have received debilitating injuries while fighting for our continued freedom in the ongoing military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. These homes are provided at no cost to the family receiving assistance. John Gonsalves founded this wonderful organization with the aim of providing a service for our soldiers which was much needed and even more appreciated. He has dedicated his time to this noble endeavor and his organization has proven to be of the highest standard of excellence. Homes For Our Troops has been awarded the Independent Charities Seal of Excellence. This award, bestowed upon members of the Local Independent Charities of America and the Independent Charities of America is recognition of the highest level for charity work. Fewer than 5 percent of all eligible charities are honored with this award.

Providing these homes for our injured service men and women is a team effort. Recently, ground was broken on a home for Army Staff Sergeant Matthew Keil and his wife Tracy, of Parker Colorado. Numerous organizations have teamed up with Homes For Our Troops and provided their expertise, materials and time to make this home a reality. Pulte Homes, under the guidance of Mike Meneguzzi has designed the Keil's future

home. Their organization has graciously donated over \$31,000 to the building effort and one of their employees, Bret Hribar, will be operating as the general contractor. Pulte has further demonstrated their dedication to worthy projects such as this by providing their employees 2 paid days of leave annually to participate in charitable projects.

With the help of other local businesses, Homes For Our Troops and Pulte Homes have performed a great service for a great American hero. Their continued dedication to the welfare of our returning veterans is a great example of patriotism which we should all strive to achieve.

#### CONGRATULATING MRS. DAWN O'CONNOR RECIPIENT OF THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN SCIENCE TEACH- ING

#### HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 1, 2008*

Mr. HONDA. Madam Speaker, as a former teacher, school principal, and school board member I am proud to rise today to congratulate Mrs. Dawn O'Connor for receiving the 2008 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science Teaching. Since 1983, the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching have honored outstanding kindergarten through 12th grade mathematics or science teachers for their contributions in the classroom and to their profession. On behalf of the people of California's 15th District, I am honored to recognize one of our own as a recipient of the Presidential Award, the highest recognition that a teacher can receive—Mrs. O'Connor teaches Seventh Grade Biology at Ascension Solarsano Middle School in the Gilroy Unified School District.

Ascension Solarsano's students are fortunate to have Mrs. O'Connor serve as chair of the Science Department, coach of the Cross Country team, and advisor of the school's MESA program. After graduating from California State University, Humboldt with a B.S. in Biology Mrs. O'Connor completed her multiple subjects credential program at my alma mater, San Jose State University.

Mrs. O'Connor received the 2007 Horace Lucich Award for Outstanding Teachers by the Synopsys science fair and the California State Science Fair Teacher of the Year Award. She was a Summer Institute Fellow at Stanford University's Center for Probing the Nanoparticle and also participated in the Summer Leadership Institute hosted by the National Science Education Leadership Association.

During Mrs. O'Connor's tenure year at Ascension Solarsano she has helped to expand a traditional science fair into a five-month inquiry-based project involving 98% of the students in the activities of a practicing scientist—problem identification, hypotheses generation, experimental design, experimentation, writing and presenting conclusions. Her inclusion of cross-curricular skills is indeed commendable. Through her encouragement students have performed exceptionally in the Silicon Valley science fair competition and gone on to attain awards at the State level

competitions. According to Mrs. O'Connor "It is also my goal to produce a population of capable problem solvers," a goal I share, one that is crucial to ensuring our Nation's competitiveness in the 21st century global economy.

Mrs. O'Connor represents the spirit of innovation that is the core of my District, the Silicon Valley and the State of California, and she is dedicated to inspiring and engaging students in science through inquiry. I congratulate her and her colleagues and students for this distinguished achievement.

#### STATEMENT IN RECOGNITION OF EDIE FRASER

#### HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 1, 2008*

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor the work of one of the leaders of diversity, entrepreneurship, women in business and mentoring, Edie Fraser, who was honored on April 24 with the Lou Campanelli Award for volunteerism and leadership.

The award, presented by SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business," honors Edie Fraser for her volunteerism, philanthropic contributions and dedication to entrepreneurship and SCORE.

The Lou Campanelli Award annually recognizes outstanding individual volunteerism, leadership, vision and philanthropy in support of small business, entrepreneurship and SCORE. Edie received the award at SCORE's Afternoon of Vision 2008 in Washington, D.C., on April 24. SCORE CEO Ken Yancey and Lou Campanelli presented Edie with the award.

Edie Fraser has won more than 35 major diversity awards. SCORE is in her blood as her dad, Les Fraser, was a SCORE volunteer and leader for 33 years in Atlanta. Edie has worked with SCORE over the years, now serving on the SCORE Board of Directors.

She was named in 2007 as one of the Top 50 Pioneers in Diversity by Profiles in Diversity Journal and top 46 of America's Top Diversity Advocates by DiversityBusiness.com, along with Oprah Winfrey, Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, and many other senior diversity leaders. Her other awards include: The Enterprising Women Hall of Fame; the eWomen Network International Femtor Award for Lifetime Achievement; the Count-Me-In Leader Entrepreneurial Award; and the Euro-American Women's Council Artemis Award, presented by Athens and the sacred island of Delos. She also received the First Global ATHENA Award in Athens, Greece.

As an advocate for small business and entrepreneurship Edie says, "SCORE is a cornerstone of what is the best of this country. Small business is the most significant part of our economy across this nation." Fraser believes, "SCORE is the premiere source of free counseling and advice, and a source of loan information for America's aspiring entrepreneurs."

Edie's extensive background in support of diversity and women spans four decades, and she is the founder of Diversity Best Practices and Business Women's Network. She is a