

State Senator Mary Lou Rath is one of the most respected legislators in our area—proof that elected service is a noble calling. Mary Lou has always been the voice of reason, and proved time and time again that her only agenda was to serve and fight for the people of Western New York.

After spending 30 years in public service, Mary Lou announced recently that she will retire from the New York State Senate. She surely be missed, leaving behind a legacy of fighting for quality health care, serving as a champion for women across New York State, and taking on issues big and small that made a real difference in the lives of those she represented.

Mary Lou was first elected to public office in 1977 as an Erie County Legislator and earned both the support of her constituents and the trust of her colleagues, who elevated her to the post of Republican Leader. In 1994, she became the first woman ever to serve the 61st District in the New York State Senate. In the State Senate, Mary Lou earned a reputation as a hard working and compassionate representative.

Mary Lou also earned a statewide reputation for her efforts to reform Medicaid and curtail the sky-rocketing costs of health care. Additionally, she worked hard to advance her smart growth initiatives, end domestic violence and ensure that all children have a quality education.

In 1997, Mary Lou was inducted in the Western New York Women's Hall of Fame, a fitting tribute for a woman who has been such a positive role model and inspiration to women across New York. Not only did Mary Lou have a distinguished professional career, but along with her husband, the late Supreme Court Justice Edward A. Rath, Jr., raised a wonderful family in whom she instilled the values of public service.

The name Rath not only invokes the best in public service, it is, in a word, iconic in our community. The County Office building bears the name of her father-in-law, Edward A. Rath, Erie County's first-ever chief executive. Her son, Edward A. Rath III, is the third generation of family public servants, a member of the Erie County Legislature, elected to a seat once held by his mother.

Despite all her achievements in public life, I know from my long friendship with the Rath family that Mary Lou's greatest accomplishment is her loving family, her children Allison, Melinda, and Ed, and her eight grandchildren.

She is very deserving of the honor she will receive from the YWCA on May 10th, 2008 for her contributions to Batavia and Genesee County.

Madam Speaker, in recognition of her tremendous service of more than 30 years, for her leadership, dedication and lasting legacy she leaves, I ask this Honorable Body to join me in honoring my friend and colleague, New York State Senator Mary Lou Rath, in grateful appreciation for her distinguished career and devoted service to the people of Western New York.

THE ENHANCEMENT OF RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND READJUSTMENT THROUGH EDUCATION ACT OF 2008

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, we are forever indebted to the brave soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines of our Armed Forces who have fought and continue to fight for our freedom. Though we can never truly repay the debt we owe them, we have a solemn duty to honor their service with more than mere words.

One important benefit for veterans is the Montgomery G.I. Bill, which provides funding for education and training to veterans after their service. Since its inception, the Montgomery G.I. Bill has helped millions of service members. But, Mr. Speaker, it's long past the time when we should modernize this important law.

Today, with my colleagues, I introduced The Enhancement of Recruitment, Retention, and Readjustment Through Education Act of 2008. This legislation enhances the existing G.I. Bill by improving education benefits for servicemembers, veterans, and members of the Guard and Reserve. The legislation will help more military personnel attend college debt free, and allow them to transfer their education benefits to their spouse or children. It also bolsters recruitment and retention efforts, encouraging servicemembers to continue their military careers in support of the all-volunteer force of today. Specifically this legislation would:

Provide an immediate increase in education benefits for active duty personnel to \$1500 a month, and to improve retention, those benefits increase to \$2000 a month after 12 or more years of service.

Significantly increase benefits for members of the National Guard and Reserves.

Provide transferability, allowing service members to transfer their education benefits to dependents. After 6 years of service, half of the benefit may be transferred and after 12 years of service 100 percent may be transferred to a spouse or dependent children.

Allow servicemembers to use up to \$6,000 per year of G.I. Bill education benefits to repay Federal student loans.

Create a matching program to help more veterans graduate debt-free. Up to an additional \$3,000 per year could be paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs in return.

Allow access to Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits for service academy graduates and Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps officers who continue serving.

Build on existing educational benefits program to ensure rapid implementation with minimal additional administrative costs.

On behalf of the over 30 million veterans in the United States who stand to benefit, I am very excited to introduce this legislation. While we can never fully repay the service and sacrifice so many brave Americans have made and continue to make on behalf of our nation, we must ensure they receive access to the kind of benefits they deserve.

IN RECOGNITION OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL GARRY W. McCLENDON

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Madam Speaker, I respectfully ask the attention of the House today to pay recognition to LTC Garry McClendon. Lieutenant Colonel McClendon has served our Nation in the Army for 25 years and as commanding officer for the Anniston Defense Munitions Center and Holston Army Ammunition Plant since June 2006.

Mr. McClendon's distinguished career began in 1983 as an Ammunition Stock Control and Accounting Specialist. Subsequent assignments with the Army included tours of duty in Southwest Asia, Fort Bragg, NC, Germany, Fort Lee, Virginia, and Camp Able Sentry in Macedonia.

On behalf of us all, I would like to thank Lieutenant Colonel McClendon for his 25 years of service to the United States, and wish him all the best in his next endeavors.

RISING ABOVE THE GATHERING STORM: TWO YEARS LATER

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I rise today to share a speech I gave to the National Academies' convocation on April 29, 2008 on the second anniversary of the release of the "Gathering Storm." I was honored to have had the opportunity to address some of our nation's top business, academic, and scientific leaders at the convocation.

As you may recall, the report painted a very bleak picture of our Nation's high-tech workforce, innovation, and global competitiveness. It prompted swift congressional action to authorize new funding and resources to bolster our science and high-tech workforce, culminating with the enactment of the America COMPETES Act last fall.

However, I am concerned that we still have much work to do to secure our economic future in this global marketplace. And we will never be competitive if we cannot get the Federal Government's finances in order and begin to reduce our dependency on foreign debt.

Madam Speaker, my address as prepared to the "Gathering Storm" convocation follows:

Thank you for the opportunity to address this gathering. As the fourth of five "congressional perspectives" on the program this morning, I'm reminded of the old Congressman Mo Udall quote: "Everything has been said but not everyone has said it."

First, I want to thank you all for your efforts. I am pleased that so many of our nation's science, business, and government leaders have once again gathered to discuss this most pressing of issues challenging the United States.

Perhaps the greatest success of the "Gathering Storm" report thus far is the tremendous awareness and urgency it has raised among the American people.

It was only a few years ago, in 2005, that Rep. Vernon Ehlers, Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, and I went to the White House to urge the administration to make this a priority.

With the support of the councils of National Academies of Science and Engineering, we announced a national summit on science, technology, engineering, and manufacturing at the Department of Commerce which helped lead to the creation of the Committee on Prospering in the Global Economy of the 21st Century.

I want to thank Norm Augustine and the other members of the committee who helped educate me to the critical importance of this as I served as Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee funding these programs.

I appreciate President Bush for laying out the American Competitiveness Agenda in his 2006 State of the Union and his support for more funding this year.

Congress followed suit and adopted many recommendations from the “Gathering Storm” report into the America COMPETES Act which was signed into law last year.

I appreciate the leadership of Science Committee Chairman Bart Gordon and Ranking Member Ralph Hall in the House, as well as Sen. Lamar Alexander in the Senate for seeing this bill through.

It is rare in Washington that good ideas move so far, so fast. And it is in many ways a testament to the people in this room who tirelessly worked to educate Congress, the Administration, business community, and the American people.

There is so much more work to be done. We have been successful in raising public awareness of these issues, but we have barely begun to turn the page in meeting our workforce and innovation demands.

I worry that we still graduate half the number of physicists that we did in 1956—before Sputnik spurred our last “great awakening” in science and engineering.

I worry that one-third to half of those we graduate with science and engineering degrees are foreign students; and most of them will return to their home countries rather than applying their skills in the U.S.

I worry that U.S. patents are down and our companies are spending more on tort legislation than on research and development.

I worry that tests still show that one-third of U.S. students lack the competency to perform the most basic mathematical computations.

I worry that half of the money we made available for grants for college students in STEM fields is going unused.

I worry that our edge in aerospace research is in danger. Our historic prominence in automobiles and electronics manufacturing has long since eroded; we cannot afford to lose our aerospace leadership.

I worry about losing competitiveness with China—they may even beat us back to the moon.

I worry about the country my children and grandchildren will live in if we fail to deal with this.

But you don’t need me to rattle off any more statistics. The real experts will help put these trends and developments in context later today.

Instead, I’d like to talk about a different, yet inextricably linked, issue that is further undermining our competitiveness. To turn Udall’s phrase, I would like to talk about something that hasn’t been said, in hopes that everyone will say it.

While we are working hard to stave off the “Gathering Storm,” we are losing sight of the tsunami right off our coasts—a tsunami of debt. Former Comptroller General David Walker calls this tsunami powerful enough to “swamp our ship of state.”

This is particularly relevant as we consider the state of our nation’s competitiveness. If we can’t pay for our current obligations, how can we begin to afford the resources we will need to compete globally in the twenty-first century?

These two efforts go hand-in-hand.

America is \$9 trillion deep in federal debt, and the Government Accountability Office has estimated \$54.3 trillion in unfunded promised benefits if we don’t change our current course. That’s trillions, with a “T”.

The Social Security and Medicare Trustees reports issued last month only reinforce the dire condition of our fiscal health. Both reports make very clear that we must address these tremendous shortfalls very soon.

The U.S. dollar is dropping like a rock—it lost 15 percent against the Euro last year.

Gasoline reached \$120 per barrel this week.

What will happen when the well runs dry and we no longer have money for the vital technology programs that we’re discussing today?

How will we remain competitive when there is no money to fund science and math education initiatives? Our children can’t compete in the global marketplace if we can’t provide U.S. students with a first-class education.

How will we remain competitive when there is no money to fund medical research? Without discretionary funding to develop cutting-edge technology, advance research, and perform clinical trials, we will not be able to make critical strides toward cures for cancer, Alzheimer’s, autism, and other devastating diseases.

How will we remain competitive when there is no money to fund our infrastructure?

How will we remain competitive when there is no money to pay for the National Science Foundation and NASA? America will no longer be able to provide leadership and inspiration to the rest of the world.

These bleak scenarios only scratch the surface of how concerned we should be about America’s future. These are the realities we face.

Sadly, much of this falls on deaf ears in Washington. So many bright people delude themselves into thinking that we have a long-term plan to bring our finances into order.

The long-term has arrived. The next President will have to address this.

It reminds me of the refrain from songwriter Paul Simon’s “The Boxer”: “Man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest.” That could describe Congress’s and Wall Street’s reaction, or lack thereof, to the financial crisis staring America square in the face.

We can’t afford to put off reform anymore. With every year that Congress prolongs making the difficult decisions to deal with this runaway mandatory spending—the portion of the federal budget available to fund discretionary programs decreases.

And just so we’re clear: nearly every science, technology, research, manufacturing, and competitiveness program we discuss here today is funded through discretionary dollars.

In 1962, mandatory spending—Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and debt interest payments—comprised less than one-third of the federal budget. Today it’s doubled to over two-thirds of the budget.

The Office of Management and Budget projects that in less than 5 years, non-defense discretionary spending will fall to less than 15 percent of the federal budget. And the competitiveness programs we’re working so hard for are but a small fraction of that.

Because mandatory programs get funded first, we will have to fight harder for fewer dollars to fund this important initiative.

Without mandatory spending reform, we simply won’t be able to fund the necessary increases in competitiveness programs without significant cuts in other discretionary programs.

Clearly, this is a pressing economic issue, as the first baby boomer has just signed up for promised Social Security benefits and our nation’s longterm IOUs are coming due.

Just recently, Moody’s Investment Service indicated that the U.S. triple-A bond rating will be at risk by 2018. Standard and Poor’s Investment Service indicated that it may be as early as 2012; and if present trends continue would plummet to junk-bond status by 2025.

What will that mean to our economy?

Should the U.S. lose its AAA rating in a few years, the cost of borrowing for both the Treasury and for U.S. private businesses would significantly increase. It would also increase the likelihood of a devastating capital flight. This is a very real risk to our economic growth and global competitiveness.

Again, this debt has very real implications. More than \$2.6 billion a day is needed to fund our budget shortfall, which has left nearly 40 percent of our domestic economy in foreign hands.

These IOU’s are held by foreign countries—with significant shares held by non-democratic countries like China and Saudi Arabia. We should care that countries that do not share our democratic values have growing leverage over the U.S.

Borrowing hundreds of billions of dollars on the Chinese and Saudi credit cards puts not only our future economy, but also our national security at serious risk.

Ironically, the Chinese will be some of our greatest economic and technology competitors in the twenty-first century. How well will we be able to compete when we depend on their credit to fund our programs? They have become our banker.

This is also a moral issue. Last month, Pete Peterson penned an editorial that ran in Newsweek. He ends by quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who was instrumental in the resistance movement against Nazism. Bonhoeffer said, “The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world it leaves to its children.”

I can’t help but wonder what sort of future today’s partisan Washington is leaving to our children and grandchildren.

Fortunately, we still have options—if we act soon.

I am truly impressed by the bipartisan and broad ranging coalition that the “Gathering Storm” report has assembled in its cause. I believe we can replicate this success in addressing entitlement reform, tax policy, and fiscal solvency. We need to replicate the “Gathering Storm” effort to deal with the issue of our debt.

For the past year, Congressman Jim Cooper, a Democrat from Tennessee, and I have been working closely together on the Cooper-Wolf SAFE Commission Act. It has since garnered over 80 bipartisan cosponsors, including Republican leadership in the House as well as the chairs of the Democratic Blue Dog Coalition.

The Heritage Foundation, Brookings Institution, Concord Coalition, and former Comptroller General David Walker helped us draft this and it is supported by David Broder and David Brooks.

Modeled after the base-closing process, the bill would create a bipartisan 16-member commission to review entitlement spending, tax policy, debt, and all other federal spending.

The Commission will look beyond the Beltway for solutions, holding at least 12 town meetings—one in each of the nation’s Federal Reserve districts—over the span of 12 months in order to hear directly from the American people.

Everything must be on the table—including tax policy.

If anyone has another viable plan to address our entitlement tsunami, we are anxious to hear it. But it has to be able to pass. Doing nothing is not acceptable.

And just like the base-closing process, the SAFE Commission Act would require an up-or-down vote on the Commission's proposal—ensuring that Congress finally considered a comprehensive solution to this great challenge.

So far, Rep. Cooper and I have reached out to every Member of Congress, the President and his potential successors, Fortune 500 leaders, small business owners, think tanks, thought leaders, and the religious community.

And today I'm reaching out to you—our science, technology, engineering, manufacturing and workforce development leaders.

I ask for your support in this endeavor so that it may put us back on track financially, just as the "Gathering Storm" report spurred us to fix our nation's education and competitiveness programs.

William Wilberforce, who, in his first speech in the British Parliament in 1789 describing the evils of the slave trade, concluded by telling his colleagues,

"Having heard all this you may choose to look the other way, but you can never again say that you did not know."

Not one of us can say we do not know about the nation's long-term financial outlook.

We know, and it's on our watch to fix.

This must also be a part of this year's presidential debate. We need to make the next president understand that entitlement reform.

And the media needs to do a better job covering it. We should insist on a presidential debate devoted to these issues.

I am confident that, with your support, we will succeed and it may well lead to a renaissance in America—a renaissance in innovation, education, and economic development.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO STEPHANIE TAVARES

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to rise today to honor Stephanie Tavares by entering her name in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, the official record of the proceedings and debates of the United States Congress since 1873. Today I pay tribute to Stephanie Tavares, reporter for In Business Las Vegas for her achievements in reporting on various small business legal issues within the Southern Nevada community.

Stephanie grew up in a small town that did not have access to many big-city newspapers, but while she was still in high school, she strongly identified with a local television news anchor inspiring her to pursue a career in journalism.

She worked as a news clerk for her college newspaper, which helped to launch her love for writing, editing, and the news. For the past three years, Stephanie has reported on small business issues for In Business Las Vegas. She is credited with not only covering business issues, but with being an advocate for small business as well, learning different perspectives, policies, and the needs of the small business community. She also reports on utilities and environmental issues for the magazine.

In addition to her professional work, Stephanie donates much of her time and talent to several professional and community organizations. She is involved with the National Association of Business Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, and the International Studies Association. Additionally, she recently served on a panel of the 2007 Women of Color Conference. On the local level, Stephanie is a supporter of Adoption Exchange, Henderson Libraries, and Henderson Parks and Recreation.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor Stephanie Tavares for her achievements in journalism for small businesses within the Las Vegas community. I would also like to congratulate her on receiving the Small Business Journalist of the Year at the 2008 Small Business Awards.

TRIBUTE TO AMANDA VEEN

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. LATHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Cadet Lieutenant Amanda Veen of Perry, Iowa for being named Cadet of the Year by the Iowa Wing of the Civil Air Patrol.

Amanda, who is currently a sophomore at Liberty Home School, also received the Billy Mitchell Award and served as Color Guard Commander in the North Central Region Cadet Competition last year for the Des Moines Metro Cadet Squadron.

The Cadet of the Year award honors Amanda's dedication and commitment during her participation in the Civil Air Patrol's Cadet Programs. The Iowa Wing of the Civil Air Patrol, which is the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, is a nonprofit organization with more than 390 officers and cadets in Iowa. The Civil Air Patrol's Cadet Programs provide youth opportunities to reach their full potential as they study four subject areas: aerospace education, physical training, leadership, and moral and ethical values.

I know that my colleagues in the U.S. Congress join me in commanding Cadet Lieutenant Amanda Veen for her leadership and dedication to representing the Iowa Civil Air Patrol. I consider it an honor to represent Amanda and her family in Congress, and I wish her the best in her future endeavors.

COMMENDING THE HARD WORK OF OUR NATION'S NURSES ON THIS, NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to applaud the incredible efforts our nurses pour into their grueling workdays, carrying out their duties to the great benefit of this country's health and medical care system. Together, nurses represent the largest share of health care professionals in the field, boasting numbers eclipsing 2,500,000—but that's becoming increasingly not enough. Facing a shortage that demands a million new nurses

by 2016, the current crop of professionals have shouldered, and will continue to shoulder, the extra work and hours of properly caring for our elderly and infirmed. For this, and so much more, nurses deserve a generous helping of our gratitude and the highest of reverence, not just this next week dubbed "National Nurses Week," but all year round.

We can show them that we care by paying tribute to those nurses serving in Iraq and Afghanistan—by bringing them and our heroic troops home after a job well done. We can show them that we care by outfitting them with a health care system that is affordable, universal, and driven less by profits and more by compassion and humanitarianism. We can show them that we care by investing in the research, techniques, and technologies that promise to one day cure age-old, debilitating diseases that plague millions—and not play politics when our citizens' livelihoods are at stake.

The Harlem Hospital Center serves my district as a powerful force for social progress, catering to the community's health needs and training the next generation's minority and female physicians. The nurses there fight the good fight, day in and day out, not often enough rewarded with the credit that they deserve. I am honored to praise their achievements—and those of their colleagues all across America—this week.

VIETNAM HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 2007

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker, as you may know, I have the privilege of representing the Vietnamese community in Orange County—one of the largest outside of Vietnam.

Human rights is an important issue to me and my Vietnamese constituents. Today, I want to highlight the importance of continuing to work for freedom and democracy in Vietnam, and to commend the advocates that are committed to this cause.

This year marks the 14th anniversary of the House-Senate Joint Resolution designating May 11th as Vietnam Human Rights Day. As we prepare to observe Vietnam Human Rights Day, it is clear that the struggle is far from over.

Human rights violations in Vietnam have only gotten worse since Vietnam was granted Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) status, removed from the State Department's list of Countries of Particular Concern, added to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and allowed to be a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

In my eyes, these policies, endorsed by the Bush Administration, have been rewards for a government that has made no real effort to improve its human rights record.

The Government of Vietnam claimed that it had improved its human rights record, and that it would continue to make progress on the issue of human rights. However, their record speaks for itself.

The Government of Vietnam has harassed, arrested and sentenced democracy advocates many of whom were not afforded a trial. That