

IN APPRECIATION OF BARBARA
PLETZ

HON. JACKIE SPEIER-

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 21, 2009

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, San Mateo County has one of the most respected Emergency Medical Services agencies in the nation. Much of that success is due to EMS Program Administrator Barbara Pletz, who retires May 21st after 21 years of dedicated and inspired service.

Under Barbara's leadership, the San Mateo County EMS system has been transformed into a nationally recognized model of excellence. The department has been singled out for many honors, including the Award for Excellence from the International Association of Fire Chiefs, International City-County Management's Award for Outstanding Partnerships, the Helen Putnam Award for Excellence in Public Safety from the League of California Cities, and a commendation from the National Council for Public-Private Partnerships.

Barbara Pletz has advanced emergency medical services in San Mateo County by, among other things, encouraging public-private partnerships, working with hospitals to develop the County's Trauma and Stroke Plans and helping develop the San Mateo County Mental Health Assessment and Referral Treatment Program.

Ms. Pletz is a registered nurse with over 35 years of health care experience, including a quarter century in emergency medical services. She is past president of the Emergency Medical Services Agency Administrators' Association of California and was its Legislative Chair from 1998–2004. She is also past president of the California Emergency Department Nurses Association and was one of the very first commissioners on the California State EMS Commission.

Besides honors bestowed on her department, Ms. Pletz has received personal acclaim, including the Distinguished Service Award from the Emergency Nurses Association, the Circle of Service Award from the California State Association of California, and the Lawrence M. Herman Award for Legislative Advocacy from the American Heart Association.

Madam Speaker, all of us in San Mateo County are sorry to see Barbara go, but we wish her much joy and adventure as she pursues her love of travel and experiencing new foods and cultures. Our county is a better place because of her service and for that we are eternally grateful.

ENHANCED OVERSIGHT OF STATE
AND LOCAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 19, 2009

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today in support of H.R. 2182, the "Enhanced Oversight of State and Local Economic Recovery Act." I would like to

thank my colleague Representative TOWNS for introducing this bill and I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2182, amending the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Supporting this bill will ensure that those people responsible for monitoring and accounting the \$787 billion currently being allocated through the Recovery Act are able to do so both fairly and efficiently. I would also like to thank my legislative director, Mr. Arthur D. Sidney, for all his hard work.

This bill will require federal agencies receiving funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, subject to guidance from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), to reasonably adjust applicable limits on administrative expenditures for federal awards to help award recipients defray costs of data collection, auditing, contract and grant planning and management, and investigations of waste, fraud, and abuse required under such Act.

The "Enhanced Oversight of State and Local Economic Recovery Act" modifies the Recovery Act and provides state and local governments the flexibility to set aside a portion of their stimulus funds, up to .5% of such funds, in addition to any funds already allocated to administrative expenditures, to conduct planning, management and oversight investigations to prevent and detect waste, fraud, and abuse.

Furthermore, H.R. 2182 will permit the Administrator of the General Services Administration (GSA) to provide for the use by state and local governments of GSA federal supply schedules for goods or services funded by such Act. The GSA schedules are pre-negotiated federal contracts for a range of common goods and services, for stimulus projects. In addition, this bill will make participation by a firm that sells to a state or local government through such schedule, voluntary as well as require the OMB Director to issue guidance to ensure accurate and consistent reporting of "jobs created" and "jobs retained" data.

There is much concern that state and local governments are unable to meet the oversight demands placed on them by the Recovery Act. The stimulus calls for unparalleled oversight and accountability, so we must provide those whose job it is to root out waste, fraud, and abuse with the adequate tools to get the job done. Our state and local governments are on the front lines of this monumental effort to fight mismanagement of Recovery Act dollars and their success is vital to making the stimulus work. Not initially providing funds for state auditors under the Recovery Act was an omission that needs to be rectified. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill.

SUPPORTING NATIONAL WOMEN'S
HEALTH WEEK

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 19, 2009

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 120 "Supporting the goals and ideals of National Women's Health." I would also like to extend my gratitude to my distinguished colleague from New York, Representative MAURICE D.

HINCHEY, for introducing this important legislation. I thank my legislative director, Arthur D. Sidney.

National Women's Health Week is a weeklong health observance coordinated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health (OWH). National Women's Health Week empowers women to make their health a top priority. With the theme "It's Your Time," the nationwide initiative encourages women to take simple steps for a longer, healthier, and happier life. During National Women's Health Week, communities, businesses, government, health organizations, and other groups work together to educate women about steps they can take to improve their physical and mental health and lower their risks of certain diseases. Important steps include: getting at least 2½ hours of moderate physical activity, 1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity, or a combination of both each week; eating a nutritious diet; visiting a health care professional for regular checkups and preventive screenings; avoiding risky behaviors, like smoking and not wearing a seatbelt; and paying attention to mental health, including getting enough sleep and managing stress.

Research has established the existence of persistent racial and socioeconomic disparities in women's health in the United States. We know that coronary disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women. But, nearly twice as many women in the U.S. die of heart disease and stroke every year as die from all types of cancer. Yet, multiple studies have shown that women are less likely than men to be referred for invasive cardiac procedures.

While the life expectancy of women in the United States has risen, as a group, African American women have a shorter life expectancy and experience earlier onset of such chronic conditions as diabetes and hypertension. If we look at the death rates for diseases of the heart, African American women are clearly at risk with 147 deaths per 100,000. When we look at cervical cancer, we see that the incidence rate of invasive cervical cancer is higher among Asian-American women. Yet, we cannot explain the causes of these higher rates.

Disparities are perhaps most alarming when we look at HIV/AIDS. Twenty-two percent of Americans currently living with HIV are women, and 77 percent of those are African American or Hispanic. Many people are shocked to know that AIDS is the second leading cause of death among African American women age 25 to 44.

There are nearly 40 million women in America who are members of racial and ethnic minority groups. These women suffer disproportionately from premature death, disease, and disabilities. Many also face tremendous barriers to optimal health. This is a growing challenge in our nation.

The challenge is even greater when we consider the aging population. By the year 2050, nearly 1 in 4 adult women will be 65 years old or older, and an astonishing 1 in 17 will be 85 years old or older. We must ensure that our Federal agencies are in the forefront, working to find solutions to the challenges our nation faces in caring for the health of our women.

It is important to celebrate National Women's Health Week to remind women that taking care of themselves is essential to living

longer, healthier, and happier lives. Women are often the caregivers for their spouses, children, and parents and forget to focus on their own health. But research shows that when women take care of themselves, the health of their family improves. During National Women's Health Week it is important to educate our wives, mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, and girlfriends about the steps they can take to improve their health and prevent disease. After all, when women take even the simplest steps to improve their health, the results can be significant and everyone can benefit.

H. Con. Res. 120 is an important way to support the women of this nation, and I am proud to stand today in support of this important legislation. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation as well.

MEMORIAL DAY

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 21, 2009

Mr. WAXMAN. Madam Speaker, each year Memorial Day is an important time to honor the fallen, renew our support to the wounded and recognize the commitment and heroism of those who serve the United States.

In my district this weekend the headstones of the Los Angeles National Cemetery, as those in hundreds of cemeteries across the country, will be surrounded by flowers and by loved ones paying their respects to the departed. In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, these serene and mournful fields honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the freedoms we so cherish.

The sanctity and preservation of our nation's battlefields, monuments and institutions are of utmost importance to ensure that future generations can pay their respects to those who have fought. One of my constituents, Leon Cooper, has been tireless in his efforts to raise awareness about the build-up of garbage and debris at Red Beach in Tarawa Atoll in the remote Pacific island nation of Kiribati. On this site, in a span of just a few days in November 1943, nearly 1700 Marines and Navy personnel were killed and over 2000 more wounded in heavy fighting.

I applaud Mr. Cooper for his commitment. Recently his story about the Battle of Tarawa and its aftermath, *Return to Tarawa: The Leon Cooper Story*, debuted on the Discovery Network. This documentary, narrated by Ed Harris, provides a remarkable window into the events surrounding both the battle itself and Mr. Cooper's involvement, and is a great service to future generations.

I encourage our local U.S. Embassy in Fiji to work with the Government of Kiribati on sanitation and conservation projects that would provide long-term solutions for maintaining the coastline and preserving the area. It would be a tribute to our veterans and a great benefit to the Kiribati people.

While we honor those fallen and veterans from generations past, we must also honor the needs of our soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The past three years have seen a remarkable increase in support for our nation's veterans, including the strengthening of quality health care, funding increases to treat

traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, a record increase in veterans' educational funding, and other improvements to address deficiencies in medical facilities and housing.

The 30th congressional district is home to the West Los Angeles Veterans Medical Center, the largest VA hospital in the continental United States. The West LA VA was built on land that was generously donated in 1888 to serve as an Old Soldiers' Home. I am pleased that a State Veterans Home is being constructed on the property and that the VA is moving forward to develop long-term therapeutic supportive housing on the campus. In addition, I am delighted that the Fisher Foundation has built a facility on the property where veterans' families can live while their loved ones are getting medical treatment at the hospital. These are all appropriate uses that are consistent with the deed and will benefit our nation's veterans.

I remain opposed, however, to the VA's consideration of any plan that would divert portions of this land for commercial uses. That is why I am pleased that Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN and I were able to have legislation passed by Congress and signed by the President to prohibit the sale or commercialization of the campus. I will continue my work with local veterans groups, elected officials and the community to ensure that the property of the West LA VA is preserved for programs that benefit and serve our veterans.

As Americans join together this Memorial Day, let us properly thank those who stand in harm's way, far from home, living under continual risk and fighting under the stars and stripes to preserve and defend the freedoms that all Americans cherish and hold dear. We owe these brave men and women an enduring debt of gratitude.

CREDIT CARDHOLDERS' BILL OF RIGHTS ACT OF 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 20, 2009

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Americans are taught to work hard and make money and to buy a house, but we are never taught about financial literacy. In these tough economic times, it is imperative that Americans know about financial literacy; it is crucial to our survival. Americans need to be prepared to make informed financial choices. Indeed, we must learn how to effectively handle money, credit, debt, and risk. We must become better stewards over the things that we are entrusted. By becoming better stewards, Americans will become responsible workers, heads of households, investors, entrepreneurs, business leaders and citizens.

I am reminded of how important this issue is to American society, as I was invited to attend a financial literacy roundtable panel at the New York Stock Exchange late last month. The panel was sponsored by the Hope Literacy Foundation. The panel was moderated by John Hope Bryant. I was surrounded by some of the great financial literacy experts in the nation. At the roundtable, I discussed the importance of financial literacy for college and

university students. It is important that students be taught financial literacy. The facts about students and financial literacy are astounding.

In 2008, 84 percent of undergraduates had at least one credit card. This figure is staggering. Young people who themselves might not even have a job are able to get credit cards. This is astounding because it begins the cycle of indebtedness.

Recent studies have indicated that young people do not even know basic financial topics such as the impact of student loans on one's credit, how to balance a checkbook, and the impact of automobile loans on one's credit.

Because of my concern that young people are not sufficiently informed about financial literacy, I have offered this amendment: To require financial literacy counseling for borrowers, and for other purposes.

This amendment is important because approximately two-thirds of students borrow to pay for college according to the Center for Economic and Policy Research. Moreover, one in ten of student borrowers have loans more than \$35,000. Passing this legislation will ensure that our nation's college students will be more prepared when incurring student loan debt and help them to avoid default as student loans severely impact one's credit score. Currently there is about \$60 billion in defaulted student loan debt.

Many students do not understand the reality of repaying student debt while taking out these loans. While most Americans have debt of some kind, student loan repayment is especially scary, as one cannot just declare bankruptcy and have their loans discharged. Due to the lack of financial literacy counseling for borrowers, student loan payments are often higher than expected. Recent grads are unable to afford the monthly payments resulting in them living paycheck to paycheck, acquiring credit card debt and in extreme cases, grads leaving the country in order to avoid repayment and debt collectors.

Students and parents are not currently receiving the proper or any information of the burden that their student loans will have once they graduate. This is possibly a result of the relationship between student loan companies and universities, as some lenders offer universities incentives to steer borrowers their way.

College campuses are one place that young Americans are introduced to credit and the possibility of living beyond their means. With proper loan and credit counseling the burden of debt incurred in college could be greatly reduced. Especially in this time of recession, financial literacy is one of the most important tools that we can give to our students in order to ensure their success in the future.

This amendment will provide financial literacy training to students and will require a minimum of 4 hours of counseling including entrance and exit counseling. Counseling will include the fundamentals of basic checking and savings accounts, budgeting, types of credit and their appropriate uses, the different forms of student financial aid, repayment options, credit scores and ratings, as well as investing.

I support the bill and urge my colleagues to do likewise.

H.R. 627 prevents card companies from unfairly increasing interest rates on existing card balances—retroactive increases are permitted only if a cardholder is more than 30 days late,