

violence are deserving of protection. The Senate has passed a strong bipartisan bill that contains critical protections for all victims of domestic violence, but House Republicans are reverting back to partisan politics by pushing through a bill that will not pass the Senate. We should be seeking ways to expand and improve upon the Historic Violence Against Women Act, not limit its ability to protect innocent victims."

Unfortunately, the House Republican bill refuses to acknowledge the needs of all victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and stalking. There are too many women waiting on vital domestic violence services. It is time for House Republicans to end this charade and allow a vote on the comprehensive VAWA that passed the Senate earlier this month.

WHY REPUBLICANS OPPOSE THE BILL (“CONTROVERSIAL” NEW PROVISIONS)

PROTECTIONS FOR LGBT SURVIVORS

The Senate bipartisan reauthorization of VAWA ensures that ALL victims of domestic violence receive aid, including LGBT survivors.

LGBT people are often victims of Domestic Violence:

A 2010 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered victims report intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking at levels equal to or higher than the general population.

The report also found that bisexual women report higher incidences of rape, physical violence, and stalking than their lesbian and heterosexual counterparts.

Recent studies show that LGBT victims face discrimination when accessing services. For example, 45% of LGBT victims were turned away when they sought help from a domestic violence shelter, according to a 2010 survey, and nearly 55% were denied protection orders.

Service providers have gathered numerous stories of LGBT victims denied assistance or services because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Senate Bill ensures non-discrimination, and allows for a wider variety of groups to apply for VAWA funding:

The legislation clarifies that organizations seeking to provide specific services to gay and lesbian victims may receive funds under the largest VAWA grant—the STOP formula grant program.

No organization will be required to develop services specifically targeting this population, but those organizations that would like to offer such services will be able to access funding. Currently, STOP grant funds are only available to organizations predominantly serving women.

Additionally, the legislation clarifies that gay and lesbian victims are included in the definition of underserved populations. Although the LGBT community experiences domestic violence at the same rate as heterosexual couples, a 2010 study found that many victim services providers lack services specific to LGBT victims and have not received training in how to work with LGBT victims. Specialized services are important for this population because reporting rates and prosecution rates are very low.

This bill does not Mandate that Service Providers Offer Specific LGBT Services.

The legislation does not require service providers to offer specific programs for LGBT vic-

tims. It simply seeks to increase the availability of specialized services and to ensure that no victim is turned away based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

VAWA AND IMMIGRANT WOMEN

H.R. 11 adds the crime of stalking to the offenses for which a U Visa is available. The U Visa was created to encourage immigrant victims of crime to report and help prosecute criminal activity. It is only available to victims of certain crimes, which currently include domestic violence and sexual assault.

H.R. 11 protects the children of applicants for U Visas from “aging out” of the process if they become adults while their parent’s application is pending.

H.R. 11 clarifies that VAWA self-petitioners, U Visa petitioners and holders, and T Visa holders (victims of human trafficking) are exempted from the public charge inadmissibility ground that typically precludes a non-citizen from remaining in the country.

H.R. 11 extends the so-called “widow’s and widower’s fix,” approved by Congress in 2009, to add the surviving minor children of a VAWA self-petitioner when the abusive spouse of the petitioner died after the filing of the petition. Other relatives of the petitioner would remain ineligible.

H.R. 11 requires annual reports to Congress regarding outcomes and processing times for VAWA self-petitions, U Visas, and T Visas.

H.R. 11 strengthens the existing International Marriage Broker Regulation Act to provide vital disclosures to foreign fiancés and fiancées of U.S. citizens regarding the criminal history of the sponsoring citizen and other information foreign fiance’s and fiancée’s need to protect themselves from entering abusive marriages. Requires international marriage brokers to collect proof that the foreign fiancé or fiancée is of the age of consent.

H.R. 11 extends the application of the Prison Rape Elimination Act to all immigration detention facilities under the authority of the DHS and HHS.

VAWA EXPANDS PROTECTIONS FOR TRIBAL WOMEN

VAWA Reauthorization provides law enforcement with additional tools to combat domestic and sexual assault in tribal communities.

The bill adds new federal crimes—including a ten-year offense for assaulting a spouse or intimate partner by strangling or suffocating and a five-year offense for assaults resulting in substantial bodily injury—that will enable federal prosecutors to more effectively combat types of assault frequently committed against women in Indian country.

These new crimes allow law enforcement to appropriately address the gradual escalation of seriousness often associated with domestic violence offenses. The bill also clarifies that tribal courts have the authority to issue and enforce tribal protection orders, ensuring that these protection orders can be used effectively to keep women safe.

VAWA Reauthorization closes jurisdictional loopholes to ensure that those who commit domestic violence in Indian country do not escape justice.

The bill addresses a gaping jurisdictional hole by giving tribal courts concurrent jurisdiction over Indian and non-Indian defendants who commit domestic violence offenses against an Indian in Indian country.

Currently, tribal courts do not have jurisdiction over non-Indian defendants who abuse

and attack their Indian spouses on Indian lands, even though more than 50% of Native women are married to non-Indians. Prosecution of domestic violence offenses in Indian country often falls through the cracks, since federal and state law enforcement and prosecutors have limited resources and may be located hours away from tribal communities.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, I urge the members of this House to vote in favor of H.R.11. The Violence Against Women Act provides crucial protections for victims of domestic violence. We cannot wait any longer to reauthorize this crucial legislation that saves the lives of women every day.

HONORING THE 25TH SILVER ANNIVERSARY OF THE YOUNG ISRAEL OF BOCA RATON AND YAKOV & RUCHIE LYONS

HON. THEODORE E. DEUTCH

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 28, 2013

Mr. DEUTCH. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in honor of the 25th Silver Anniversary of the Young Israel of Boca Raton, Florida synagogue. I would like to recognize them for their service to the Jewish community of South Florida and the local community as a whole.

Founded in 1988, the Young Israel of Boca Raton has served as a center of Jewish identity and education for the South Palm Beach County community. I want to particularly acknowledge Yakov (Jason) and Ruchie Lyons, the special honorees during the Silver Anniversary celebration, for their dedication to the synagogue and its emphasis on prayer, study, and community service.

I would like to congratulate the Young Israel of Boca Raton synagogue, an extraordinary Jewish community of South Florida, on their 25th Silver Anniversary. Hopefully, through their example, the Young Israel’s philosophy and spiritual guidance can extend far beyond South Florida.

HONORING ELIZABETH MICHELLE WOODS

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 28, 2013

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable veteran, Elizabeth Michelle Woods. She is a lifelong resident of the Mississippi Delta.

Ms. Woods joined the United States Army Reserves while a senior in high school at East Side High School and served eight years with the 479th Ordnance Company. She completed a tour of duty in Operation Desert Storm as an assistant squad leader. She earned the U.S. Army Achievement Medal, the U.S. Army Certificate of Achievement and other awards. After returning from Saudi Arabia she obtained an Associate of Arts Degree in Social Work.

Ms. Woods earned the rank of Sergeant Promotional after serving our country for 12 years and received an Honorable Discharge. During and after completion of her military

service, she continued her educational pursuits and received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Social Work, a Masters Degree in Social Work, and an Executive Masters of Science Degree in Health Administration.

Ms. Woods stated that her service to America taught her that she can succeed in her life pursuits. She has utilized her social work skills during her tenure in law enforcement and developed a Crime Victims Assistance Program with the Department of Veterans Affairs where she provided mental health services. Ms. Woods has also served as Director of Social Work at Delta Health Center and Aaron Henry Health Center. Ms. Woods is the daughter of the late Percy and Annie Woods.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Ms. Elizabeth Woods for her dedication to serving our great country.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 28, 2013

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, February 25, 2013, I was unable to be present for recorded votes. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes" on rollcall vote No. 46 (on approving the journal) and "yes" on rollcall vote No. 47 (on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 667).

RECOGNIZING MR. LEE WRIGHT AND HIS 48 YEARS OF SERVICE

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 28, 2013

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank and commend Lee Wright of Woodbridge, Va., for his 30 years of honorable service with the United States Air Force and for his subsequent 18 years of civilian service with the Defense Intelligence Agency. We are fortunate to have among us veterans with Mr. Wright's sense of duty and continued commitment to public service.

Mr. Wright began his career stationed at Cam Rahn Bay, RVN in 1964. After the war, Mr. Wright served at multiple air stations, eventually serving on staff at the USAF Military Air Command, Non-Commissioned Officer Academy. Mr. Wright soon moved on to DIA assignments spanning Western Europe, Turkey, Eurasia and Russia where he served multiple roles in intelligence operations. His devotion, hard work, and expertise on Russia led to successive roles within DIA's Russia/EURASIA Division, where Mr. Wright would eventually become Division Chief.

Since August of 2011, Mr. Wright has lent his considerable experience to DIA's Office of Congressional and Public Affairs where his leadership, work ethic and knowledge base have proven invaluable to his colleagues. There is little doubt that after 48 years of serving his country, Mr. Wright has earned some well-deserved R&R.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues rise to join me in recognizing and thanking Lee Wright for his committed and selfless service to his colleagues and our country. We wish Mr. Wright, his wife, Dottie, and his family well in retirement.

RECOGNIZING RARE DISEASE DAY

HON. STEPHEN F. LYNCH

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 28, 2013

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, today, February 28, 2013, marks the sixth annual International Rare Disease Day, a day to raise awareness of the nearly 7,000 rare diseases affecting 30 million Americans, or about one in ten people. Here in the United States, any disease affecting 200,000 people or fewer is considered rare.

Rare Disease Day is also an opportunity to celebrate the life-saving advances in science and research that continue to transform the diagnosis, treatment, and standard of care for many orphan diseases, thanks in no small part to the advocacy efforts of the medical community, patients and their families, and rare disease organizations.

In my congressional district, I have met with a number of constituents and their families whose lives have been impacted by rare diseases, cystic fibrosis among them.

Cystic fibrosis is a genetic disease affecting approximately 30,000 children and adults in the United States and is characterized by a reduction in the flow of salt and water across cell membranes, which leads to the buildup of thick, sticky mucus in the lungs. In 1955, with limited therapies available, children with cystic fibrosis were not expected to live long enough to attend elementary school. Today, due to significant improvements in medical treatment and care, people with the disease are living longer, healthier lives. The median predicted age of survival now stands at 38 years.

Today, I have never been more hopeful of the promise science holds for all patients affected by rare diseases; however, there remains much work to be done. On this sixth annual International Rare Disease Day, I join with patients and their families in urging my colleagues to think about what more Congress can do to help bring hope to those suffering from rare diseases.

CLUSTER MUNITIONS CIVILIAN PROTECTION ACT OF 2013

HON. JAMES P. McGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 28, 2013

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, today I am honored to join my esteemed colleagues, Representative CHARLES BOUSTANY (R-LA) and Senators DIANNE FEINSTEIN (D-CA) and PATRICK LEAHY (D-VT) in introducing the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act of 2013. This bill will restrict the use and deployment of dangerous cluster munitions.

Cluster bombs are canisters designed to open in the air before making contact, dispersing between 200 and 400 small munitions that can saturate a radius of 250 yards. The bombs are intended for military use when attacking enemy troop formations, but are often used in or near populated areas. This is a problem because up to 40 percent of these bomblets fail to explode and become de facto landmines, posing a significant risk to civilians—particularly children—lasting years after a conflict ends.

The Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act prevents any U.S. military funds from being used on cluster munitions with a failure rate of more than 1 percent, unless the rules of engagement specify that cluster munitions (1) will only be used against clearly defined military targets, and (2) will not be used where civilians are known to be present or in areas normally inhabited by civilians.

The bill requires the president to report to Congress on the plan to clean up unexploded cluster munitions, and it includes a national security waiver allowing the president to waive the prohibition if he determines such a waiver is vital to national security.

Mr. Speaker, current law prohibits U.S. sales, exports and transfers of cluster munitions that have a failure rate exceeding 1 percent. The law also requires any sale, export or transfer agreement to include a requirement that the cluster munitions will be used only against military targets. Regrettably, the Pentagon insists that the U.S. should continue to have the ability to use millions of stockpiled cluster munitions that have estimated failure rates of 5 to 20 percent until 2018. This is simply not acceptable; we can do better.

I believe strongly that the United States should be an international leader in ending the terrible toll on civilian populations caused by the high failure rate of these weapons. Passage of this bill would establish in law the Pentagon's standard of a 99 percent functioning rate for all U.S. cluster munitions, and ensure that our deployment and use of these munitions adhere uniformly to this standard. We must do everything possible to spare innocent civilians intended for military targets. The current risk posed by cluster munitions is simply unacceptable.

In 2011, Handicap International studied the effects of cluster bombs in 24 countries and regions, including Afghanistan, Chechnya, Laos and Lebanon. Its report found civilians make up 98 percent of those killed or injured by cluster bombs, and 27 percent of the casualties were children.

The Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions—which has been signed by 111 countries and ratified by 77—prohibits the production, use and export of cluster munitions and requires signatories to eliminate their arsenals within eight years. While nearly all of our major military allies have joined this treaty, to date, the United States has not.

There will always be those who will argue against such a change in military policy and practice, who will say this can't be done. History argues otherwise. I am hopeful that we can make significant progress on this issue and pass this legislation during the 113th Congress.