

The interim lease provisions have not been as successful as planned because many of the terms and conditions act as disincentives to economic development conveyance. For example, there is no commitment for final ownership by Federal agencies upon assumption of control or occupancy of transferred property. Commercial firms are willing to enter into leases, but are refusing this option because of the lack of commitment for final ownership. In addition, the new occupants of closed base property are unable to conduct major renovations unless they agree to restore the property to its original condition. Many of the facilities require major alterations from their original condition just to bring them to local code standards. Why are we requiring restoration of undesired conditions? This makes no sense and ultimately results in taxpayer waste.

Prior to 1996, departure of Federal agencies reverted property to the Federal Government for disposal by GSA. A "leaseback provision" was established in the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1996 to protect communities from a Federal agency revolving door. Under this law, property approved for Federal usage would be transferred to the local redevelopment agency, then leased to a Federal agency at no cost for up to 50 years. The reasoning behind this is to ensure transfer of property to local communities in the event of departure by Federal agencies. The lack of a mandatory requirement for leaseback acceptance allows for circumvention of the legislative intent. In Orlando, FL, the Veterans Administration [VA] has requested Orlando Naval Training Center property through the Federal screen process. VA has refused to enter into a long-term lease with the city. This creates major problems for community redevelopment authorities as it limits their ability to finalize reuse plans. My legislation guarantees an option for communities to obtain reuse property after the departure from the property by the first Federal agency lessee.

We must allow common sense to prevail in this base reuse process. There are some instances where it makes sense to lease to organizations affiliated with the branch of service that previously occupied the base property. This is currently prohibited; yet doesn't it make sense to relocate recruiting stations, reserve centers, and military processing centers onto closed base property?

The four branches of the U.S. Armed Forces are currently able to contract with local governments for fire and police services for only the last 6 months prior to the closure of a base. Many times a base is phased out over a long period of time and the military eliminates military fire and police services much longer before the base is fully closed. Families and military personnel remaining need fire and police services from the local community. The military should be able to contract for these services throughout a long closure process.

Mr. Speaker, the bill I'm introducing today will make major strides in reforming the base closure reuse process. We must enact this legislation to protect our local communities. I urge my colleagues' support.

CONGRATULATIONS TO SARAH
THOMAS

HON. JOHN W. OLVER

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 1997

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my constituent, Sarah Thomas, for her prize-winning entry in the 1997 Voice of Democracy broadcast scriptwriting contest. This contest, sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its Ladies Auxiliary, is highly competitive, with more than 109,000 entries and only 54 available scholarships. Sarah, a junior at St. Bernard's High School in Fitchburg, MA, distinguished herself from other competitors by composing an exceptionally insightful piece that truly reminds us all how fortunate we are to live in a nation of democracy and freedom. I would like to insert Sarah's inspirational script for the RECORD.

1996-97 VFW VOICE OF DEMOCRACY
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

(By Sarah Thomas)

As I look around the room in my history class I see many things that I consider my window to the world unknown. A map shows me where the problems we discuss are happening. A picture above of President Abraham Lincoln above speaks to me of a government " * * * of the people, by the people, and for the people." A book on the desk retells the stories of those who fought many battles and we hear the mournful cries of those who lost and the joyful tales of those who tasted victory. And we learn from them all.

As I look around, though, I am saddened by what I see. A pair of gazing eyes stares aimlessly out the window thinking of this afternoon's soccer game and another person half asleep's thinking, "Why do we need history anyway? This stuff happened years ago." I must confess that I have asked myself the same question several times in my life—until this year.

I am lucky, for I have met and grown close to three exchange students this year. Much can be learned from them and I have been awakened to how privileged we in America truly are. Next to me sits Lan from Beijing, China. He takes notes furiously as he wants to learn as much as he can about the freedom and justice we have in our country. He desperately wants to expand his knowledge during his short stay here in the United States, for when he returns home he may not get the opportunity to further his education. Lan's government places a percentage on those allowed to college and Lan may be one of the many who will not be able to continue his schooling. In a government where the people do not have a voice over the laws placed over them, personal development and growth may be stunted and full potentials may not be reached.

Behind me sits Maria. "Living in Spain is quite different from living here," she once said to me. "You have so many opportunities that I cannot get at home." Unfortunately many of these opportunities are overlooked by those of us lucky enough to live in a country that allows us to enjoy the freedom of new experiences. Maria was surprised at all of the activities girls could participate in. In the schools of her native country, athletics are for the boys and there is not much offered to the girls. United States citizens are fortunate, for under the constitution an eminent theme of equality prevails. The people are also encouraged to voice their opinion if they are unhappy with the actions of

government. Elections and voting are just two of the numerous ways an individual can help to make change in our ever-evolving society. In our schools today men and women have equal opportunity and this is thoroughly supported by the laws of our governmental system.

Across the room sits Dahlia. When she speaks of her home in Israel, I see a picture with much turmoil. Saddened by the thought of leaving America, Dahlia tells us what she faces when she returns home—a home where she fears the unknown. Because Dahlia will soon be eighteen years old, when she goes home she will be forced to enter the military. All men and women, upon reaching eighteen years of age, must enter the military and give up their plans and aspirations at least for a while. Unfortunately many forms of government do not allow their people to take a stand for what they believe in. Government controls all. But in those forms of ruling * * * who controls the government?

In the United States of America, we, the people, have a voice. Through our democratic society, our voice is heard. My worry for Lan, Maria, and Dahlia helps me to have a clearer vision of my "land of opportunity"—a country that allows me to develop my potential and realize my dreams.

In class, a poster over-head is yet another reminder of our unparalleled good fortune. It echoes the words of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "Since the beginning of our American History we have been engaged in change—in a perpetual peaceful revolution—a revolution which goes on steadily, quietly adjusting itself to changing conditions." I believe a society must be able to adapt with the changing world if it is to succeed. Democracy is above and beyond all other forms of government because it allows us to do just that. By allowing its people to make change, our country not only survives, but as a nation of involved people, we thrive. A nation, a people, a voice, we must be heard. Through democracy, we are heard.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION
PROVIDING FOR THE RELIEF OF
NANCY WILSON

HON. THOMAS H. ALLEN

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 1997

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a private relief bill that would provide Social Security widow benefits for my constituent, Nancy B. Wilson of Bremen, ME. I appreciate the opportunity to help resolve Nancy Wilson's unjust restriction of benefits.

Section 216(c) of the Social Security Act requires that a widow be married for at least 9 months to collect her spouse's benefit. Nancy Wilson is not eligible for her husband's Social Security benefit because she was legally married to Al Wilson for only 7 months.

In the mid 1940's, Al Wilson's first wife was committed to a mental institution in Massachusetts. Mr. Wilson wanted a divorce, but was unable to proceed due to Massachusetts State law. According to a study conducted by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), the existing State law excluded insanity or institutionalization as grounds for a divorce.

In 1950, Nancy had a common-law marriage with Mr. Wilson. For 19 years, these two people lived as husband and wife. Al had two children from his original marriage. Nancy also had a child. They raised their children together