

of Mary Beth and Norma was crucial in this life treating situation.

On behalf of all the citizens of western Wisconsin I ask that the United States House of Representatives recognize Mary Beth Clark and Norma Stafne for their courage and thank them for being concerned and giving community citizens.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN AND VIRGINIA  
GAFFNEY

**HON. JOHN SHIMKUS**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 16, 1999*

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to commend two of my constituents from Springfield, Illinois, John and Virginia Gaffney, for their tireless work on a volunteer mission with the International Executive Service Corps in Egypt.

Too often today, people become so engrossed in their busy lives that they forget others need their help. However, Mr. Gaffney found time to volunteer a month out of his life to teach flour milling technology at the Egyptian Milling Technology Center. While John and Virginia were "helping others help themselves", they were also representing our great nation. This kind of personalized foreign assistance is vital to accelerating the development of free enterprise and democracy around the globe.

Thank you John and Virginia for representing, not only America, but the great state of Illinois in your selfless endeavor.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF VA BE-  
COMING A CABINET DEPART-  
MENT

**HON. BOB STUMP**

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 16, 1999*

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, by 1988 the Veterans Administration had become the largest independent agency in the government. Only the Department of Defense had more employees. Making the VA a cabinet-level department was an idea whose time had come.

On March 15 of this year, the Department of Veterans Affairs celebrates its tenth anniversary.

I remember well both the formal creation of the new cabinet department on March 15, 1989, and the Ft. McNair ceremony the previous October 22 when President Reagan signed the bill into law. He paid tribute, and rightly so, to the two driving forces in Congress who gave veterans their seat at the President's Cabinet table.

President Reagan singled out an Army veteran, Congressman G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery of Mississippi, and a former Marine, Congressman Jerry Solomon of New York. At the time, they were, respectively, chairman and ranking minority member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. It was their persistence and legislative skill that brought the measure from its inception to its passage, and finally, to enactment. They also deserve our congratulations today.

Elevation to cabinet status has given the VA a greater opportunity to be heard at the highest level of government, and a greater voice in determining national policies in the areas of health care, education, housing and insurance. Veterans are concerned not only with issues unique to them, such as service-connected illnesses, but also with broader national issues such as homelessness, Alzheimer's and other health issues related specifically to aging.

Making the VA a cabinet department cost the American people nothing in this era of tight budgets, but it would have been justified at any price. Veterans have served their country at great personal sacrifice. More than a million of them made the ultimate sacrifice. It's the price paid for the freedoms we enjoy as Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and all Members to join me in congratulating the VA for a decade of improved service to our veterans.

IMPORTANCE OF AFTER-SCHOOL  
ACTIVITIES

**HON. ELLEN O. TAUSCHER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 16, 1999*

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Speaker, I had planned to offer two amendments concerning after-school programs for children to H.R. 800, the Education Flexibility Partnership Act. After consultation with Chairman MIKE CASTLE, I have decided against offering the amendments and have agreed to work with the chairman to highlight the importance of after-school activities for schoolchildren and the need for a national discourse on this topic.

I believe we should do everything on the Federal level to promote quality, after-school care for students, and after-school educational activities for at-risk juveniles.

Every day at 3 p.m., the final school bell rings and hundreds of classrooms across America stand empty until the next day. Numerous studies have shown that between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. is when the majority of juvenile crimes occur.

It is also the same time period when moms and dads begin to anxiously watch the clock at work, worrying about their children being home alone.

Doesn't it make sense for schools to use this readily available space to provide after-school activities rather than send the school kids home alone to an empty house? After school programs will address the needs of working parents who want a safe haven for their children during non-school hours.

Quality, after-school care can also have tremendous academic benefits. It can overcome learning difficulties created by overcrowded classrooms and high teacher-student ratios which are common problems in America's public schools. After-school child care programs also provide the working parents of the five to twelve million latchkey children in the United States, with the peace of mind that their children are in a safe and supervised environment after school.

After-school educational programs for at-risk youth have been shown to reduce the incidence of crime on school campuses and enhance the academic achievements for at-risk juveniles.

We must encourage schools to provide quality, after-school activities as a way to complement other programs that are designed to promote academic achievement. Education does not end when the last school bell rings. Let's work together to help children reach their highest potential.

I would like to thank Chairman CASTLE for his leadership on after-school programs. It is a pleasure to collaborate with him on this important issue which has significant implications on our children's future.

AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

**HON. MICHAEL N. CASTLE**

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 16, 1999*

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from California, Congresswoman ELLEN TAUSCHER for her comments about the importance of after-school programs. I appreciate and applaud her dedication to this issue. In addition, I welcome this opportunity to work with her to bring this issue to the forefront of the ongoing discussion Congress is having on how best to educate our youth.

Indeed, evidence is continually emerging to prove what we have always intuitively known about the importance of out-of-school time for children, their health and well-being, and their academic growth. Roughly five million children are unsupervised after school, leaving them at risk of accidents and ripe for undesirable behaviors ranging from smoking and drinking to sexual activity and violent crime. For too many of our children, the hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. are spent engaged in delinquent or unproductive behavior. Television happens to be the No. 1 substitute for good after-school programs. Millions of children come home and plop in front of the television set after school, and I venture to guess that many are not watching educational programming. In addition, juvenile crime rates go up 300 percent after 3 p.m. and over half of all juvenile crime occurs between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

This is quite disturbing, given that we know that the hours after school have become absolutely critical in a child's life. After-school programs can be exceptionally beneficial for kids. Good programs can give kids the chance to interact with their peers and adults in a positive way, to gain or improve new skills, to master educational material, to develop strong bodies, or to foster creativity. In addition, studies have shown that students who attend productive after-school programs make significant academic gains, enjoy school more, feel more safe, and are less likely to participate in delinquent behaviors year round.

We, as leaders of this Nation, need to focus on improving the quality of children's out-of-school time. I do not necessarily believe we have to spend billions of dollars to accomplish this task, but we should invest ourselves and our time. Up to date information is desperately needed to understand the dynamics, intricacies, strengths, and weaknesses of existing after-school programs. The last major study of after-school programs was completed in 1993 by the National Institute of Out-Of-School Time. This lack of up to date information is what drove me to hold several round table discussions with my constituents last year and to