

REMARKS HONORING THE 40TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE PEACE
CORPS**HON. STEVEN R. ROTHMAN**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2001

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Peace Corps and to join in the celebration of this wonderful organization's 40th anniversary.

Since its founding in 1961, few government initiatives have captured the imagination of the American people like the Peace Corps. Born out of President John F. Kennedy's bold vision for the future, the Peace Corps has served to promote world peace and friendship for four decades.

Remarkably, since 1961 over 160,000 Americans have joined the Peace Corps, serving in 134 countries and bringing hope to millions of people around the world. By working to bring clean water to villages and towns, teaching children, helping start new small businesses and stopping the spread of dangerous diseases, Peace Corps volunteers have served as our nation's ambassadors of "good will" to the rest of the world.

I am pleased to have Philip Peredo, a former Peace Corps volunteer, serve on my staff in my District Office in Hackensack, New Jersey. As a Peace Corps volunteer from 1998 until just last year, Phil taught English language classes at Neijiang Teacher's University in the Sichuan Province of the People's Republic of China. The lessons Phil taught his students about America will long endure, just as the lessons he learned from his students will stay with Phil for the rest of his life.

Whether they are in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Central Asia, Eastern and Central Europe, or Central and South America, Peace Corps volunteers continue to make our world a better place.

For their idealism, for their commitment to achieving real progress for the less fortunate, I salute all Peace Corps volunteers, past and present. I wish the Peace Corps continued success in sharing America's promise with people around the world.

THE SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT
RESTORATION ACT**HON. MAX SANDLIN**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2001

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation addressing a serious issue for retired teachers and government employees across America. These public servants, after a lifetime of educating our youth and working for the taxpayers of America, find that their reward is a significant reduction in their Social Security benefits. It is time to end this penalty and give these retirees the benefits they are due.

Retirees drawing a benefit from a private pension fund do not have their Social Security benefits reduced. Why should we do this to civil servants? We should be encouraging able and intelligent people to teach our children and work for the government, not discouraging them by slashing their retirement benefits. We must bring equity to the Social Security benefits of private sector and public sector retirees.

This legislation, the Social Security Benefit Restoration Act, will bring this equity to retirement benefits. This bill will simply eliminate the public sector benefit penalty enacted in 1983 and allow all civil servants to draw full Social Security benefits.

I urge my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring this legislation. For every retired government employee and retired teacher in your district experiencing reduced Social Security benefits, I urge your support for this bill.

HONORING THE 40TH ANNIVER-
SARY OF THE PEACE CORPS**HON. TAMMY BALDWIN**

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2001

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the 40th anniversary of the Peace Corps. Since 1961, over 161,000 Americans have offered their energy to improving conditions in over 134 nations around the world.

Reflecting the rich diversity of the United States, Peace Corps volunteers share a common spirit of service, dedication, and idealism. Peace Corps volunteers must participate in intensive language and cross-cultural training to help them better adapt to their new communities. In addition to learning the local language and adapting to new cultures, volunteers also help improve their surroundings. Corps volunteers work to bring clean water to underdeveloped communities, teach children, start new small businesses, and stop the spread of AIDS. The Peace Corps always goes about its mission with the knowledge that, with assistance, developing nations can take control of their own destiny.

Because the University of Wisconsin-Madison has been a leading producer of Peace Corps volunteers for over a decade, the Peace Corps has chosen to commemorate their 40th Anniversary at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Many of the first to serve in the Peace Corps were alumni of the UW-Madison. Since 1961, more than 2,500 alumni have dedicated a minimum of two years of their lives to help developing countries around the world. Almost 200 current graduate students, faculty, and staff have served in the Peace Corps. The Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVS) are an extremely active group in the 2nd Congressional District and a vital force in the Peace Corps community.

Forty years later, the Peace Corps continues to fulfill its promise by sharing one of our most precious resources: its citizens. The work of these volunteers has helped engender positive changes around the world. We, as citizens of the world, should honor the commitment of such an important organization.

VETERANS HOSPITALS
EMERGENCY REPAIR ACT**HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2001

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of myself, Mr. EVANS of Illinois, Mr. MORAN of Kansas and Mr. FILNER of California, and other members of the Veteran's Affairs Committee, I am introducing a new

measure, the "Veterans Hospitals Emergency Repair Act," that my colleagues and I hope will begin to address what has become a troubling and lingering problem in some of our Nation's veterans hospitals: a crumbling and substandard patient-care infrastructure. The problems even include buildings that could collapse in earthquakes. In fact, Mr. Speaker, just yesterday in Tacoma, Washington, a temblor of 6.8 magnitude damaged patient care buildings 6 and 81 on the campus of the American Lake VA Medical Center.

Mr. Speaker, for the past several years, we have noted that the President's annual budget for VA health care has requested little or no funding for major medical facility construction projects for America's veterans. As we indicated last year in our report to the Committee on the Budget on the Administration's budget request for fiscal year 2001, VA has engaged in an effort through market-based research by independent organizations to determine whether present VA facility infrastructures are meeting needs in the most appropriate manner, and whether services to veterans can be enhanced with alternative approaches. This process, called "Capital Assets Realignment for Enhanced Services," or "CARES," has commenced within the Department of Veterans Affairs, but will require several years before bearing fruit. In the interim, Mr. Speaker, some VA hospitals need additional maintenance, repair and improvements to address immediate dangers and hazards, to promote safety and to sustain a reasonable standard of care for the nation's veterans. Recent reports by outside consultants and VA have revealed that dozens of VA health care buildings are still seriously at risk from seismic damage. The buildings at American Lake damaged in yesterday's earthquake were among those identified as being at the highest levels of risk.

Also, Mr. Speaker, a report by VA identified \$57 million in improvements were needed to address women's health care; another report, by the Price Waterhouse firm, concluded that VA should be spending from 2 percent to 4 percent of its "plant replacement value" (PRV) on upkeep and replacement of its health care facilities. This PRV value in VA is about \$35 billion; thus, using the Price Waterhouse index on maintenance and replacement, VA should be spending from \$700 million to \$1.4 billion each year. In fact, in fiscal year 2001, VA will spend only \$170.2 million for these purposes.

While Congress authorized a number of major medical construction projects in the past three fiscal years, these have received no funding through the appropriations process. I understand that some of the more recent deferrals of major VA construction funding were intended to permit the CARES process to proceed in an orderly fashion, avoiding unnecessary spending on VA hospital facilities that might, in the future, not be needed for veterans. I agree with this general policy, especially for those larger hospital projects, ones that ordinarily would be considered under our regular annual construction authorization authority. We need to resist wasteful spending, especially when overall funds are so precious. But I believe that I have a better plan.

Mr. Speaker, when I assumed the Chairmanship of the Veterans Committee earlier this year, I asked what steps my colleagues

and I might take immediately that could help our veterans. The legislation that I am introducing today is part of the answer. This bill, which I am pleased is cosponsored by my friend and the Ranking Member of the Committee, Lane Evans of Illinois, Mr. JERRY MORAN of Kansas, our new Chairman of the Health Subcommittee, as well as the Subcommittee's Ranking Member, Mr. BOB FILNER of California, as well as other members of the Veteran's Affairs Committee, sets up a temporary, 2-year program of delegated authorizations of smaller construction projects (each limited to a cost of less than \$25 million) that would update, improve and restore VA health care facilities in a defined number of sites each of these years. The Secretary would be given this power to approve individual facility projects, generally based on recommendations of an independent capital investments board and on criteria detailed in our bill that place a premium on projects to protect patient safety and privacy, improve seismic protection, provide barrier-free accommodation, and improve VA patient care facilities in several specialized areas of concern, such as privacy needs for women veterans, in order to meet the contemporary standard of care for our veterans.

The bill would require the Secretary, at the end of the process, to report his actions to the VA Committee and to the Appropriations Committee as well. The bill also would mandate a review of this delegated-project approach by the General Accounting Office, to ensure this is an effective mechanism to advance some VA medical construction during the pendency of CARES.

Mr. Speaker, our bill would authorize appropriations of \$250 million in fiscal year 2002, and \$300 million in fiscal year 2003, to accomplish these projects under the authority provided. Thus, I believe we can make the case for this interim approach and gain support for moving a specific list of relatively small but critical projects forward with independent review. I believe we soon can be doing something urgently needed for veterans, in the best traditions of our continuing commitment to them. Then we can await the development and conclusion of the CARES process, more comfortable in the knowledge that at least for many VA hospitals, their emergency maintenance needs for small-scale construction projects will not go unnoticed, unauthorized—and unfunded.

It should be noted that nothing in this bill prevents the Committee or the Congress from still considering the merits of large-scale, VA major medical facility construction project authorizations in these two fiscal years, should we decide to take such decisions, now or in the future. By its nature, the bill is intended as a stopgap measure to give the VA Secretary limited authority to keep its health care system viable while the CARES process proceeds.

Mr. Speaker, I believe, and I hope that my colleagues will agree with me, that this is a worthy bill. On very short notice, when VA was informally advised about the prospect of this kind of bill being introduced and considered by this House, 25 projects that would be appropriate under its terms were immediately identified. I am certain that there are many more, in all sectors of the VA health care system, that the Secretary will have an opportunity to consider and approve under this authority. Many VA facilities need funds right now for small projects on an emergency basis. In good con-

science, we cannot continue to ignore them. In my judgment, we cannot afford to wait several years before deciding to provide funds when these projects confront the VA system, the veterans, and us today.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this bill and help enact it as a high priority early this year.

IN HONOR OF JOHN JUSTIN, JR.

HON. KAY GRANGER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2001

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and remember the life of a great Texan, John Justin, Jr. Mr. Justin passed away Monday at his home in Fort Worth, Texas. He was 84 years old. Mr. Justin was a boot maker and civic leader who was a tireless promoter of Fort Worth's western heritage. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, Jane, his daughter Mary, son David, and to all of his family at this difficult time in their lives.

Mr. Justin was born in Nocona, Texas on January 17th, 1917 to John and Ruby Justin. He attended high school in Fort Worth but left as a teenager to come to Washington, DC, where he took a job as a messenger and graduated from night high school. He attended Oklahoma A&M and then returned to Texas to attend Texas Christian University. Mr. Justin served as a member of the TCU board of trustees since 1979, and was a longstanding booster. The athletic center at the university is named in his honor.

He started the Justin Barton Belt Company with a partner and produced fashionable belts. The company continued to thrive during Mr. Justin's service in the Merchant Marines during World War 11. In 1950, he took the reigns of the family business. Mr. Justin was the third generation to run Justin Industries, the family boot business that he expanded to include Acme Brick. John Justin, Jr. oversaw the introduction of several popular boot styles, and, under his direction, Justin Industries was regularly the boot market leader. Its motto, "The Standard of the West" says it all.

Mr. Justin was very active in the community. He was a member of the Fort Worth City Council from 1959 to 1961 and was mayor from 1961 to 1963. He was longtime chairman of the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo. In the 1980s he led the drive to build the equestrian center at the Will Rogers complex that is now named in his honor. John Justin, Jr.'s most lasting contribution to Fort Worth will undoubtedly be his drive to promote the city's western heritage. There is no question that he will be deeply missed within the Texas civic community.

Again, my heart goes out to Mr. Justin's family and to all those who are grieving his passing. He gave unselfishly to the city he loved so much. John Justin, Jr. was a Texas icon and his contributions to our community will never be forgotten.

SOCIAL SECURITY GUARANTEE ACT

HON. WALTER B. JONES

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2001

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation to protect the Social Security benefits of our senior citizens. With the prospect of Social Security reform looming in the not so distant future, it is important that we assure seniors that their benefits will not be cut to expedite Social Security reform. Seniors have worked too hard for a secure retirement, to see it jeopardized by a short-sighted effort to ensure future Social Security solvency.

Under current law, Americans have no property right to their Social Security benefits. Many Americans have paid Social Security taxes over their working lifetimes and are planning for retirement with the expectation that they will receive these Social Security benefits. However, at any time, Congress could eliminate or reduce these benefits in the name of Social Security reform.

The Social Security Guarantee Act would eliminate concerns over benefit reduction by seeking to give seniors a property right to their retirement benefits. Specifically, it would require the Secretary of the Treasury to issue to each recipient of Social Security retirement benefits a certificate that includes a written guarantee of a fixed monthly benefit, plus a guaranteed annual cost-of-living increase. By doing so, we hope to eliminate the use of senior scare tactics that have doomed Social Security reform prospects in the past.

I believe this is an important first step toward meaningful Social Security reform. We as members of Congress have a duty to our seniors to ensure their retirement security will not be jeopardized. At the same time, we cannot lose sight of the overall goal of reforming the Social Security program so that today's workers will have the retirement that they deserve as well.

Please join me in supporting this legislation as the beginning of meaningful discourse on Social Security reform.

HONORING ARCHBISHOP EDWARD M. EGAN

HON. FELIX GRUCCI

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2001

Mr. GRUCCI. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to congratulate the Most Reverend Edward M. Egan, Archbishop of New York upon his elevation to the dignity of Cardinal.

The Most Reverend Edward Egan is only the seventh Archbishop of New York to be named a Cardinal in the last one hundred and twenty five years. He was born on April 2, 1932, in Oak Park, Illinois. Having earned his Bachelor's in Philosophy from Saint Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois, he was sent to Rome to complete his seminary studies at Pontifical North American College in Vatican City. In 1958, he received a Licentiate in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University.