

their constituents. These State and local officials are the first responders to emergencies. They need access to critical information on potential threats within their jurisdictions. The "Intergovernmental Law Enforcement Sharing Act of 2001" will enhance their ability to get that information.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

H.R. 3483

A bill, to amend title 31, United States Code, to provide for intergovernmental cooperation to enhance the sharing of law enforcement information.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Intergovernmental Law Enforcement Information Sharing Act of 2001".

SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Governors and mayors are responsible for the protection of their constituents, and State and local agencies are typically the first responders to emergencies. Therefore, State and local officials and agencies must be able to receive information regarding potential threats within their jurisdictions.

(2) Most State and local law enforcement authorities currently have mechanisms in place to receive and protect classified information provided by Federal officials. These mechanisms must be supplemented to include elected officials and additional senior law enforcement officials in every State.

(3) Expanding the issuance of security clearances, consistent with all applicable Federal standards and investigative requirements, is an important means of improving information sharing among Federal, State, and local officials.

(4) There is a need for a comprehensive review of procedures within Federal law enforcement agencies in order to identify and remedy unnecessary barriers to information sharing among Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies.

SEC. 3. SECURITY CLEARANCES AND ENHANCED INFORMATION SHARING.

Chapter 65 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 6509. Intergovernmental cooperation to enhance the sharing of law enforcement information

“(a) The Attorney General shall expeditiously carry out security clearance investigations for the persons identified in subsection (b), and shall grant appropriate security clearances to all such persons who qualify for clearances under the standards set forth in applicable laws and Executive orders.

“(b) The persons referred to in subsection (a) are:

“(1) Every Governor of a State or territory who applies for a security clearance.

“(2) Every chief elected official of a political subdivision of a State or territory with a population exceeding 30,000 who applies for a security clearance.

“(3) At least one senior law enforcement official for each State or territory, as designated by the Governor of such State or territory.

“(4) At least one senior law enforcement official for each political subdivision described in paragraph (2), as designated by the chief elected official of such subdivision.

“(5) Law enforcement officers from State, territorial, and local agencies that participate in Federal counter-terrorism working groups, joint or regional terrorism task forces, and other activities involving the

combined efforts of Federal and non-Federal law enforcement agencies.

“(6) The chiefs, commissioners, sheriffs, or comparable officials who head each State, territorial, and local agency that participates in a working group, task force, or similar activity described in paragraph (5).

“(c)(1) The Attorney General may charge State, territorial, and local governments, in whole or in part, for the costs of carrying out security clearance investigations and granting security clearances under this section. Such charges may not exceed the amounts charged for carrying out such investigations and granting such clearances for Federal employees.

“(2) The Attorney General may waive any charges that would otherwise apply under paragraph (1) to a State, territorial, or local government if such government agrees to promptly provide Federal officials, without charge, access to the criminal databases of such government for the purpose of conducting personnel security background investigations for military, civilian, and contract employees.

“(d) To the maximum extent practicable, the Attorney General shall ensure that information systems, including databases, are configured to allow efficient and effective sharing of information among appropriate Federal, State, territorial, and local officials and agencies.”

SEC. 4. STUDY BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Attorney General shall conduct a study of methods to enhance the sharing of sensitive Federal law enforcement information with State, territorial, and local law enforcement officials. The study shall review—

(1) appropriate safeguards to protect confidential sources and methods;

(2) mechanisms for determining the credibility of information relating to potential threats;

(3) restrictions on access to Federal databases by State, territorial, and local elected officials and law enforcement personnel; and

(4) any other matter that the Attorney General considers appropriate.

(b) PARTICIPATION.—The Attorney General shall ensure that officials from State, territorial, and local law enforcement agencies participate in the study.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act the Attorney General shall submit a report containing the findings and recommendations of the study to the Committee on Government Reform and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Governmental Affairs and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate.

SEC. 5. DISCLAIMER.

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to limit the authority of the head of a Federal agency to classify information or to continue the classification of information previously classified by an agency.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2001

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, during rollcall vote No. 494 on December 12, 2001 I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea.”

MIDDLE EASTERN TERRORIST INCIDENTS

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2001

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, on September 11th, the U.S. suffered the most destructive terrorist attack on its soil by Middle Eastern terrorists with the suicide bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., which killed over three thousand Americans and wounded many more. This was the highest casualty toll ever recorded for a single terrorist incident anywhere. Yet the U.S. is by no means the only country to feel the wrath of Middle Eastern terrorists in recent months.

The cancer of terrorism that has plagued the Middle East for decades has now transformed into new and more deadly forms that pose grave challenges to the United States and our allies. Middle Eastern terrorists are now striking outside their home region, boldly attacking high-profile targets, and killing in a more indiscriminant manner.

Nonetheless, the Middle East is a hotbed of state-sponsored terrorism. Five of the seven states that have been branded by the U.S. government as sponsors of international terrorism—Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and Syria—are part of the troubled Middle East region. The Middle East is not only infested with more terrorist groups than any other region, but the Middle East remains the world's foremost exporter of terrorism, with most of the spillover afflicting Western Europe and the United States. These state sponsors of terrorism are concerned with furthering their national goals only through the use of their terrorist networks. It remains imperative, therefore that the United States and our allies track down and destroy these terrorist groups and their global reach wherever they may be.

Accordingly, in wanting to bring to the attention of my colleagues a list of the significant Middle Eastern terrorist incidents from 1961–2001 based on the findings of the State Department's Office of the Historian, I request that this terrorism list be printed at this point in the RECORD.

SIGNIFICANT MIDDLE EASTERN TERRORIST INCIDENTS: 1961–2001

1961–1982

Munich Olympic Massacre, September 5, 1972: Eight Palestinian “Black September” terrorists seized 11 Israeli athletes in the Olympic Village in Munich, West Germany. In a bungled rescue attempt by West German authorities, nine of the hostages and five terrorists were killed.

Ambassador to Sudan Assassinated, March 2, 1973: U.S. Ambassador to Sudan Cleo A. Noel and other diplomats were assassinated at the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Khartoum by members of the Black September organization.

Entebbe Hostage Crisis, June 27, 1976: Members of the Baader-Meinhof Group and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) seized an Air France airliner and its 258 passengers. They forced the plane to land in Uganda, where on July 3, Israeli commandos successfully rescued the passengers.

Iran Hostage Crisis, November 4, 1979: After President Carter agreed to admit the Shah of Iran into the U.S., Iranian radicals

seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took 66 American diplomats hostage. Thirteen hostages were soon released, but the remaining 53 were held until their release on January 20, 1981.

Grand Mosque Seizure, November 20, 1979: 200 Islamic terrorists seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, taking hundreds of pilgrims hostage. Saudi and French security forces retook the shrine after an intense battle in which some 250 people were killed and 600 wounded.

Assassination of Egyptian President, October 6, 1981: Soldiers who were secretly members of the Takfir Wal-Hajira sect attacked and killed Egyptian President Anwar Sadat during a troop review.

Assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister, September 14, 1982: Premier Bashir Gemayel was assassinated by a car bomb parked outside his party's Beirut headquarters.

1983

Bombing of U.S. Embassy in Beirut, April 18, 1983: Sixty-three people including the CIA's Middle East director, were killed, and 120 were injured in a 400-pound suicide truck-bomb attack on the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon. The Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility.

Bombing of Marine Barracks, Beirut, October 23, 1983: Simultaneous suicide truck-bomb attacks were made on American and French compounds in Beirut, Lebanon. A 12,000-pound bomb destroyed the U.S. compound, killing 242 Americans, while 58 French troops were killed when a 400-pound device destroyed a French base. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility.

1984

Kidnapping of Embassy Official, March 16, 1984: The Islamic Jihad kidnapped and later murdered Political Officer William Buckley in Beirut, Lebanon. Other U.S. citizens not connected to the U.S. Government were seized over a succeeding 2-year period.

Hizballah Restaurant Bombing, April 12, 1984: Eighteen U.S. servicemen were killed, and 83 people were injured in a bomb attack on a restaurant near a U.S. Air Force Base in Torrejon, Spain. Responsibility was claimed by Hizballah.

1985

TWA Hijacking, June 14, 1985: A Trans-World Airlines flight was hijacked en route to Rome from Athens by two Lebanese Hizballah terrorists and forced to fly to Beirut. The eight crew members and 145 passengers were held for 17 days, during which one American hostage, a U.S. Navy sailor, was murdered. After being flown twice to Algiers, the aircraft was returned to Beirut after Israel released 435 Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners.

Soviet Diplomats Kidnapped, September 30, 1985: In Beirut, Lebanon, Sunni terrorists kidnapped four Soviet diplomats. One was killed, but three were later released.

Achille Lauro Hijacking, October 7, 1985: Four Palestinian Liberation Front terrorist seized the Italian cruise liner in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, taking more than 700 hostages. One U.S. passenger was murdered before the Egyptian Government offered the terrorists safe haven in return for the hostages' freedom.

Egyptian Airliner Hijacking, November 23, 1985: An EgyptAir airplane bound from Athens to Malta and carrying several U.S. citizens was hijacked by the Abu Nidal Group.

1986

Aircraft Bombing in Greece, March 30, 1986: A Palestinian splinter group detonated a bomb as TWA Flight 840 approached Athens Airport, killing four U.S. citizens.

Berlin Discoteque Bombing, April 5, 1986: Two U.S. soldiers were killed, and 79 Amer-

ican servicemen were injured in a Libyan bomb attack on a nightclub in West Berlin, West Germany. In retaliation, U.S. military jets bombed targets in and around Tripoli and Benghazi.

1988

Kidnapping of William Higgins, February 17, 1988: U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. W. Higgins was kidnapped and murdered by the Iranian-backed Hizballah group while serving with the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO) in southern Lebanon.

Naples USO Attack, April 14, 1988: The Organization of Jihad Brigades exploded a car bomb outside a USO Club in Naples, Italy, killing one U.S. sailor.

Pan Am 103 Bombing, December 21, 1988: Pan American Airlines Flight 103 was blown up over Lockerbie, Scotland, by a bomb believed to have been placed on the aircraft in Frankfurt, West Germany, by Libyan terrorists. All 259 people on board were killed.

1991

Attempted Iraqi Attacks on U.S. Posts, January 18-19, 1991: Iraqi agents planted bombs at the U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia's home residence and at the USIS library in Manila.

1992

Bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Argentina, March 17, 1992: Hizballah claimed responsibility for a blast that leveled the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, causing the deaths of 29 and wounding 242.

1993

World Trade Center Bombing, February 26, 1993: The World Trade Center in New York City was badly damaged when a car bomb planted by Islamic terrorists explodes in an underground garage. The bomb left six people dead and 1,000 injured. The men carrying out the attack were followers of Umar Abd al-Rahman, an Egyptian cleric who preached in the New York City area.

Attempted Assassination of President Bush by Iraqi Agents, April 14, 1993: The Iraqi intelligence service attempted to assassinate former U.S. President George Bush during a visit to Kuwait. In retaliation, the U.S. launched a cruise missile attack 2 months later on the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

1994

Hebron Massacre, February 25, 1994: Jewish right-wing extremist and U.S. citizen Baruch Goldstein machine-gunned Moslem worshippers at a mosque in West Bank town of Hebron, killing 29 and wounding about 150.

Air France Hijacking, December 24, 1994: Members of the Armed Islamic Group seized an Air France Flight to Algeria. The four terrorists were killed during a rescue effort.

1995

Jerusalem Bus Attack, August 21, 1995: Hamas claimed responsibility for the detonation of a bomb that killed six and injured over 100 persons, including several U.S. citizens.

Saudi Military Installation Attack, November 13, 1995: The Islamic Movement of Change planted a bomb in a Riyadh military compound that killed one U.S. citizen, several foreign national employees of the U.S. Government, and more than 40 others.

Egyptian Embassy Attack, November 19, 1995: A suicide bomber drove a vehicle into the Egyptian Embassy compound in Islamabad, Pakistan, killing at least 16 and injuring 60 persons. Three militant Islamic groups claimed responsibility.

1996

Hamas Bus Attack, February 26, 1996: In Jerusalem, a suicide bomber blew up a bus, killing 26 persons, including three U.S. citizens, and injuring some 80 persons, including three other US citizens.

Dizengoff Center Bombing, March 4, 1996: Hamas and the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) both claimed responsibility for a bombing outside of Tel Aviv's largest shopping mall that killed 20 persons and injured 75 others, including two U.S. citizens.

West Bank Attack, May 13, 1996: Arab gunmen opened fire on a bus and a group of Yeshiva students near the Bet El settlement, killing a dual U.S.-Israeli citizen and wounding three Israelis. No one claimed responsibility for the attack, but Hamas was suspected.

Zekharya Attack, June 9, 1996: Unidentified gunmen opened fire on a car near Zekharya, killing a dual U.S./Israeli citizen and an Israeli. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) is suspected.

Khobar Towers Bombing, June 25, 1996: A fuel truck carrying a bomb exploded outside the U.S. military's Khobar Towers housing facility in Dhahran, killing 19 U.S. military personnel and wounding 515 persons, including 240 U.S. personnel. Several groups claimed responsibility for the attack.

Bombing of Archbishop of Oran, August 1, 1996: A bomb exploded at the home of the French Archbishop of Oran, killing him and his chauffeur. The attack occurred after the Archbishop's meeting with the French Foreign Minister. The Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) is suspected.

PUK Kidnapping, September 13, 1996: In Iraq, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) militants kidnapped four French workers for Pharmaciens Sans Frontieres, a Canadian United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) official, and two Iraqis.

1997

Egyptian Letter Bombs, January 2-13, 1997: A series of letter bombs with Alexandria, Egypt, postmarks were discovered at Al-Hayat newspaper bureaus in Washington, New York City, London, and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Three similar devices, also post-marked in Egypt, were found at a prison facility in Leavenworth, Kansas. Bomb disposal experts defused all the devices, but one donated at the Al-Hayat office in London, injuring two security guards and causing minor damage.

Empire State Building Sniper Attack, February 23, 1997: A Palestinian gunman opened fire on tourists at an observation deck atop the Empire State Building in New York City, killing a Danish national and wounding visitors from the United States, Argentina, Switzerland, and France before turning the gun on himself. A handwritten note carried by the gunman claimed this was a punishment attack against the "enemies of Palestine."

Israeli Shopping Mall Bombing, September 4, 1997: Three suicide bombers of Hamas detonated bombs in the Ben Yehuda shopping mall in Jerusalem, killing eight persons, including the bombers, and wounding nearly 200 others. A dual U.S./Israeli citizen was among the dead, and seven U.S. citizens were wounded.

Yemeni Kidnapping, October 30, 1997: Al-Sha'if tribesman kidnapped a U.S. businessman near Sanaa. The tribesman sought the release of two fellow tribesmen who were arrested on smuggling charges and several public works projects they claim the government promised them. They released the hostage on November 27.

Tourist killings in Egypt, November 17, 1997: Al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya (IG) gunmen shot and killed 58 tourists and four Egyptians and wounded 26 others at the Hatshepsut Temple in the Valley of the Kings near Luxor. Thirty-four Swiss, eight Japanese, five Germans, four Britons, one French, one Colombian, a dual Bulgarian/British citizen, and four unidentified persons

were among the dead. Twelve Swiss, two Japanese, two Germans, one French, and nine Egyptians were among the wounded.

1998

U.S. Embassy Bombings in East Africa, August 7, 1998: A bomb exploded at the rear entrance of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, killing 12 U.S. citizens, 32 Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs), and 247 Kenyan citizens. About 5,000 Kenyans, six U.S. citizens, and 13 FSNs were injured. The U.S. embassy building sustained extensive structural damage. Almost simultaneously, a bomb detonated outside the U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, killing seven FSNs and three Tanzanian citizens, and injuring one U.S. citizen and 76 Tanzanians. The explosion caused major structural damage to the U.S. embassy facility. The U.S. Government held Usama Bin Ladin responsible.

2000

Attack on U.S.S. *Cole*, October 12, 2000: In Aden, Yemen, a small dingy carrying explosives rammed the destroyer U.S.S. *Cole*, killing 17 sailors and injuring 39 others. Supporters of Usama Bin Ladin were suspected.

2001

Bus Stop Bombing, April 22, 2001: A member of Hamas detonated a bomb he was carrying near a bus stop in Kfar Siva, Israel, killing one person and injuring 60.

Tel-Aviv Nightclub Bombing, June 1, 2001: Hamas claimed responsibility for the bombing of a popular Israeli nightclub that caused over 140 casualties.

Hamas Restaurant Bombing, August 9, 2001: A Hamas-planted bomb detonated in a Jerusalem pizza restaurant, killing 15 people and wounding more than 90.

Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Homeland, September 11, 2001: Two hijacked airliners crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center. Soon thereafter, the Pentagon was struck by a third hijacked plane. A fourth hijacked plane, suspected to be bound for a high-profile target in Washington, crashed into a field in southern Pennsylvania. More than 5,000 U.S. citizens and other nationals were killed as a result of these acts. President Bush and Cabinet officials indicated that Usama Bin Laden was the prime suspect and that they considered the United States in a state of war with international terrorism. In the aftermath of the attacks, the United States formed the Global Coalition Against Terrorism.

Downtown Jerusalem Bombing, December 2, 2001: Two suicide bombers blew themselves up in downtown Jerusalem killing ten people and wounding more than 130. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.

Haifa Bus Attack, December 3, 2001: A Hamas suicide bomber blew himself up on a public bus in the northern Israeli city of Haifa, killing at least 15 people and wounding dozens of others.

West Bank Bus Attack, December 12, 2001: Palestinian gunman killed eight people and wounded 30 in a grenade and shooting ambush on an Israel bus in the West Bank just minutes before 2 suicide bombers struck in the Gaza Strip.

A TRIBUTE TO BETTY ANN ONG

HON. CALVIN M. DOOLEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2001

Mr. DOOLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the late Betty Ann Ong, the sister of my constituent and friend

Cathie Ann Ong-Herrera. Betty was a woman of remarkable courage who was one of the many to die in the act of war perpetrated on our country on September 11, 2001.

Betty Ann Ong was born in San Francisco on February 5, 1956 to Harry Ong, Sr. and Yee Gam Oy Ong. Betty was the youngest of four siblings, Harry Ong, Jr., Cathie Ann Ong-Herrera, and Gloria Ann Ong-Woo. Betty grew up in San Francisco's Chinatown where she attended Jean Parker Elementary School, Francisco Middle School, Washington High School, and the City College of San Francisco. She excelled in volleyball and bowling. Later in life, Betty also loved to travel, collect antiques and carousels, and had an extensive collection of stuffed animals and dolls.

Betty began her career in the airline industry as a baggage handler and a ticket reservations agent with PSA and Delta Airlines. In 1998, Betty joined American Airlines as a flight attendant and later became a flight attendant purser. Betty loved her job and the people she worked with, and she was voted Flight Attendant of the Year five time by her peers.

Betty's colleagues always described her as a very loving, caring, and always friendly person, both to her co-workers and to the passengers she served. Betty received numerous written compliments from her passengers.

On that tragic date of September 11, Betty was serving as a flight attendant on American Airlines Flight 11 from Boston to Los Angeles. As terrorist hijackers took over the plane, Betty and her colleagues calmly reported to the ground crew vital information about what was taking place. She identified some of the hijackers' seat locations, which helped investigators later identify the individuals responsible, and asked the ground crew to pray for the passengers aboard. Under over-whelming circumstances, Betty's primary concern was the safety of her passengers.

Up until the moment her life was tragically taken, Betty Ann Ong was a true professional who performed beyond her call of duty. Betty Ann Ong acted heroically under trying circumstances, and her heroism should be a sterling example of service to us all. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in paying tribute to Betty Ann Ong, celebrating her heroic legacy, and wishing her family peace for their loss.

HONORING FRESNO BEE REPORTER, JOHN ELLIS

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2001

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Fresno Bee reporter, John Ellis. Mr. Ellis was recently presented the Unsung Heroes Award given by the Youth Law Center.

The following is the story printed in today's Fresno Bee celebrating John's award:

Fresno Bee political reporter John Ellis received a national award Wednesday night that honors individuals for their work regarding child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

The Youth Law Center's annual Unsung Heroes Awards were presented to seven people. Ellis was the only journalist among the

honorees, who included bureaucrats, attorneys, a teacher and a Seattle Police Department deputy assistant chief. Six of the honorees are from California.

His Jan. 14 story, "Fresno County may house foster children illegally," told how Fresno County had been housing some of its most difficult foster children in two area motels, a practice that some legal advocates say violates state law.

The California Department of Social Services, which found out about the situation through inquires by The Bee, notified Salvador Montana, then director of Fresno County's Department of Children and Family Services, that housing the children in motels was not allowed.

The county quit the practice after the state stepped in; the children were moved to foster-care group homes.

The sponsoring Youth Law Center is a national nonprofit organization that focuses on the problems and needs of children who are placed out of home in foster care or juvenile justice systems.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate John Ellis both for his dedication to journalism and child welfare. I urge my colleagues to join me in wishing John the very best.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2001

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, during rollcall vote No. 495 on December 12, 2001 I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea".

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 11, 2001

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3447, the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important measure and I commend the distinguished chairman of the Veterans Committee, the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. SMITH.

This legislation provides a number of significant enhancements to veterans health care programs, with the purpose of both expanding those services offered to veterans, and improving the manner in which those services are delivered.

Specifically, the bill makes a number of changes in the policies governing VA nursing staff. It enhances eligibility and benefits for the employee incentive scholarship and education debt reduction programs by enabling VA nurses to pursue advanced degrees while continuing to care for veterans, in order to improve recruitment and retention of nurses within the VA health care system. Furthermore, the bill establishes a 12-member National Commission on VA Nursing that would assess legislative and organizational policy changes