

Musharraf, or the People's Party, led by Benazir Bhutto.

Mr. Speaker, during Parliamentary elections held in Pakistan last month, members of the Pakistani religious bloc known as the Islamic allies unexpectedly won 60 out of 342 seats. Not only was this surprising, but furthermore, the outcome of the elections was divided in such a way that no party won the number of seats necessary to form a government.

As a result, the Islamic allies have been negotiating separately with the pro-Musharraf party and the Bhutto party in an effort to form a coalition and thereby create a majority. Their intent is to demand a reversal of constitutional amendments introduced by Musharraf earlier this year, and most importantly, to overturn the amendment that allows Musharraf to dismiss Parliament.

However, what concerns me greatly is that the members of this Islamic alliance, or this Pakistani religious bloc, won their seats based almost exclusively on an anti-American platform. In fact, this party's primary campaign message criticized Musharraf's support for the war on terror and denounced Musharraf's cooperation with the United States. In addition, a component of this party's message demanded that the U.S. military leave Pakistan and Afghanistan immediately. Lastly, the Islamic allies have encouraged Pakistanis to offer sanctuary to both the Taliban and Al-Qaeda and to embrace the work of Osama bin Laden.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that for these reasons, it is imperative that Pakistan's religious bloc remain unsuccessful in forming a coalition with Musharraf's party or Bhutto's party. If in fact this party gained a majority and was able to implement its anti-US policies, the consequences would be devastating.

At this stage, it does not seem as if the religious bloc will be able to achieve forming a government. However, Mr. Speaker, it is in the best interest of the U.S. to monitor this situation closely.

CONFERENCE REPORT FOR H.R.
4546, THE BOB STUMP NATIONAL
DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2003

HON. WALTER B. JONES

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 22, 2002

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last week, the House of Representatives took up and passed the conference report to H.R. 4546, the Fiscal Year 2003 National Defense Authorization Act. As one of the conferees to that measure, I was proud to support the overall bill and was pleased to see its passage. The Bob Stump National Defense Act was a fitting tribute to a man whose congressional career was spent working for our Nation's men and women in uniform.

This year's Defense Authorization Act has three main principles: protecting and defending America's homeland, supporting U.S. service members and their families, and better equipping troops with training, equipment and weapons to fight and win the war against terrorism. It marks the largest increase in defense spending in over 20 years, providing billions of additional dollars for procurement, research, and development for the next genera-

tion of weapons. The measure continues our commitment to improving the pay of military personnel by providing a 4.1 percent pay increase and continued the administration's plans to eliminate out-of-pocket housing costs for military families. H.R. 4546 devotes considerable resources toward protecting our homeland from the threat of terrorist attacks and from the growing proliferation of ballistic missiles. I stand behind this bill because I believe it provides our military with the foundation it needs and deserves. We are living in a time of war and must act accordingly.

Despite the important advances this bill makes for our national defense, I retain two reservations about the final product.

One significant issue which has not been addressed is legislation I sponsored to redesignate the position of the Secretary of the Navy as the Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps. For over 200 years the Navy and Marine Corps have shared a secretary in being, but not in name. Notwithstanding their jointness, the Navy and Marine Corps are distinct with their own history, honors, and tradition. Rather than detracting from those traditions, this legislation seeks to recognize the separate, but equal traditions that the Navy and the Marine Corps team share. It acknowledges that there are two members of the same team and seeks to reinforce to the American people that the Secretary is a proud supporter of both. The legislation was adopted unanimously in the House Armed Services Committee, over half of whose membership had cosponsored the legislation. It was supported by three former Secretaries of the Navy, the current and two former Commandants of the Marine Corps, a former Secretary of the Veterans Administration, and many other former senior leaders of the Navy and Marine Corps. The Fleet Reserve Association and the Marine Corps League, each boasting thousands of members, also strongly urged passage of the legislation. Yet because of the concerns of a few, it was not included in the final conference report.

However I do not view this as a setback, but instead an opportunity. I remain committed to introducing the measure again early in the 108th Congress. As Commandant Jim Jones stated, this is an idea whose time has come. I will be working diligently with my Navy and Marine Corps friends to broaden the support and communicate the importance of this measure. By passing this legislation, the teamwork that has been present for over 200 years will finally be recognized in the title of the person who coaches the team.

A second shortcoming of the otherwise outstanding measure is the compromise on concurrent receipt. Although the language in the conference report regarding concurrent receipt is a very important step forward, I strongly believe that more should be done. As I stated in a letter to President Bush, if a man or woman served in uniform and retired honorably, they deserve to receive the retirement pay they were promised. If in the course of that service, that military member was injured and sustained a lasting disability, they should be compensated for that as well. One was earned for service and one was earned for sacrifice. It is for that reason that I have been a strong supporter of legislation to eliminate this offset since coming to Congress.

It is true that correcting this unfair penalty is expensive, however I also believe that our

military retirees are priorities for which we must be willing to support. Congressman BILIRAKIS, numerous military and veteran organizations such as the Fleet Reserve Association, and countless veterans have waged a tireless effort to see legislation ending the prohibition against concurrent receipt enacted. They should be commended for the great work that has been accomplished to date and encouraged to continue this fight in the future. I look forward to working with them on future efforts to meet the principles behind H.R. 303. Our military retirees did not fail us when they were called. We should not fail them.

GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET
AND WINDFALL ELIMINATION
PROVISION

HON. MAX SANDLIN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 22, 2002

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, in the waning moments of this Congress, the House of Representatives almost adopted a bill that would have devastating consequences to teachers and public employees across the State of Texas and the country. Instead of helping teachers and government employees secure a better retirement, H.R. 4070, Social Security Program Protection Act of 2002, as amended, would have left hard working teachers worse off rather than better off. In these uncertain economic times, this Congress should be adopting legislation to make sure everyone has access to the retirement benefits they have earned over a lifetime of work and service.

Two little known amendments to the Social Security Act are dramatically and unfairly slashing the retirement benefits of hundreds of thousands of Americans—teachers and other public school employees, firefighters, police, social workers, and other civil servants—who are being penalized for their public service. These provisions are just plain unfair, and I am committed to working to end the injustices of these two provisions.

The Government Pension Offset, GPO, requires that an individual who receives a pension from work that was not covered by Social Security has his or her Social Security spousal benefit substantially reduced. The law allowed an exemption from the GPO if he or she worked in a job that was covered by Social Security on his or her last day of employment. Under the Senate-passed version of H.R. 4070, an individual would be required to work in a Social Security-covered job for the last 5 years of employment to be exempt from the GPO. The amendment is being characterized as closing a loophole. This is not a loophole but rather a mechanism for individuals to obtain the benefits for which they have paid. It is an unnecessary and unjust hurdle. Instead of raising the bar to achieve these earned benefits, Congress should be eliminating the barriers completely.

In addition to the GPO, teachers and certain other workers are subject to the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). This provision unfairly harms public servants by reducing—sometimes by as much as 55.6 percent—the Social Security benefits of federal, state, and local employees who retire from government jobs that are not covered by Social Security.