

proactive security program. I strongly support this resolution and urge its approval.

INTRODUCTION OF SECURING CONSUMERS' ASSURANCE IN MOVING ACT OF 2003

**HON. THOMAS E. PETRI**

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 4, 2003*

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing the Securing Consumers' Assurance in Moving Act of 2003 (the SCAM Act) in order to put more cops on the beat in policing the interstate household goods industry and to provide more information for consumers facing an interstate move.

While the vast and overwhelming majority of moving companies operate in a fair, open and honest way, I am sure all Members are aware of the increasing problem with so-called "rogue" movers who prey upon consumers. Since the ICC was abolished in 1996, there have been fewer resources available for consumer protection enforcement at the Department of Transportation which now oversees the moving industry. Over the course of the last several years, this issue has been the subject of hearings and continuing oversight by the Subcommittee on Highways, Transit and Pipelines, and I believe it is now time to act.

We have all heard the horror stories of moves gone wrong. One of the most egregious practices is the "hostage goods" situation, where a mover low-balls an estimate, loads the consumer's goods onto his truck, drives off, and then refuses to deliver the goods until paid an amount in cash that can be up to 4 or 5 times the amount of the original estimate—in strict violation of Federal regulation. I have heard from some who have gone months without knowing where their goods are located. And yet there is little the consumer can do.

A major issue which has emerged is the authority of states to take action, since various courts have ruled that they have no jurisdiction over interstate moves—citing primarily the Carmack amendment. This policy was enacted in 1906 and simply sets forth a uniform liability scheme for loss and damage to avoid uncertainties over differing state laws.

A lot has changed since 1906 and Congress has never really had a debate on what role states or individuals should have regarding consumer protection and the moving industry. I understand that the moving industry has concerns regarding the application of consumer protection laws, claiming that it will be difficult to operate with 50 different state laws. However, states have been enforcing consumer protection laws—which are aimed at those businesses engaged in fraud and deceptive practices—for many years now and somehow other businesses which are not exempt have survived and thrived.

Certainly within the trucking industry, the movement of an individual's household goods is unique from commercial shipments. A consumer may utilize a moving company once or twice in a lifetime and entrusts virtually all his worldly goods to a mover—which gives a lot of leverage to the moving company. Although the President has requested funds for another 7

personnel to oversee household goods, I believe it will never be possible for the federal government to provide adequate oversight over those who take advantage of consumers—it is more appropriate that the states also be able to get involved against those who operate now with near immunity from effective oversight.

The bill I am introducing has three major goals—allowing for Federal-State partnerships to enhance enforcement; establishing new fines for certain behavior; and increasing opportunities for consumer education for those contemplating a move.

Specifically, the bill would: Clarify that an individual or states can use consumer protection laws against interstate movers; require DOT to establish a working group of state attorneys general, consumer protection administrators and law enforcement to coordinate information and enforcement efforts; require DOT to establish a database of consumer complaints with a procedure for public access to the database; require DOT to review current federal regulations regarding insurance coverage and determine whether revisions are necessary to provide adequate protection to consumers; establish a civil penalty of \$10,000 and potential 6-month suspension of operating authority, and create criminal penalties, for movers who hold goods hostage in violation of the 110 % rule; create a \$25,000 civil penalty for brokers or movers operating without authority; and establish a \$10,000 civil penalty for a broker who provides an estimate before entering into an agreement with a carrier; require that movers and brokers include additional information regarding DOT registration numbers, consumer rights and responsibilities, and broker-carrier relationships on Web sites; and increase disclosure requirements for brokers who arrange for the shipment of household goods.

Mr. Speaker, it is an unfortunate but necessary step that I am taking today in introducing this legislation. For too long the scales have been tipped in favor of those few within the moving industry who abuse consumers—it is time to even the scales.

RECOGNITION OF RACHEL NEWELL

**HON. SAM GRAVES**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 4, 2003*

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Rachel Newell, a very special young woman who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Girl Scouts of America, Troop 472, and in earning the most prestigious honor of the Gold Award.

The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest achievement attainable in Girl Scouting. To earn the Gold Award, a scout must complete five requirements, all of which promote community service, personal and spiritual growth, positive values, and leadership skills. The requirements include, 1. Earning four interest project patches, each of which requires seven activities that center on skill building, technology, service projects, and career exploration, 2. Earning the Career Exploration Pin, which involves researching careers, writing resumes, and planning a career fair or trip, 3. Earning the senior Girl Scout Leadership

Award, which requires a minimum of 30 hours of work using leadership skills, 4. Designing a self-development plan that requires assessment of ability to interact with others and prioritize values, participation for a minimum of 15 hours in a community service project, and development of a plan to promote Girl Scouting, and 5. Spending a minimum of 50 hours planning and implementing a Girl Scout Gold Award project that has a positive lasting impact on the community.

For her Gold Award Project, Rachel refurbished and painted a playground.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Rachel Newell for her accomplishments with the Girl Scouts of America and for her efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of the Gold Award.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE PARTHENON CHAPTER OF THE ORDER OF AHEPA (AMERICAN HELLENIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION)

**HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 4, 2003*

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the Andreas T. Stamboulidis Parthenon Chapter of the Order of AHEPA on the occasion of their annual dinner dance. For their extraordinary service and commitment to the community, Senator Frank Padavan, James Efthimiades, Stephen Cherpelis and George Doulaveris will be honored. They are truly "Axie", worthy of this honor.

Established to fight prejudice and racism, AHEPA is philanthropic organization that has been serving the Hellenic community since its inception 80 years ago. The many dedicated members of AHEPA have provided the community with an understanding of the Hellenic heritage and an awareness of its contribution to the evolution of democratic ideals in the United States and Greece.

AHEPA's many contributions to the community include the establishment of educational scholarships, relief drives to aid the victims of warfare, persecution and national disaster, sponsorship of sports tournaments, support for women and children, the elderly, and the disabled. Through all of their community outreach efforts, AHEPA has striven to promote appreciation of Greek culture and further advance understanding between the Hellenic-American, American and the Hellenic community abroad.

The Andreas T. Stamboulidis Parthenon Chapter is exemplary of the AHEPA objective. Founded by the late Andrew Stamboulidis twenty-two years ago, the Parthenon Chapter has raised and contributed over \$35,000 toward the Holy Cross School and Community Center. For the Parthenon Chapter's extraordinary support of the school, one of the classrooms is named after founder Andreas T. Stamboulidis. Mr. Stamboulidis typified the ideals and aspirations of AHEPA.

It is a true pleasure to honor this chapter and its members, including Theodore Stamas and my good friend Manny Mavroidis. As the founder and co-chairperson of the Hellenic Caucus in Congress it has been my pleasure and honor to work with many of the members of AHEPA. Since its inception, the Parthenon