The bill will provide that funding for the new office would come from the medical care account of the Veterans Health Administration rather than from ORD funding.

Finally, the legislation mandates that the Comptroller General of the United States conduct a study of the effectiveness of the new office and submit a report to Congress by January 1, 2005. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor this important legislation to improve protection for our Nation’s veterans who participate in VA medical research.

WHERE THE AMERICANS COME, THEY MAKE ORDER

HON. DOUG BEREUTER
OF NEBRASKA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, April 3, 2003

Mr. BEREUTER, Mr. Speaker, this Member wishes to commend to his colleagues the March 31, 2003, editorial from the Norfolk Daily News entitled “Unharmed.”

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) remains critical to Slovenia and other countries who until recently suffered under the yoke of tyranny. Such countries have made difficult, immediate sacrifices to gain the long-term protection which NATO membership provides and should be recognized for their efforts.

UNHARMED SLOVENIA’S VOTE INDICATES NATO NOT HARMED BY WAR ON IRAQ

Critics of Bush administration policy have feared that the war in Iraq and U.S. “unilateralism” might damage critical alliances like NATO.

From tiny Slovenia—population 1.9 million—comes heartening evidence that this may not be so. Slovenia’s leaders and the most successful of the Balkan nations to come out of the breakup of Yugoslavia, and from the beginning, its leaders decided the future lay with the West.

In recent referendums, Slovenes voted to join both NATO and the European Union. The E.U. vote was never in doubt, but Slovenia’s leaders understood that NATO membership has real obligations, feared the effect of the war on that vote. In the end, two-thirds of the voters approved:

An economist, Milan Cadez, gave the New York Times a reassuring reason why as he left a polling place: “Only America is capable of doing anything for peace. The E.U. is not capable of doing anything. They watched the crimes in Bosnia and when the Americans come, they make order.” And, it should be noted, are still there to help maintain order.

The Slovenes might have doubts about the war in Iraq, but they have few reservations about the benefits of the U.S.-led military alliance.

SLOVENIA’S NUMBER ONE: NATO IS NOT HARMED BY WAR ON IRAQ

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The Slovenes might have doubts about the war in Iraq, but they have few reservations about the benefits of the U.S.-led military alliance.

A CELEBRATION OF YOUTH IN HONOR OF CHAUNCY SMITH OF MICHIGAN

HON. NICK SMITH
OF MICHIGAN
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, April 3, 2003

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the career of Chief Master Sergeant David L. Benson. Originally from Chittenango, NY, Chief Benson enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1952 and subsequently has spent over 38 years with New York Air National Guard. Chief Benson has been decorated with numerous medals, awards and service distinctions. It is my honor to recognize such a distinguished citizen and soldier.

Chief Benson’s career began as an Aircraft Maintenance Officer at Amarillo Air Force Base, Texas. Soon after he was assigned to the 4626th Support Squadron, Sage, Air Defense Command at Topsham Air Force Station in Brunswick, Maine. After completion of his four year tour of duty, Chief Benson was granted his release from active duty and became a member of the 174th Fighter Wing of the New York National Guard. Here he performed duties as an Aircraft Crew Chief on the F–86H Sabrejet Fighter Aircraft and the A–37B Dragoon. He was also an Egress Shop Chief and Accessories Element Supervisor. Concluding his career, Chief Benson served as a Non-commissioned Officer In-charge of the Component Repair Flight.

Mr. Speaker, Chief Benson has served our nation proud in many military arenas. He has been deployed to Saudi Arabia in support of the Persian Gulf War and once again to the Middle East during Operation Northern Watch as part of contingency operations enforcing the no-fly zone over Northern Iraq. He also participated in Operation Noble Eagle after the September 11th attacks.

During these times and throughout his career, Chief Benson has displayed honorable character and service to the 174th and our country. His military decorations include the...
Mr. COULTER "DINK" ELDRIDGE, SR. OF TENNESSEE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Thursday, April 3, 2003

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer a tribute to one of Knoxville, Tennessee’s finest citizens. Many in this body and around the Country will not recognize his name, but when Mr. Robert Coultier “Dink” Eldridge, Sr. passed away at the age of 85 on February 21, 2003 this Nation lost a great American. Many Knoxvillians join me in mourning his death.

Dink Eldridge graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1940. During his final years at the University, he managed the Volunteer Football team as they went undefeated in regular season play and participated in the Orange Bowl, the Rose Bowl and the Sugar Bowl. More than victory marked his time with the Volunteers however. Those who knew him at this time also remember his dedicated leadership and desire to see every athlete reach his fullest potential.

In addition to his time managing the Volunteers, Dink managed the East Army All Star football team at Yale University with the great General R.R. Neyland. In 1942 Dink Eldridge was called to serve his Nation in the United States Army where he served with distinction as a second lieutenant in the Tank Corps. Here again, Dink proved his willingness to serve his fellow man and was awarded both a Purple Heart and Bronze Star medal for his efforts. After a brief period away from the military, Dink was called on again, this time in the Korean War.

During his professional career, Dink demonstrated a deeply held commitment to excellence. Following his early days as a lineman for Bell Systems, Dink steadily rose in his career. While his supervisory work for Bell took him to cities across the State, Dink was eventually able to return to Knoxville where he served as District Engineer until his retirement in 1971.

Like many leaders, Dink was unable to remain retired for long. In 1986, he was named president of the Concord Telephone Exchange. Dink provided steady leadership to this organization during a period of tremendous growth and remained president until his second retirement in 1993.

With this said, Dink is possibly best known to the people of East Tennessee for his dedicated work in the community. His generosity of time touched countless lives. Through his work on the executive board of the Great Smoky Mountain Council of the Boy Scouts of America and President of the Bearden Little League Baseball league alone, Dink passed his love of Country and community onto a generation of young people. In everything Dink did, he strove for excellence in himself and sought to inspire the same in those he was proud to have known Dink for many years, but I am even more proud to have called Dink Eldridge a personal friend.

To his wife Anna Yvonne I say thank-you for being such a supportive and loving part of his life and to his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Simply say continue carrying the banner of service your father and grandfather held so high.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and welcome the March 14th statement of the President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, pledging his commitment to religious freedom for all Georgians and promising the punishment of individuals complicit in mob attacks on religious minorities. (I am submitting the statement for the RECORD below.) President Shevardnadze made this pledge during an ecumenical service in Tbilisi’s Evangelist-Baptist Cathedral Church, attended by leaders of the Georgian Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Baptist churches and many individuals from the diplomatic community. The U.S. Ambassador to Georgia, Richard Miles, also attended and addressed the gathering. Reportedly, so many people came that hundreds had to listen via loudspeakers in the churchyard.

The service was initially planned for late January, but defrocked priest Basil Mkalavishvili and his crowd of thugs assaulted worshipers and clergy an hour before it was scheduled to begin—along with impunity since 1999. Individuals were beaten as they tried to leave, with rocks and stones being reportedly thrown. While President Shevardnadze quickly condemned that attack, ordering the Interior Minister, the Prosecutor General, State Chancellery Head, and the Security Council Secretary to investigate and punish the perpetrators, no arrests or prosecutions followed.

Despite Georgia’s appalling record on religious tolerance for the last few years, I hope President Shevardnadze’s speech at the Baptist church signals a new determination to arrest and aggressively prosecute the mob leaders and their henchmen. He promised that “as the President of Georgia and a believer, I shall not restrict myself only to a mere expression of resentment. I do promise that the President and the Authorities of Georgia will do their utmost to grant every person freedom of expression of faith.” Driving home the point further, Mr. Shevardnadze declared, “the state will exert its pressure on whoever comes in defiance of this principle. You may stand assured that the aggressors will be brought to justice.”

As Co-Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, over the past three years I have watched with increasing alarm the escalation of mob violence. On September 24th I chaired a Commission hearing focused on this disturbing pattern. The Jehovah’s Witnesses have borne the brunt of attacks, along with Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists and Catholics. Most disheartening has been the government’s indifference; victims throughout the country have filed approximately 130 criminal complaints, without one criminal conviction.

Despite a series of statements by President Shevardnadze, Georgia’s Minister of Interior