

I want to make 4 points about this bill. First, it is constitutional. Article I, section 4, explicitly authorizes the U.S. Congress to, "At any time by law make or alter such regulations regarding the manner of holding elections." This is the authority that was used for the Voter Rights Act of 1965.

The second point I would like to make is an issue of fairness. Because so many states require independent candidates to collect an excessive amount of signatures in a short period of time, many individuals are excluded from the ballot. For instance, there has not been one minor party candidate on the Georgia ballot since 1943, because of Georgia's overly strict ballot access requirements. This is unfair. The Voter Protection Act corrects this.

My third point addresses those who worry about overcrowding on the ballot. In fact, there have been statistical studies made of states that have minimal signature requirements and generous grants of time to collect the signatures. Instead of overcrowding, these states have an average of 3.3 candidates per ballot.

The fourth point that I would like to make is that complying with ballot access rules drains resources from even those minor party candidates able to comply with these onerous rules. This obviously limits the ability of minor party candidates to communicate their message and ideas to the general public. Perhaps the ballot access laws are one reason why voter turnout has been declining over the past few decades. After all, almost 42 percent of eligible voters have either not registered to vote or registered as something other than Democrat or Republican.

The Voter Protection Act is a constitutional way to reform campaign laws to increase voter participation by making the election process fairer and open to new candidates and ideas. I hope all my colleagues will join me in supporting this true campaign reform bill.

CONTINUING SUPPORT OF U.S. ARMED FORCES

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the men and women of the United States Armed Forces, who continue to act with honor, courage, valor, and respect. Operation Iraqi Freedom was fought with precision and ended decisively.

Through the sweat and blood of our troops a vicious dictator's regime has ended, the American people are safer, and an oppressed people have new hope for the future. These extraordinary men and women risked their lives for this noble cause, while many nations stood on the sidelines, once again proving that America is the symbol of liberty and freedom in the world.

I encourage Americans to continue their support of our troops and their families, even long after the war no longer headlines on our nightly news. I commend radio host Mike Gallagher for doing his part, in organizing a benefit concert, featuring the Marshall Tucker Band, for military families in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and I hope others follow his lead.

May Cod bless our troops and may Cod bless America.

IN RECOGNITION OF WORLD WAR I VETERAN AL ROSS

HON. E. CLAY SHAW, JR.

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, today I bring sad news of the passing of an American hero, Mr. Al Ross of Palm Beach County, Florida at the age of 101. Al Ross was one of the last remaining veterans of World War I.

Al was a living legend in Palm Beach County, who freely gave of his time to educate many generations of Americans on the true meaning of service to our nation and deep understanding of the Pledge of Allegiance. In countless schools and public appearances around the county, he was a fiery champion for all veterans and a defender of the flag. Up until the very last moment that continued to be his mission.

In 2002, fewer than 500 veterans of World War I remained and Al was the last known survivor in Palm Beach County and the Treasure Coast. Still wearing his 1918 Navy uniform, I last saw him this past July 4th speaking to a Town of Palm Beach picnic celebrating America. As always, he had something new to share with his audience, and this month was looking forward to again being a featured speaker at this year's Memorial Day services at the National Cemetery.

We in Congress should remember Al Ross, along with his fellow soldiers and sailors from the Great War who are rapidly departing God's green earth which they ably defended with honor and dignity.

Mr. Speaker, Al Ross, small in stature, big in heart will be missed. He lived to see our military go from trench warfare to laser guided missiles, from Verdun to Baghdad. Yet as Al Ross would say, our flag was still there bringing freedom and hope to people around the world.

In Al's honor I close with his favorite, The Pledge of Allegiance, which he recited many hundreds of times and explained its meaning in his own colorful way.

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

Mr. Speaker, I salute Al Ross on behalf of a grateful nation.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF BRIG. GEN. AUSTIN SHOFNER

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the memory of a great American hero and warrior, Brig. Gen. Austin C. Shofner, who retired from the U.S. Marine Corps in 1959 to return back to his home of Shelbyville, Tennessee.

At the time of his death in 1999, Gen. Shofner was the state's most decorated vet-

eran, having survived the Bataan Death March during World War II. Not only did the tenacious Marine survive this harrowing experience, but he escaped his captors to report the atrocity to the rest of the world. Once he recovered from the starvation and severe beatings inflicted on him during his captivity, he was given command of a battalion that ferociously fought on the western Pacific shores of Peleliu, where he was badly wounded.

Refusing to be sidelined for long, Gen. Shofner recovered from his wounds and led another battalion of Marines that attacked the enemy on the island of Okinawa. He was only 28 years old at the end of World War II. Through the courageous actions of warriors like Gen. Shofner, the United States of America has persevered against its enemies. We are once again facing uncertain times and an unconventional enemy, so it is appropriate that we remember our nation's past heroes. Their deeds and acts of bravery are an inspiration to America's current breed of fighting men and women who go in harm's way to protect us and the interests of this great nation.

God bless the brave men and women who wear and have worn the uniforms of our Armed Forces. And God bless the sacrifices they have made and will continue to make to keep this country free. Brig. Gen. Austin Shofner made many sacrifices when his country depended on him the most. He is the epitome of courage and honor and will forever be remembered as a true hero.

INTRODUCTION OF THE RUNAWAY, HOMELESS, AND MISSING CHILDREN PROTECTION ACT

HON. PHIL GINGREY

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker Today I introduce the Runaway, Homeless, and Missing Children Protection Act. This legislation contains the reauthorization of both the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and the Missing Children's Assistance Act. This bill strengthens the programs and services authorized under these acts in order to better address the needs of the at-risk youth served.

The changes that were made to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act will allow for a larger percentage of the allocation to go toward Transitional Living Programs. This will help to meet the need that exists for these programs so older runaway and homeless youth can develop the skills and resources to promote their independence and prevent future dependency on social services. Additionally, youth who are participating in the Transitional Living Program who come to the end of their 18 month stay before they reach the age of 18 will now be able to receive an exception to stay in the Transitional Living Program until they are 18 years old. The bill clarifies that term "group homes" in the Transitional Living Program includes "maternity group homes." These group homes operate currently and have been successful at providing child development, family budgeting, health and nutrition, and other skills to promote the parent's long-term economic independence in order to ensure the well-being of the child. The Runaway, Homeless, and Missing Children Protection

Act authorizes parts A (Basic Centers Program), B (Transitional Living Program), C (National Communications System), and D (Coordination, Training, Research, and Other Activities) at \$105 million for fiscal year 2004 and at such sums for fiscal years 2005 through 2008 and authorizes part E (Street Outreach Program) at such sums for fiscal years 2004 through 2008.

Additionally, the bill addresses the needs of missing, abducted, and sexually exploited children by reauthorizing the Missing Children's Assistance Act. This legislation increases the authorization level of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children from \$10,000,000 to \$20,000,000 for fiscal years 2004 through 2008 to mirror the Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to End the Exploitation of Child Today Act of 2003 (PROTECT Act), and extends the authorization of the remaining activities under the Act through 2008. The Runaway, Homeless, and Missing Children Protection Act also allows the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to coordinate the operation of a cyber tipline to provide online users an effective means of reporting Internet-related child sexual exploitation in the areas of distribution of child pornography, online enticement of children for sexual acts, and child prostitution.

This piece of legislation has been worked out in a very bipartisan fashion and I am happy that we were able to come together to help address the needs of runaway, homeless, missing and exploited youth. These at-risk youth receive much needed services through these Acts and I urge my colleagues to support this important piece of legislation.

HONORING MR. FRED LEWIS

HON. HENRY J. HYDE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to your attention today the exemplary work and most commendable public service of a fine and most outstanding music teacher, Mr. Fred Lewis. After 45 years as director of the Fenton High School Band located in Bensenville, Illinois, Mr. Fred Lewis is retiring in June of 2003.

During his tenure, he has instructed over 2000 band members and conducted hundreds of community concerts. Since 1955 the band has toured every two years throughout the United States and Europe gaining national and international recognition.

Mr. Lewis' final concert will be held on May 10, 2003. At that time, a scholarship fund will be established in Mr. Lewis' name at Fenton High School. Each year the Fred Lewis Scholarship Fund Committee will provide a cash award to a graduating senior band member to be used for continuing music education. Also, the Fenton Auditorium will be renamed Lewis/Huffman Auditorium.

I hope my colleagues will join me in honoring and offering congratulations to this outstanding teacher of 45 years for his selfless dedication to his students and to Fenton High School.

TRIBUTE TO THE MARINES FROM
THE 2ND BATTALION, 23RD MARINE
REGIMENT, 4TH MARINE
DIVISION

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Marines from the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division, headquartered in Encino, CA and to their families who support them, give them strength, and struggle heroically to keep things going at home while they serve overseas.

I am particularly pleased to join Major General John J. McCarthy, Commanding General, 4th Marine Division, Judge Harry Pregerson and all of the family members of this Battalion in celebrating our own special "Marine Family Day," an event which is planned both to provide some recreation for the family members of our reservists and to honor the more than 900 members of this Marine Forces Reserve unit who served in Iraq, and especially those 38 who were wounded in action. Sadly, one Marine, Staff Sergeant James Cawley was killed in action during this conflict.

Since the creation of the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines in July 1942, the battalion has valiantly fought in numerous campaigns from World War II where its members saw action at Iwo Jima and Saipan to Desert Shield, Operation Desert Storm, and, of course, Operation Iraqi Freedom. They were deployed in February of this year, and have earned the distinction of being the longest-serving reserve unit in theater. While this status has earned them honor and respect, it was gained at enormous sacrifice on the part of both them and their loved ones.

Not only have these reservists risked their lives, many have taken steep pay cuts and put their careers on hold to do so. They have missed birthdays, holidays, and other important family events. These men and women are police officers, firemen, doctors, lawyers, executives, and workers of every stripe and variety; people who make up the fabric of our communities. They are our husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and friends. They are patriots.

I am proud that many of these reservists and their families live and work in my congressional district and I am honored to be celebrating with them this Saturday. I ask my colleagues to join with me in saluting the men, women, and families of the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division.

CELEBRATING POLISH
CONSTITUTION DAY

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in celebration of Polish Constitution Day, Saturday, May 3rd. More than 111,000 people of Polish descent live in the Fifth Congressional District of Illinois. Amazingly, Chicago has more people of Polish descent than any other city except Warsaw, and I know they will all be

reflecting on their proud heritage this Saturday.

Members of this body may not be aware of the Third of May Constitution, but passed on May 3, 1791, it was the second constitution in the world—second only to the Constitution of the United States. It was the first in Europe. This important event in the history of Poland, indeed the history of the world, is too often overlooked. Recently, however, there has been a movement to resurrect the memory of this important event, and today I stand before you in honor of its significance.

Slavic in origin, Poland has a tremendous history of more than a thousand years. During that time it has been invaded, occupied and liberated on numerous occasions. Yet, throughout a tumultuous history, Poland has remained uniquely Polish. Today Poland plays a vital role in Eastern Europe and is a friend to the United States.

Like most of Europe, Poland began life as a feudal state. But it also has a rich democratic history. In 1346 Casimir the Great established the first Polish legal code and in 1364 laid the foundation of Krakow University, providing two vital ingredients for democracy—rule of law and an educated populace. In 1430, Poland established the "Nieminem Captivabimus," similar to our Habeas Corpus. By 1493, Poland established a Parliament with two houses, a Senate of dignitaries, and the Sejm which consisted of elected representatives. Following 1505, Parliament's consent was required for all new laws. The Third of May Constitution represents the culmination of these democratic reforms.

On May 3rd, 1791, the Sejm passed the Government Act, or what is today known as the Third of May Constitution. Embracing Enlightenment ideals like Rousseau's doctrine of national sovereignty and Montesquieu's concepts of a tripartite government, the Third of May Constitution demonstrates Poland's important role in helping to establish the modern world. While the Government Act still retained some resemblances of Poland's feudal heritage, it extended rights to citizens who previously had little or no rights. Peasants, for example, were officially placed under the protection of the "law and government of the country." Unfortunately, soon after enactment Russia invaded Poland and the country was partitioned by Germany and Russia, abolishing the Constitution. Still, Poland can proudly look back on 1791 as a time when Poland helped establish modern democracy.

Mr. Speaker, on Saturday I look forward to joining the people of my district, as well as those of Polish descent around the world, in celebrating the common bond of democracy. I hope the members of this body will join me in saluting this important day.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MARK STEVEN KIRK

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, on April 30, 2003, I missed rollcall vote number 149, H. Res. 206, the rule for H.R. 1350 due to my service on active duty as a reserve naval officer. Had I been present I would have voted "yea".