

Colorado Federal Credit Union is a non-profit organization that provides the citizens of Mesa County with essential banking services. Colorado recently celebrated its 50th Anniversary and I am happy to recognize its service to the Mesa Community today.

Colorado first opened its doors in 1953 and was built to serve employees of the Colorado Raw Materials Office. The company then grew to accommodate all federal employees and eventually opened its doors to all Mesa County residents in 2002. Since then, the company has continued to grow and recently opened a new state of the art building.

The Credit Union operates with a unique ownership system: when customers open an account, they pay a fee that makes them a part owner. This allows Colorado to better serve its customers because of its non-profit, customer-owned status. The company stands by its mission statement, which is "to build lifelong member relationships based on quality service, integrity, solid financial management and education." With hard work and dedication, Colorado has become an exemplary member of the Colorado business community.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great joy to recognize the Colorado Federal Credit Union. Its customer owned philosophy has provided the people of Mesa County with excellent service for many years. Congratulations on 50 years of service.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT FOR
H.R. 2518, THE VETERANS AFFAIRS
REORGANIZATION ACT
OF 2003

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing H.R. 2518, the "Veterans Affairs Reorganization Act of 2003". This bill would make organizational changes in several programs for veterans in order to improve the delivery of vital benefits and services to America's former servicemen and women.

The first two sections of this legislation provide for the consolidation and improvement of programs to assist homeless veterans. Specifically, Section 2 of the bill would create a new office in the Department of Veterans Affairs to manage a number of assistance programs for homeless veterans. Section 3 of the bill would transfer the functions of the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program from the Department of Labor to Department of Veterans Affairs and include this program in the responsibilities of the newly created office.

There are at least a quarter-million homeless veterans on the streets of America every night. With the passage of the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001, Public Law 107-95, Congress established a goal to end chronic homelessness among veterans within 10 years. More than 2 years have passed since the President signed our legislation into law, but in this Committee's oversight activities we find that the Department of Veterans Affairs is making insufficient progress to achieve this ambitious goal.

Today, VA provides a range of services for homeless veterans including outreach, case

management, clinical care, residential treatment and rehabilitation, managed residential placement, care for serious mental illnesses and substance-use disorders and supported housing. However, the delivery of these services has been hindered by a lack of focus and direction within the Department of Veterans Affairs, and frankly, a lack of will to commit the necessary funding to accomplish this mission.

The legislation I am introducing today would create a new Office of Homeless Veterans Assistance Programs within the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Director of this office would be given authority to consolidate and coordinate all homeless assistance services to help homeless veterans get back on their feet with a hand up, not a hand-out. The new Office of Homeless Veterans Assistance would be enhanced by transferring the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, a program now embedded in the Department of Labor, into VA. This transfer of responsibility for program administration would enable VA to better coordinate health care, financial benefits and employment services for homeless veterans. By moving all programs specifically designed for homeless veterans into VA and consolidating them, we expect to deliver better services in a more timely and cost-efficient manner.

Finally, Section 4 of this legislation would transfer the operational responsibility for the Military Personnel Records facility of the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Approximately 80 million military records are on file at NPRC, located in the federal records repository in St. Louis, Missouri. For the last 25 years, each service branch has been producing microfilm of each record and more recently has been keeping records on microfiche. The NPRC has been a source of major frustration for the Veterans Benefits Administration which has a daily need to search these records to help veterans establish claims for disability and other benefits.

While the NPRC has made good faith efforts to be responsive to VA, it continues to fall short of providing VA with timely and reliable records retrieval. As a consequence, VA's claims process has been delayed, and disabled veterans wait months, sometimes years, for service medical records or other information before their records are found. For the week ending June 6, 2003, VA had 3,051 requests pending for more than 30 days and 3,432 requests pending for more than 90 days. This is simply unacceptable.

My legislation would transfer responsibility for managing the NPRC to VA. The National Archives, which currently has final responsibility for maintenance of vital federal records, would be required to execute a Memorandum of Understanding to allow the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to assume the day-to-day management of the NPRC. Once this transfer of management responsibility is completed, VA will be in a better position to control its own fate in processing veterans' disability claims, and in turn, Congress will be able to hold one executive agency accountable for responsiveness to these disabled veterans who have waited far too long for the resolution of their claims.

Mr. Speaker, I believe these changes will improve the delivery of benefits and services to our nation's veterans. I hope that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will carefully

study this legislation and join with me in this effort.

HONORING TALMAGE V. BURKE
FOR OVER 50 YEARS OF SERVICE
TO THE CITY OF ALHAMBRA

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2003

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mayor Talmage Burke. In the year that marks the City of Alhambra's 100th anniversary, Mayor Talmage Burke is setting a record of his own. On May 27, the 85-year old Talmage Burke took the oath of office as the Mayor of Alhambra for the 15th time. This achievement affords him the longest record of publicly elected service of any official in the State of California and certainly one of the longest records of public servitude in the Nation.

Talmage Burke was born in November 1917 and graduated from Alhambra High School in 1935. He went on to USC, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree. He continued his studies at USC Law School, graduating with Juris Doctor and Masters of Laws degrees. Prior to being elected to the Alhambra City Council in 1952, he served as the city's first prosecutor and deputy city attorney.

The Burke family has served the City of Alhambra for over 70 of its nearly 100 years. Talmage Burke, a life-long resident of Alhambra, lives with his wife, of 45 years Lisa, in the same house that his father, Montivel A. Burke, built in 1927.

One of the most outstanding and well-known civic accomplishments of Talmage Burke was his involvement in the lowering of the railroad tracks in Alhambra during the mid-1970s. Along with the improved system of tracks, the nearby Alhambra Municipal Golf Course gained an addition of nine holes from the excavated soil from the lowered tracks.

As a member of the Rotary Club, he has a record of perfect attendance for the past 52 years! He has served as President of the San Gabriel Valley Bar Association and is the Founding Director of the Legal Aid and Public Defender Program of the San Gabriel Valley. He was also a Trustee of the University of Redlands for 18 years.

Talmage Burke and his wife have two children: a son, Montivel A. Burke II, an attorney, and a daughter, Karen M. Brown, R.N. The Burkes also have six grandchildren.

It is with great pleasure that I ask all Members to join me in congratulating the Honorable Talmage V. Burke for his truly remarkable and lifelong dedication to the City of Alhambra.

TRIBUTE TO THE HOTCHKISS ELKS
LADIES AUXILIARY

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to stand before this body of Congress and this nation today to pay tribute to the Hotchkiss

Elks Ladies Auxiliary, who have served their community in Colorado for over 50 years. The women of the Hotchkiss Elks Ladies Auxiliary have worked hard to create a friendly, positive atmosphere in their community and I am proud to pay tribute to them here today.

Through many years of distinguished service, the Ladies Auxiliary have contributed to all aspects of their community, raising and contributing money to Laradon Hall, the Sunshine School, various clothing drives, the March of Dimes, a cancer fund, a polio fund, the AIDS project, and the Hotchkiss High School Band. They also put on several community parties, allowing citizens the opportunity to relax and have some fun over the holidays.

The ladies have done more for their community than raise money; they have provided the town of Hotchkiss with the opportunity to have fun. Their hard work and dedication produces events that entertain the community, helping to bring joy into the lives of its residents. They are famous for their Christmas and Halloween parties. They have Easter egg hunts, Chili cookouts, and a Charity Ball.

Mr. Speaker, the Hotchkiss Elks Ladies Auxiliary has provided my district with over 50 years of selfless service. Their distinguished efforts in the Hotchkiss community are certainly deserving of praise before this body and this nation. I am honored to offer my sincere thanks and gratitude to the Hotchkiss Elks Ladies Auxiliary and congratulate them on 50 years of outstanding contribution.

RESULTS OF THE ATTACK ON IRAQ: WHAT HAVE WE DISCOVERED?

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2003

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, (1) After more than two months of searching, no Weapons of Mass Destruction have been discovered in Iraq. While it is not impossible that something may be discovered, the fact that no WMD were used during the war and none have yet been discovered afterward indicates that Iraq did not pose a threat to the United States.

(2) Assuming that no WMD are discovered in Iraq, it appears that Iraq may have actually been following the various UN resolutions that demanded the destruction of this weapons material.

(3) Before the attack on Iraq, it was claimed that Iraq would destroy its oil wells. Though some explosives may have been found at some sites, it is clear that there was no co-ordinated Iraqi effort to demolish its oil facilities.

(4) Before the attack, it was claimed that the Iraqi government would blow up dams to slow down invading troops. It did not do so.

(5) Despite claims before the attack, there is no evidence of sustained, high-level contacts between the Iraqi government and the Al-Qaeda terrorist network.

(6) US troops and defense planners were shocked that the Iraqi army simply melted away as the US attack pressed toward Baghdad. An army that cannot even defend its own territory is hardly a threat to its neighbors—or to the United States 6,000 miles away.

(7) Considering the apparent lack of WMD and the total failure of the Iraqi army, claims

that Iraq was a threat to United States national security appear to have been inaccurate. I publicly doubted such claims before the attack.

(8) Ending Saddam Hussein's rule over Iraq hasn't solved much. Even with Saddam removed from power, we are told that that "regime change" as such is not enough: there must be a "process" of regime change where the end-goal is to remake Iraq and Iraqi society in our own image. This is otherwise known as "nation-building."

(9) Chaos and lawlessness prevails across Iraq. There is no functioning police force other than American troops. Anger toward the United States occupying force continues to increase.

(10) There is little chance of anything resembling democracy emerging in Iraq any time soon. Any real "democracy" that emerges will likely have a fundamentalist Islamic flavor and will be hostile to other religious and ethnic groups in Iraq.

(11) American soldiers are still getting killed on a regular basis. More organized forces seeking to kill American troops appear to be springing up across Iraq. Frustration with the American occupation of Iraq seems to be adding to the ranks of these organized anti-occupation forces, multiplying the threat to American troops.

(12) There are more US troops being sent to Iraq now that major hostilities have ended. Troops that were supposed to be coming home have been told they must remain in Iraq because of the continued chaos and danger to American forces.

(13) Though it was claimed before the US attack that proceeds from the sale of Iraqi oil would be sufficient to rebuild the country, it is now obvious that this will not be the case. The brunt of the burden of Iraqi reconstruction will therefore fall on the American taxpayer. Much of the damage is the result of our own bombing of that country.

(14) At a time when the US economy continues to falter, costs of occupation and reconstruction of Iraq have skyrocketed. Money spent rebuilding Iraq is money not available to help the US economy recover.

(15) The credibility of the United States overseas is at an all time low.

(16) The US intelligence community is being increasingly questioned over the quality of intelligence provided, while others suspect that the intelligence provided had been manipulated somewhere in the process to support a pre-determined policy.

(17) Hatred toward the United States is on the increase in the Arab world, making terrorism more likely against us than before the attack—as the CIA predicted.

(18) Nation-building—from creating a health-care system to organizing trash pick-up to running the Iraqi media—has become our number one goal in Iraq.

(19) Yet, supporters of this war are already planning for the next war—possibly against Iran, Syria, North Korea, Cuba . . . or who knows where . . .

(20) In Washington, a foreign policy of non-interventionism, as advanced by the Founders and supported by the Constitution, is not considered a reasonable option, though millions of Americans would welcome it.

SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT CONGRESS SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN AND SUPPORT ACTIVITIES TO PROVIDE DECENT HOMES FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 17, 2003

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. Con. Res. 43, expressing the sense that Congress should participate in and support activities to provide decent homes for working Americans.

As we recognize National Home Ownership Month this June, I believe that the "Congress Building America" program will go a long way toward improving the lives of our constituents. In the spirit of President Carter's Habitat for Humanity, this legislation inspires volunteerism. When people see their public servants living up to that title and building houses side by side with the people who will be living in them, they will want to help others provide decent housing for those in need.

My wife, Amy, and I look forward to leading by example and showing our children how working together can make a meaningful difference in the lives of our fellow Americans. Expanding the "Congress Building America" program beyond Washington to each of our districts is an important goal toward helping Americans find decent shelter and owning their own homes.

My district is home to thousands of historic bungalows, many of which, sadly, are in disrepair. I am working with public and private agencies to provide bungalow owners with both financial and technical assistance to restore their homes. These bungalows are not only a national treasure, but also one of few affordable choices for thousands of homeowners.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly encourage my colleagues to vote in favor of S. Con. Res. 43 and continue supporting improved access to affordable housing in America.

TRIBUTE TO MILLIE HARMON

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise before this body of Congress and this nation today to pay tribute to Millie Harmon of Lake City, Colorado. Millie will soon retire from the National Weather Service, where she has been a distinguished volunteer for the past 30 years. As she nears her retirement, I would like to recognize her many years of service to her community.

Millie began her career with the National Weather Service at the same time that her husband Hal was embarking on his position as the Superintendent of Santa Maria Reservoir. At the Weather Service, Millie was responsible for measuring and reporting several important weather statistics, including precipitation amounts and snow depth. Millie then began to measure the depth, runoff, and water speed of the Lake Fork River. Millie always worked her hardest to provide the Weather