

constitution modeled on that of the United States.

However, independence did not spell the end of Liberia's close historical links with the United States. American companies, such as the Firestone Rubber and Tire Company, have played an important role in shaping the Liberian economy. Liberia has been an important political ally of the United States. During the two World Wars, the republic allowed the United States to station troops on its soil. As the Cold War reached its peak, a mutual defense pact was signed and the United States built communications facilities to relay a "Voice of America" signal throughout the continent.

Unfortunately, the progress that Liberia made over the years has been spoiled by over a decade of civil war. The war has claimed the lives of 300,000 people, and has recently intensified, causing a humanitarian disaster on a large scale. A half of the population has been forced to flee their homes. Disease, death and destruction have become everyday elements of Liberian life.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure my colleagues in the House will agree that immediate action is imperative in Liberia. Every day that we delay intervention, more lives are lost. The people of Liberia call out for our help. We have a moral obligation to act. Plans for a multinational peacekeeping force led by the United States in conjuncture with troops from the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States have been suggested. I am pleased to note that the President announced this morning that the United States will be positioning our military forces off the coast of Liberia to begin the process of assisting in this situation. My only hope is that this offer of assistance will soon be translated into practical concrete aid.

Let us give the people of Liberia something to celebrate this Independence Day. Let us help this great people recover the liberty from which their country takes its name. Let Liberia live!

IN RECOGNITION OF DIANE FURNAS, NEWLY ELECTED CHAIRWOMAN OF THE BOARD OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FEDERAL CREDIT UNIONS

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 25, 2003

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Diane Furnas, chief executive officer of Southwest Airlines Federal Credit Union in Dallas, TX. Ms. Furnas has recently been elected Chairwoman of the Board of the National Association of Federal Credit Unions (NAFCU).

Ms. Furnas' dedication to the credit union movement is illustrated by her thirty years of service to the credit union community, including more than 27 years in her current position as the CEO of Southwest Airlines FCU. Ms. Furnas has spent the last three years as the Vice-Chair of NAFCU and she is the first woman elected to chair the NAFCU Board.

Throughout her tenure at Southwest Airlines FCU, Ms. Furnas has worked diligently to ensure her credit union's 28,000 members have

access to high quality financial expertise. As a member of the Board at NAFCU, Ms. Furnas has been equally diligent in advocating the goals of the credit union community as a whole. From financial literacy to predatory lending and identity theft, Ms. Furnas has ensured that America's 82 million credit union members have a voice here in the nation's capitol. I am certain she will carry on that good work in her role as Chairwoman of NAFCU.

NAFCU is the only national trade association that exclusively represents the interests of America's federal credit unions and Ms. Furnas will—no doubt—serve with distinction in her new post. I would like to congratulate Ms. Furnas on her election and wish her the best of luck.

ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 25, 2003

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, as the House prepares to go out on recess, I leave dumbfounded by many of the actions this House has taken in these last days. Last night, this Republican led House took the first steps in the destruction of an important program whose aim is to help the children of low income parents be better prepared to succeed when they go to school and ultimately succeed in their lives. Instead of making these changes that can only hurt this program, we should have been working together, regardless of party, to strengthen a program that has served so many children so well for almost forty years. Many in this House talk a great game about being "Compassionate Conservatives". What they did last night to Head Start was neither.

If this was the only mistake we were going to make this week, it would be one thing. Yet today, this House is poised to step up its attack on the lives and hopes of our most precious resource, the young people of this country. President Bush often speaks about the need to expand another program that directly benefits many of our younger constituents. That program is AmeriCorps.

President Bush often speaks about his respect and devotion to the concept of national service. Indeed in his last two State of the Union addresses and in numerous speeches around the country, this president has urged Americans to devote time and energy to community projects. In issuing this challenge he pledged his best efforts to expand government programs of national service.

It is difficult to understand how the main instrument of such service—the AmeriCorps program—could possibly be allowed to shrink on his watch. Indeed, the program is wildly popular among many local and faith-based agencies that often place AmeriCorps workers to help organize and coordinate local volunteers. We know that governors and mayors of both parties praise AmeriCorps daily. When President Bush was Governor Bush he often praised AmeriCorps.

Yet today, this House will be asked to approve a supplemental spending package that contains no additional funding for AmeriCorps. I wonder why President Bush has not used his

leadership skills to convince his Republican colleagues that having a vibrant, properly funded AmeriCorps is indeed vital to our national interest.

If these two actions were not bad enough, today we will vote on a bill that dramatically skimps on programs for Americans who have answered our country's call to arms, our proud veterans. We should never break our promises to veterans. This VA-HUD Appropriations bill will not meet our veterans' needs. Its increase from last year is \$1.4 billion, and does not even keep pace with hospital inflation or the growth in the numbers of veterans enrolled.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my fellow Americans know that an average of 200,000 veterans are forced to wait six months or more for an appointment at Veterans Administration hospitals. Some even die before they get to see a doctor. A new report, released by the American Legion this month reminds this Congress that veterans are waiting six months or more for medical care, as the overburdened Veterans Affairs health system fails to keep pace with an ever growing demand. All members of this House should be ashamed to face veterans when we return to our districts for considering this awful budget for our veterans.

Even the President's own Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans acknowledged the problem, stating "there is persistent concern about the inability of VA to provide care to enrolled veterans . . ."

The President's Task Force also noted that "the Federal Government has been more ambitious in authorizing veteran access to health care than it has been in providing the funding necessary to match declared intentions."

The VA-HUD bill that we will consider today contains a very disappointing but not surprising outcome for housing programs. Appropriators assert that if anyone is to blame it is HUD for an inadequate request, but Congress approved the budget request after hearing from advocates that the Department's request was inadequate.

This bill provides inadequate funding to address rising housing costs and the increasing number of low income people who are unable to afford a home. Funding for the Housing Choice Voucher program will not fully fund all vouchers currently in use. Two of the President's much-touted initiatives were not fully funded: The American Dream Downpayment initiative received only \$125 million of the \$200 million the President had requested, and his Samaritan Housing Initiative received no funding at all.

While public housing programs would receive slightly more than what the President requested we know that the funding needed for capital needs remains wholly inadequate, given the \$20 billion estimated backlog in capital needs.

I am happy that the HOME production and rental assistance program was increased by \$77 million from last year's funding level. Unfortunately, the committee lacked the funds needed to match the Administration's request of \$2.2 billion, instead funding the program at \$2.064 billion.

Mr. Speaker, in this time of increasing unemployment and economic turmoil, more people need our help in making certain that they have the opportunity to live in a home they can afford. Yet for some reason, this House is