

face unique challenges, especially in the first days and weeks after the member has been summoned to duty. The National Military Family Association has testified that it hears from many families about the difficulties of balancing new family and personal requirements with their regular duties when a family member is deployed. As members of Congress, we too hear from constituents who struggle with this balance. I believe there are measures we can take to ease this burden and increase flexibility in the lives of our military family members.

The legislation I am introducing today is one of the steps we can take in that direction. The Military Families Leave Act allows spouses, parents, or children of military personnel who are serving on, or are called to active duty, in support of a contingency operation to use their Family and Medical Leave Act benefits for issues directly related to deployment. The bill does not extend the FMLA to anyone; it simply allows those who already qualify for the FMLA to use that benefit in new specific instances. For example, if a woman's husband is deployed for a contingency operation, she can use her FMLA benefit to secure power of attorney or to arrange for necessary childcare. Or, in a single parent situation, the mother or father of the deployed servicemember could use his or her FMLA benefit to care for a grandchild. This bill has been carefully drafted to stipulate that this leave could only be taken for issues directly relating to or resulting from the deployment of a family member.

This bill is a companion to a bill introduced by Senator Russ Feingold S.683. That bill was passed by unanimous consent in the Senate as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2004 Iraq Supplemental Appropriations bill, but it was unfortunately subsequently stripped in conference. However, this bill continues to have widespread support from military reserve, active duty, and military family organizations.

I would like to submit for the record support letters from the Reserve Enlisted Association, the National Military Family Association, and the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States. Others who support this bill are the Military Officers Association of America, the National Guard Association of the United States, and the Reserve Officers Association.

The time is ripe to show our military families that we are listening to their concerns. The Military Families Leave Act represents a small measure of relief for the families of the men and women who serve in our armed forces. I ask that my colleagues join me in assisting our military families by supporting this bill.

NATIONAL MILITARY FAMILY  
ASSOCIATION,  
Sept. 14, 2004.

Hon. TOM UDALL,  
U.S. House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE UDALL: The National Military Family Association, NMFA, is a national nonprofit membership organization whose sole focus is the military family. NMFA's mission is to serve the families of the seven uniformed services through education, information and advocacy.

On behalf of NMFA and the families it serves, I would like to thank you for introducing legislation to amend the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 to provide entitlement to leave to eligible employees whose spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a member

of the Armed Forces serving on active duty in support of a contingency operation or notified of an impending call or order to active duty in support of a contingency operation.

NMFA has heard from many families about the difficulty of balancing family obligations with job requirements when a close family member is deployed. Suddenly, they are single parents or, in the case of grandparents, assuming the new responsibility of caring for grandchildren. The days leading up to a deployment can be filled with pre-deployment briefings and putting legal affairs in order. Families also need the opportunity to spend precious time together prior to a long separation. The need is no less when the servicemember returns. Reintegration and transition requires training not only for the servicemember but for the family as well in order to be most effective.

Military families, especially those of deployed servicemembers, are called upon to make extraordinary sacrifices. This amendment offers families some breathing room as they adjust to this time of separation.

Thank you for your support and interest in military families. If NMFA can be of any assistance to you in other areas concerning military families, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,  
CANDACE A. WHEELER,  
President.

EANGUS,  
Sept. 16, 2004.

Hon. TOM UDALL,  
U.S. Congress,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN UDALL: The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS) would like to thank you, on behalf of the enlisted men and women of the Army and Air National Guard, for drafting the Military Families Leave Act of 2004.

Families of mobilized National Guard and Reserve members, as well as the families of deployed active duty service members, experience many hardships. Your bill will help alleviate some of the stress involved when, a principal family member is deployed. Allowing the use of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 for those family members can greatly assist during a difficult time.

Thank you so much for recognizing one of the many deeds of the military community. EANGUS will support the Military Families Leave Act in any way possible. If there is anything we can, do to assist, please let us know.

If I can be of any assistance, please feel free to ask.

Working for America's Best!  
MSG (RET.) MICHAEL P. CLINE, AUS,  
Executive Director.

RESERVE ENLISTED ASSOCIATION  
AND RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION,  
Sept. 29, 2004.

Hon. TOM UDALL,  
U.S. House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE UDALL: The Reserve Officers Association, representing 75,000 Reserve Component members, and the Reserve Enlisted Association supporting all Reserve enlisted members supports your bill, to amend the Family and Medical Leave Act to provide authority for Reserve Component family members to take leave in conjunction with a call-up.

The Guard and Reserve are contributing approximately 40 percent of the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and are gone from home for the longest period of time ever anticipated. Many families are faced with hav-

ing to accommodate this absence with often less than 30 days notice and it requires a considerable amount of time to make the necessary adjustments. Family members supporting a spouse, son, daughter or parent that is serving on active duty, should not have to also be afraid of losing their job.

The bill recognizes many of the problems encountered in the current mobilization and provide solutions. We are stunned and appreciative of all of the co-sponsors who have supported this generous but necessary measure. ROA and REA applaud your effort and concern.

Sincerely,  
LANI BURNETT,  
CMSgt, USAFR (Ret.),  
REA Executive Director.  
ROBERT A. MCINTOSH,  
Major General (Ret.), USAFR,  
ROA Executive Director.

## RECOGNIZING HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

HON. PATRICK J. TIBERI

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 30, 2004

Mr. TIBERI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in celebration of National Hispanic Heritage Month, and in special recognition of Hispanics in central Ohio and throughout our country.

During this designated month, America celebrates the culture and traditions of our friends and neighbors with Hispanic roots. Hispanics are now the largest minority group in the United States. The 2000 Census found that 35.3 million people identified themselves as Hispanic American. That represents a 58 percent increase from the 1990 Census.

Beyond the data, the reality is that Hispanics are an integral part of America's social fabric. I am proud that the state of Ohio is home to more than 217,000 residents of Hispanic/Latino descent. Hispanic Americans continue to make great strides in education, employment, health, homeownership, and economic mobility. This is a result of a set of values that includes a strong work ethic, family values, and service to community.

Hispanic Americans in central Ohio serve the community in numerous capacities. In particular, recent immigrants unfamiliar with the English language are served by Spanish interpreters who help provide them access to health care, education, legal assistance and other vital services. Mi Directorio Hispana, a business directory, and Spanish newspapers in central Ohio, like La Voz Hispana, connect Hispanics with the community and keep them informed. The Ohio Hispanic Coalition, a nonprofit outreach organization, and the Ohio Commission of Hispanic/Latino Affairs serve as advocates for the needs of Hispanic people and help to promote good relations among the community-at-large.

Mr. Speaker, the Hispanic community is a vital part of central Ohio and our country. As we move forward as a nation, it is important to pursue policies that can further expand opportunities for Hispanic Americans. I ask all of my colleagues to join me in support and in honor of Hispanic Americans, their culture and traditions, and their work and service that contributes to the greatness of this nation.