

my bill, H.R. 2892, will prevent the possibility of future program disruptions that will be detrimental to seniors.

The importance of sustaining the FHA reverse mortgage program was further emphasized to me this past Monday while I was visiting in my district in Pennsylvania with several senior homeowners who recently obtained reverse mortgages.

Their stories are the same. They have worked their whole lives to obtain this home and to pay for the home. They have raised their children in the home. They have retired into their homes, and they live on Social Security income with basically no remaining savings. They have converted the equity in their home so that they can repair their homes, they can increase their standard of living, and they can live out their senior years with dignity in their own home.

Mr. Speaker, I think every Member of Congress can agree that seniors must have the option to stay in their homes as long as they wish. Lifelong homeownership is the American Dream. My legislation, H.R. 2892, would provide relief for those seniors faced with losing their homes. As we celebrate National Homeownership Month, it is fitting that Congress enact legislation that will allow existing homeowners to remain homeowners.

Today I call on all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in this vital effort and to co-sponsor H.R. 2892.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CARSON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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#### DFAS BRAC COMMISSIONER VISIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of a wonderful facility, the DFAS center in Cleveland, the Defense Finance and Accounting Services Center in the city of Cleveland, originally founded in 1942 as the Navy Bureau of Supplies and Accounts. It was renamed in 1955, and then DFAS was created in 1991, established six field sites in 1995, a reorganization in 2000, and unfortunately this year DFAS in Cleveland has become a victim of a BRAC reorganization.

I am pleased to stand here today with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) from the Tenth Congressional District from Ohio, and we were joined earlier today by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) from the 14th Congressional District. And in that process, we had an opportunity to meet with the BRAC Commissioner. He was a wonderful general by the name of

“Fig” Newton, who came to give us a site visit on this particular issue.

And I am pleased to now engage in a colloquy with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me and want to say what a pleasure and honor it is to work with her and with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) as well in our effort to save over 1,000 jobs at the Defense Finance and Accounting Service in Cleveland, Ohio.

This is a center which is important for the entire Nation because this is a center which processes payroll for a total of 5.7 million Department of Defense employees, military, civilian, and retired, including 2 million Armed Forces members, Navy Active Reserve, Air Force Reserve and Guard, and Army Reserve; 2.4 million military retirees and annuitants. They also do work for the Department of Energy and the Office of Health and Human Services and for various armed service headquarters' elements.

I want to say that this center has been recognized and acknowledged across this country for the tremendous work which the people there do. They do the best accounting work; and now, despite the fact that they have been doing great work for decades, they are finding that the rug is being pulled out from them by a BRAC that does not even save any money.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. And, reclaiming my time, the interesting thing about this BRAC facility in the city of Cleveland, it has developed a system for garnishment, which is one of the ways in which we are able to collect child support for young people across this country. They have developed a system for retired annuitant pay that is one of the finest systems in the country. It just seems to me that they could not be considering the economic situation in the city of Cleveland in deciding to take this BRAC on.

I yield to the gentleman from Ohio to talk about that.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, the gentlewoman is correct. Unfortunately, in the city whose responsibilities we share as Members of the Congress to represent the people here in the Federal Government, our city has had one of the highest poverty rates in America, and one of the criteria which must be taken into account during a BRAC are the economic conditions within the community. And it is clear that the economic conditions in the city of Cleveland were not taken into account, and that is one of the bases of the appeal that we are making to the BRAC Commission in Buffalo on Monday.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, it is very interesting that today we had an opportunity to have a rally with the DFAS workers and more than 1,000 of these

workers came out in support of keeping their jobs. I am confident that with the work that we will do that we will be able to establish in this BRAC hearing on Monday in the city of Buffalo that the city of Cleveland deserves to hold on to this facility and that the 1,200 people along with the 1,000 people in county jobs who facilitate these services will be able to stay on.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) for the tremendous leadership that she has shown in rallying the community. She really has performed a powerful service, as well as the work of the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE), in building the case.

Keep in mind the BRAC Commission has the authority to change the Department's recommendations if it determines that the Secretary deviated substantially from the force structure and/or selection criteria, and I believe that the Department of Defense has clearly deviated from the selection criteria in two areas: the Secretary is required to consider, among several things, the military value and the economic impact on existing communities in the vicinity of the military installations, and the Department of Defense has erroneously ranked the military value for DFAS Cleveland low and states that a .01 percent within the Cleveland metropolitan statistical area has minimal economic impact.

We look forward to taking our case to Buffalo.

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#### GEAR UP FACTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, pretty much everybody tonight has been upset about something, and often when I come to the floor, I am too. But I wanted to share some good news, actually some good news inside the Labor-HHS appropriations bill, which is very tight in funding, and it involves the GEAR UP program, which I believe is a very important program, and, in fact, the President has proposed to zero it out and the Committee on Appropriations had put \$306 million, the same funding as fiscal year 2005, in this.

It is a program that, from the first time we funded it in 1999, had only \$120 million in it after we finally got it appropriated; and now it is up to \$306 million in spite of a very tight budget.

I would like to give just a brief history of this program. The gentleman from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAH), when I was first elected in the class of 1994, came to me with this proposal of how to reach minority and low-income kids and give them some hope that someday they might be able to get student loans and someday might be able to get scholarships and aid, because it is one thing for a middle