

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. MICHAEL G. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 24, 2006

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5427), making appropriations for energy and water development for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes:

Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank Chairman HOBSON for his work during consideration of the Energy and Water Appropriations Act to include language in the final version of the legislation to block funds that would have allowed an ill-advised policy directive by the Department of Energy to go forward. The policy directive would have prevented contractors to the agency from continuing to provide defined benefit pension plans and comprehensive healthcare coverage to their employees. Chairman HOBSON's language blocks federal funds from implementing this directive.

The Department of Energy's policy directive amounts to nothing more than an attack on organized labor unions and their members. Not only did the policy directive allow only a scant 90 days for the new restrictions to be executed, but no labor unions were consulted on the proposed policy prior to its promulgation. The Department of Energy failed to clear its policy with the Department of Labor to determine whether it is consistent with the requirements of the Service Contract Act and the Davis-Bacon Act.

Moreover, while this policy sets a significant precedent by having one of the largest federal departments prohibiting certain employers from offering workers the security of defined benefit pension plans and comprehensive health coverage, it was not cleared by the Office of Management and Budget. The Department of Energy should not be driving pension and health care policy—especially when it does so without due deliberation and input from stakeholders and agencies with expertise on these issues.

Additionally, the House is currently in the process of crafting a reform of our Nation's pension system. It is disconcerting that an Executive agency would undertake a policy directive that could contravene the actions of the Congress in what should be a legislative matter.

It is my hope that the House will maintain its position in opposition to the Department of Energy in respect to this policy initiative, or any other legislative vehicle that would allow its execution as we enter negotiations with the other body in conference.

HONORING THE 2006 STATE CHAMPION DOWNERS GROVE SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL SPEECH TEAM

HON. JUDY BIGGERT

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to congratulate the

Downers Grove South High School Speech Team on capturing the 2006 Illinois State Championship. On February 18, 2006, they bested 8 other teams to finish in first place and claim the championship title.

Even more impressive is the fact that this is the school's 11th state speech championship, making Downers Grove South the "winningest" high school in state speech team history. In addition, the members of this exceptional team provided Downers Grove South with its third state championship in the "Performance in the Round" event.

Today, our hats are off to team members Liz Adamski, Kyle Akerman, Joel Bennett, Jaclyn Bernard, James Courtney, Jeff Danziger, Cullen Deady, Meghan Deady, Stephanie Gilbert, Geysa Gonzalez, Eric Jensen, Sean Liston, Justin Matkovich, Tess Mody, Dan Nelson, Chris Nichols, Colleen O'Neill, Cauley Powell, Anne Quiaoit, Alex Safranek, Eileen Schroeder, Becca Seale, Shobana Shanmugum, Tara Smith, Adam Tanguay and Danielle Tannenbaum—for continuing their school's tradition of hard work, dedication, and commitment to excellence.

I also would like to congratulate the coaches—Head Coach Jan Heiteen, Elighie Wilson, Kim Pakowski, Chris Blum, Justin Ashton, Tiffany Bruce, Aggie Valenti, Bridget Frodyma, Katy Gaby and Kavi Chawla—teachers, and parents for providing the guidance and support that helped the speech team achieve this great accomplishment.

Once again, congratulations to the Downers Grove South High School Speech Team on their state championship. I wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors.

FALLEN SOLDIERS' MOTHERS ARE ALSO WAR CASUALTIES

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share a moving article published on Mother's Day in the San Antonio Express-News. Since this piece speaks eloquently for itself, I see no reason to add any extra words.

FALLEN SOLDIERS' MOTHERS ARE ALSO WAR CASUALTIES

(By Mary Alice Altorfer)

"Mama, Mama," is the universal cry of the dying in battle. Men maimed and broken scream for their mothers, who mercifully can't hear them.

Posthumous medals for valor muffle the child and honor the warrior, but for a Gold Star Mother, ribbons and ceremony are as short-lived as the cherished remains being buried. Without being a statistic, she, too, is a casualty of war. Heard in her strangled weeping are guttural pleas to God to ease the pain of losing a child. For this heartbroken woman, a coffin, even one draped in the American flag and carried by white-gloved Marines, is the grim totality of her forced enlistment into a war that breached the refuge of home.

The bomb in this woman's living room is the conspicuous absence of her baby. Yes, baby, because no matter how old or how long deceased, the person for whom taps sounded only sleeps in his mother's heart, naptime being eternity.

Mother's Day becomes a sad reminder and an accolade for her supreme contribution to patriotism. Or maybe it's a time to be angry and resentful—why my son or daughter? Pride crumples in a darkened room filled with pictures of a young man or woman whose potential bled out onto a foreign soil.

This imagined scenario is a relentless assault on memories of all the boo-boos she kissed and Superman Band-Aids plastered on scraped knees and dinged elbows. If only Mama could have been there to fix things, to make them better, to chase the monster away, to kiss away hurts one more time, then maybe she, too, could quit crying.

Questions and accusations stifle remorse, but tears like water, ever the enemy of rock, wear down resistance. Solace wrestles with acceptance, but grief takes on a presence of its own. Guided by ghosts, it is either torment or release from them.

When burying a child, remembrance is love and guilt is debilitating; however, my quantifying and simplifying a mother's loss and angst seems as unsentimental as some potbellied politician pontificating on Memorial Day. How can anyone suppose a wound so deep it bleeds concurrently with every thought of the initial one? Such trauma is personal, so much so that empathy even seems contrived.

In the middle of the night, this woman still awakens to the imagined cries of her baby, only to clutch a pillow instead. Holidays are a poignant reminder of her diminished family, her unwitting contribution to a distant conflict that ignored every mother's boundaries and ended innocence as abruptly as the life she mourns. Her naivete is six feet under, too. The flag so gloriously waving in front of her home also casts a shadow.

This Mother's Day, there are women embracing memories rather than their children. These mothers fully understand the costs of war and wonder if the old generals and politicians who enact them ever walk in a military cemetery and sob aloud? Do their sons and daughters wear our country's uniform and see active duty?

Do beribboned chests ever exhale and tremble at the sight of an old woman kneeling at Arlington, her fingers lovingly touching a carved name as if it were warm and whispering back to her?

Maybe it is; maybe that's why her face is pressed against the stone so she can once again hear, "Mama, Mama."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MARK R. KENNEDY

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, had I been in Washington yesterday, my votes on the following rollcalls would have been as follows:

- Roll No. 196, Deal Amendment—"yes."
- Roll No. 197, Markey Amendment—"no."
- Roll No. 198, DeLauro Amendment—"yes."
- Roll No. 199, Andrews Amendment—"yes."
- Roll No. 200, Berkley Amendment—"no."
- Roll No. 201, Markey Amendment—"yes."
- Roll No. 202, Bishop Amendment—"no."
- Roll No. 203, Hefley Amendment—"no."
- Roll No. 204, Flake Amendment—"yes."
- Roll No. 205, Flake Amendment—"yes."