According to data from the Project on Government Oversight (POGO), since 1995, of the top fifty federal contractors based on total contract dollars received, nine have a total of twelve resolved cases totaling $161 million in penalties paid. Additionally, those fifty contractors have paid approximately $12 billion in fines and penalties.

''The Contractors and Federal Spending Accountability Act'' establishes a centralized and comprehensive database on actions taken against federal contractors and assistance participants, requiring a description of each of these actions. This will provide debarring officials with the information that they need to protect the business interests of the United States. It places the burden of proving responsibility and subsequent eligibility for contracts or assistance on the person seeking contracts or assistance should they have been previously convicted of two exact or similar violations that constitutes a charge for debarment. Additionally, it improves and clarifies the role of the Interagency Committee on Debarments and Suspension, and requires the Administrator of General Services to report to Congress within 180 days with recommendations for creating the centralized and comprehensive federal contracting and assistance database.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 12, 2007*

Mr. SHERMAN. Madam Speaker, on June 28, 2007, I inadvertently failed to vote on the Stearns Amendment to H.R. 2829 (Rollcall Vote No. 604). Had I voted, I would have voted ''no.''

## DEMOCRATIC HOUR ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

### HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 12, 2007*

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, while our national crime rates have fallen over the last decade, we have seen an unprecedented explosion in our prison and jail populations. Over two million prisoners are now held in Federal and State prisons and local jails. Each year, approximately 650,000 people return to their communities following a prison or jail sentence, resulting in more than 6.7 million Americans under some form of criminal justice supervision. In large part, these people are casualties in our war against drugs.

The weight of the drive to incarcerate has fallen disproportionately on the African-American community. Although drug use and sale cuts across racial and socioeconomic lines, law enforcement strategies have targeted street-level drug dealers and users from low-income, predominately minority, urban areas. As a result, the arrest rates per 100,000 for drug offenses are 6 times higher for blacks than for whites. The rate of imprisonment for black men is more than eight-times that of white men; and over the last 10 years, the incarceration rate of black men has increased at 10 times that of white men.

This disproportionate rate of incarceration has created havoc in our communities. One of the most significant costs of these policies is the impact on children, the weakened ties among family members. According to the 2001 national data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 3,500,000 parents were supervised by the correctional system. Prior to incarceration, 64 percent of female prisoners and 44 percent of male prisoners in State facilities lived with their children. Obviously, the long-term generational effects of a social structure in which imprisonment is the norm and law-abiding role models are absent are difficult to measure, but undoubtedly exist.

The social and criminal justice policy decisions generated by the drug war have also resulted in massive collateral damage negatively limiting critically important access to housing, employment, public benefits, education, and political participation.

A vast infrastructure of barriers, often legislatively mandated, combine to erect seemingly insurmountable roadblocks at every turn, creating a host of proscriptions blanketed under a ''one shoe fits all'' regime. For example, in some States, it is impossible for an ex-felon to get a barber's license, an extreme prohibition when cutting hair is a skill that can be acquired in prison.

There is a pressing need to provide the more than 650,000 men and women who reenter our communities from prison each year with the education and training necessary to obtain and hold onto steady jobs, undergo drug treatment, and get medical and mental health services. For that very reason, I have been active in supporting and introducing reentry legislation for well over a decade.

As Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, I was pleased to join my colleague DANNY DAVIS in this Congress in supporting the Second Chance Act. The Committee passed this legislation on March 28th and we await action on the floor. This bipartisan legislation is a critical step in expanding the foundation for comprehensive re-entry programs at the Federal, State and local level.

The bill focuses on development and support of programs that provide alternatives to incarceration, expand the availability of substance abuse treatment, strengthen families and expand comprehensive re-entry services. The bill is a product of multi-year bipartisan negotiations and enjoys support from across the political spectrum.

The statistics underlying the needs of our prison population are staggering. As detailed by many researchers, these deficiencies include limited education, few job skills or experience, substance and alcohol dependency, and other health problems, including mental health. Evidence from the Department of Justice indicates that the needs of the prison population are not being met under the current system. If we allow them to return to communities with few economic opportunities, where their family and friends are often involved in crime and substance abuse, we can only expect to extend the cycle of recidivism.

For example, 57 percent of federal and 70 percent of State inmates used drugs regularly before prison, with some estimates of involvement with drugs or alcohol around the time of the offense as high as 84 percent. Further, over one-third of all jail inmates have some physical or mental disability and 25 percent of jail inmates have been treated at some time for a mental or emotional problem.

In the face of these statistics, I believe that we can be cautiously optimistic in the support of re-entry programming through the Second Chance Act. Researchers at the Washington State Institute for Public Policy have determined that programs employing ''best practices'' have yielded up to 20 percent declines in re-arrest rates. Spread across the thousands of arrests each year, these practices could yield a significant decline in recidivism, with a commensurate reduction in community and victim costs.

Family-centered programs are one of the hallmarks of this legislation. Family-based treatment programs, for example, have proven results for serving the special population of female offenders and substance abusers with children. An evaluation by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of family-based treatment for substance abusing mothers and children found that at six months post treatment, 60 percent of the mothers remain alcohol and drug free, and drug related offenses declined from 28 to 7 percent.

As we move toward passage of the bill, I hope that we are not caught in the trap of attempting to solve this problem on the cheap or over-reacting to misinformation. In past Congresses, there have been objections to the cost of this bill and past re-entry initiatives.

I must point out that Section 101, the demonstration projects at the heart of the legislation, works out to less that $200 for each of the more than 650,000 people released into the community each year. Moreover, there are no perks—Blackberries or cosmetic surgery—for ex-offenders. This bill is a truly modest measure when balanced against the more than $60 billion each year spent on incarceration.

If we are going to continue to send more and more people to prison with longer and longer sentences, we should do as much as we reasonably can to assure that when they do return they don't go back to prison due to new crimes. The primary reason for doing so is not to benefit offenders, although it does—the primary reason for doing so is because it better assures that all of us and other members of the public will not be victims of crime due to recidivism.

## COLLEGE COST REDUCTION ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

### HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 11, 2007*

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2669, the College Cost Reduction Act. Too many of our country's promising young men and women do not go to college because of the prohibitive cost of tuition. Many of those students who decide to attend institutions of higher education require loans to finance their education. A college education has always been expensive. But it is quickly becoming unaffordable for students and their families. Tuition rates at four-year colleges have increased by approximately 35 percent

over inflation during the last five years. The rising cost of tuition causes approximately 200,000 students annually to delay beginning college or forgoing the chance to study for a higher degree altogether. This disturbing trend must change. The adoption of H.R. 2669 will help make college as affordable as possible for every qualified student who would like to earn an advanced degree, without new costs to taxpayers.

H.R. 2669 would authorize an increase to the maximum value of the Pell Grant scholarship by $500 over the next five years. The legislation would also cut interest rates in half on need-based student loans, reducing the cost of those loans for millions of student borrowers. H.R. 2669, moreover, would prevent student borrowers from facing unmanageable levels of federal student debt. It does this by guaranteeing that borrowers will never have to spend more than 15 percent of their yearly discretionary income on loan repayments and by allowing borrowers in economic hardship to have their loans forgiven after 20 years.

H.R. 2669 also promotes the development of the next generation of high-quality teachers and public servants. It does this by authorizing tuition assistance for excellent undergraduate students who agree to teach in public schools and authorizing loan forgiveness for college graduates that enter public service professions.

Of particular importance to my constituents is the Upward Bound program which seeks to increase high school completion, college participation, and graduation rates among low-income and first-generation college students. H.R. 2669 would provide $228 million in funding over four years for Upward Bound, restoring critical funding for programs that were not funded in fiscal year 2007, as well as fund over 100 new programs. Students from minority communities—including the Asian and Pacific Islander American community—make up nearly 50 percent of all Upward Bound participants.

What is more, this legislation would make significant and needed investments in Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions and other minority serving institutions. I commend my colleague from California (Mr. MILLER) for his commitment to assisting the minority serving institutions. I do, however, have two concerns with respect to this aspect of H.R. 2669. I respectfully request that they be favorably considered as this legislation proceeds through the legislative process.

First, section 311 of H.R. 2669 establishes categories of minority serving institutions that would be eligible to participate in a Centers of Excellence grant program that would provide funds to help recruit and prepare teachers. Institutions that traditionally serve Asian and Pacific Islander American students would benefit from eligibility for such grants. Unfortunately, the category Asian American and Pacific Islander-Serving Institution does not appear in the bill. I respectfully request that my colleagues support my efforts to make Asian American and Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions eligible for these grants.

Second, section 411 of H.R. 2669 establishes a College Access Challenge grant program for eligible students from underserved populations who enter and complete college. The term ''State'' is defined under this section as each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Students who attend institutions of higher education in the U.S. territories of Guam, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Freely Associated States (FAS)—the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau—would be prohibited from participating in this grant program as a result of the limited definition for the term ''State.'' I respectfully request that my colleagues support the efforts to expand the definition of the term ''State'' in this section of H.R. 2669 to include the U.S. territories and the Freely Associated States.

I support this bill. Its provisions will help ensure that many talented young Americans can afford the benefits of a college education. I urge my colleague to support H.R. 2669.

## RESPONSIBLE REDEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ ACT

SPEECH OF

### HON. DENNIS A. CARDOZA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 12, 2007*

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

It is long past time for a change of direction in Iraq. For far too long, this institution merely acted as a rubber stamp and never asked the hard questions necessary of the Administration.

That begins to change today. The passage of this bill will require the Administration to confront the consequences of their bad choices and, more importantly, set us on a responsible path for ending our involvement in Iraq.

This legislation would begin the responsible redeployment of U.S. troops within 120 days and complete redeployment by April 1, 2008. In addition, troops could remain in Iraq for the limited purposes of fighting terrorism or to train Iraqi forces.

This bill is a measured response to the quagmire we find ourselves in. As has been clear for some time, Iraq is currently engulfed in a vicious civil war. This strife between Sunnis and Shiites goes back 1400 years and the American people never signed up for refereeing a civil war.

Moreover, this bill expressly allows for our troops to remain in the region for the purposes of fighting terrorism or to train Iraqi forces.

Our enemy in this conflict is Al Qaeda. They are the ones who attacked us on 9/11, they are the ones who declared war on the United States, and they are the ones we were told were in Iraq. This bill allows our troops to do whatever is necessary to root out Al Qaeda and ensure they will not be able to use Iraqi territory as a safe haven.

Moreover, by augmenting our ability to train Iraqi police forces, this bill places the onus for Iraqi security squarely where it belongs—on the Iraqis themselves. This Administration has only given lip-service to the importance of training Iraqi soldiers and has allowed the bulk of the security responsibility to rest on the shoulders of our brave American men and women.

This is not only unfair, it is counterproductive. We keep hearing—''we'll stand down when the Iraqis stand up.'' This bill, by beginning the belated shift of responsibility from the American military to the Iraqis, will finally force the Iraqis to stand up.

As many have said, the problem of Iraq will not be solved militarily. No less than our military commander in Iraq—General Petraeus—has said that Iraq will not be solved with military means. Only by engaging the full weight of our diplomacy we will be able to force the political compromises necessary that will bring some measure of stability to Iraq. This bill, by redeploying our troops and thus signaling our recognition of the importance of diplomacy, will finally put the Iraqis on a path towards peace.

The time is now. The American people are clamoring for a change in our Iraq policy and, despite the recalcitrance of the Administration, a change in policy will come. After close to 5 years, billions of dollars spent, thousands of our soldiers dead, maimed, or wounded—we simply must chart a new course.

As always, this Congress stands ready to work the President to find a bipartisan solution to Iraq. However, veto threats and refusals to deal with the reality on the ground are no longer tolerable. We must all negotiate an end to this conflict in good faith with a clear and honest recognition of the challenges we face. For my part, I stand ready to work with my colleagues to engage in such a constructive dialogue.

Mr. Speaker, let's end this. Let's bring our soldiers home and thank them for a job well done. Let's pass the Responsible Redeployment Act.

## RESPONSIBLE REDEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ ACT

SPEECH OF

### HON. JERRY F. COSTELLO

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 12, 2007*

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2956, and I appreciate the fact that we are again addressing this important issue today. I want to start by recognizing the ongoing sacrifices and tremendous bravery of the men and women of our armed forces. Their dedication inspires us all and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

Very simply put, it is time to bring our troops home. The effort they are making has not been met by the Iraqi government, and there is no reason to believe that the situation is going to improve there in the foreseeable future. The various reports we have received just this week underscore this point. As I have said for some time, we are beyond the point of being able to impact events in a meaningful way militarily. The political decisions that the Iraqis need to make will not be made as long as our soldiers are there, and I seriously doubt they will be made when we are gone. All we are doing is letting an untenable situation drag on, with our soldiers caught in the crossfire. We are spending over $329 million every day in Iraq. That is a staggering sum of money. We can redirect that money to better fighting the war on terror and also addressing important domestic initiatives.