

State Senator Mary Lou Rath is one of the most respected legislators in our area—proof that elected service is a noble calling. Mary Lou has always been the voice of reason, and proved time and time again that her only agenda was to serve and fight for the people of Western New York.

After spending 30 years in public service, Mary Lou announced recently that she will retire from the New York State Senate. She surely be missed, leaving behind a legacy of fighting for quality health care, serving as a champion for women across New York State, and taking on issues big and small that made a real difference in the lives of those she represented.

Mary Lou was first elected to public office in 1977 as an Erie County Legislator and earned both the support of her constituents and the trust of her colleagues, who elevated her to the post of Republican Leader. In 1994, she became the first woman ever to serve the 61st District in the New York State Senate. In the State Senate, Mary Lou earned a reputation as a hard working and compassionate representative.

Mary Lou also earned a statewide reputation for her efforts to reform Medicaid and curtail the sky-rocketing costs of health care. Additionally, she worked hard to advance her smart growth initiatives, end domestic violence and ensure that all children have a quality education.

In 1997, Mary Lou was inducted in the Western New York Women's Hall of Fame, a fitting tribute for a woman who has been such a positive role model and inspiration to women across New York. Not only did Mary Lou have a distinguished professional career, but along with her husband, the late Supreme Court Justice Edward A. Rath, Jr., raised a wonderful family in whom she instilled the values of public service.

The name Rath not only invokes the best in public service, it is, in a word, iconic in our community. The County Office building bears the name of her father-in-law, Edward A. Rath, Erie County's first-ever chief executive. Her son, Edward A. Rath III, is the third generation of family public servants, a member of the Erie County Legislature, elected to a seat once held by his mother.

Despite all her achievements in public life, I know from my long friendship with the Rath family that Mary Lou's greatest accomplishment is her loving family, her children Allison, Melinda, and Ed, and her eight grandchildren.

She is very deserving of the honor she will receive from the YWCA on May 10th, 2008 for her contributions to Batavia and Genesee County.

Madam Speaker, in recognition of her tremendous service of more than 30 years, for her leadership, dedication and lasting legacy she leaves, I ask this Honorable Body to join me in honoring my friend and colleague, New York State Senator Mary Lou Rath, in grateful appreciation for her distinguished career and devoted service to the people of Western New York.

THE ENHANCEMENT OF RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND READJUSTMENT THROUGH EDUCATION ACT OF 2008

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, we are forever indebted to the brave soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines of our Armed Forces who have fought and continue to fight for our freedom. Though we can never truly repay the debt we owe them, we have a solemn duty to honor their service with more than mere words.

One important benefit for veterans is the Montgomery G.I. Bill, which provides funding for education and training to veterans after their service. Since its inception, the Montgomery G.I. Bill has helped millions of service members. But, Mr. Speaker, it's long past the time when we should modernize this important law.

Today, with my colleagues, I introduced The Enhancement of Recruitment, Retention, and Readjustment Through Education Act of 2008. This legislation enhances the existing G.I. Bill by improving education benefits for servicemembers, veterans, and members of the Guard and Reserve. The legislation will help more military personnel attend college debt free, and allow them to transfer their education benefits to their spouse or children. It also bolsters recruitment and retention efforts, encouraging servicemembers to continue their military careers in support of the all-volunteer force of today. Specifically this legislation would:

Provide an immediate increase in education benefits for active duty personnel to \$1500 a month, and to improve retention, those benefits increase to \$2000 a month after 12 or more years of service.

Significantly increase benefits for members of the National Guard and Reserves.

Provide transferability, allowing service members to transfer their education benefits to dependents. After 6 years of service, half of the benefit may be transferred and after 12 years of service 100 percent may be transferred to a spouse or dependent children.

Allow servicemembers to use up to \$6,000 per year of G.I. Bill education benefits to repay Federal student loans.

Create a matching program to help more veterans graduate debt-free. Up to an additional \$3,000 per year could be paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs in return.

Allow access to Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits for service academy graduates and Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps officers who continue serving.

Build on existing educational benefits program to ensure rapid implementation with minimal additional administrative costs.

On behalf of the over 30 million veterans in the United States who stand to benefit, I am very excited to introduce this legislation. While we can never fully repay the service and sacrifice so many brave Americans have made and continue to make on behalf of our nation, we must ensure they receive access to the kind of benefits they deserve.

IN RECOGNITION OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL GARRY W. MCCLENDON

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Madam Speaker, I respectfully ask the attention of the House today to pay recognition to LTC Garry McClendon. Lieutenant Colonel McClendon has served our Nation in the Army for 25 years and as commanding officer for the Anniston Defense Munitions Center and Holston Army Ammunition Plant since June 2006.

Mr. McClendon's distinguished career began in 1983 as an Ammunition Stock Control and Accounting Specialist. Subsequent assignments with the Army included tours of duty in Southwest Asia, Fort Bragg, NC, Germany, Fort Lee, Virginia, and Camp Able Sentry in Macedonia.

On behalf of us all, I would like to thank Lieutenant Colonel McClendon for his 25 years of service to the United States, and wish him all the best in his next endeavors.

RISING ABOVE THE GATHERING STORM: TWO YEARS LATER

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I rise today to share a speech I gave to the National Academies' convocation on April 29, 2008 on the second anniversary of the release of the "Gathering Storm." I was honored to have had the opportunity to address some of our nation's top business, academic, and scientific leaders at the convocation.

As you may recall, the report painted a very bleak picture of our Nation's high-tech workforce, innovation, and global competitiveness. It prompted swift congressional action to authorize new funding and resources to bolster our science and high-tech workforce, culminating with the enactment of the America COMPETES Act last fall.

However, I am concerned that we still have much work to do to secure our economic future in this global marketplace. And we will never be competitive if we cannot get the Federal Government's finances in order and begin to reduce our dependency on foreign debt.

Madam Speaker, my address as prepared to the "Gathering Storm" convocation follows:

Thank you for the opportunity to address this gathering. As the fourth of five "congressional perspectives" on the program this morning, I'm reminded of the old Congressman Mo Udall quote: "Everything has been said but not everyone has said it."

First, I want to thank you all for your efforts. I am pleased that so many of our nation's science, business, and government leaders have once again gathered to discuss this most pressing of issues challenging the United States.

Perhaps the greatest success of the "Gathering Storm" report thus far is the tremendous awareness and urgency it has raised among the American people.

It was only a few years ago, in 2005, that Rep. Vernon Ehlers, Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, and I went to the White House to urge the administration to make this a priority.