

IN HONOR OF DENNIS PEHOTSKY

**HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 10, 2009*

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker and Colleagues, I rise today in honor and recognition of Dennis Pehotsky, upon the occasion of his retirement from NASA Glenn Research Center in Cleveland, Ohio. Dennis Pehotsky is retiring after nearly thirty years of dedicated service to the NASA Glenn Research Center.

Throughout his tenure, Mr. Pehotsky reflected dedication not only to the mission of NASA, but also to his union, serving as the Vice President of the LESA's IFPTE, Local 28. His commitment to safety issues, ranging from cancer concerns in buildings to his contributions to NASA's "Safe Return to Flight" has served to place the welfare of all NASA employees as the top priority.

Mr. Pehotsky began his tenure in 1982 as a Voucher Examiner Purchasing Agent. Over the years, he was entrusted with thousands of the most complex orders and purchases. His outstanding performance on the job, innovative techniques and community outreach led to his appointment to the NASA Safety Committee and also led to outstanding performance ratings and several professional awards. Mr. Pehotsky was honored with the Silver Snoopy Award, NASA's most coveted award. This award, presented by NASA astronauts, honors an individual for enhancing the safety of space flight.

Madam Speaker and Colleagues, please join me in honor and celebration of Dennis Pehotsky, whose commitment to NASA, to his union and to the rights and safety of all workers is reflected throughout his professional career. His exceptional work ethic, ability to bring people together and his leadership in championing the cause of worker protection—from the electrician on the ground to the flight commander poised for take-off—has raised the bar of safety, excellence and innovation throughout NASA.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 795, THE DOROTHY I. HEIGHT AND WHITNEY M. YOUNG, JR. SOCIAL WORK REINVESTMENT ACT

**HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 10, 2009*

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to give my remarks on the reintroduction of the Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act, which I first introduced in the 110th Congress. Once again, I am immensely honored and privileged to recognize the historic efforts and legacies of two of my personal heroes in supporting a profession that each of us has been proud to call our own. Moreover, I rise in support of the millions of Americans served daily by the nation's social workers. As a professional social worker, I am acutely aware of the significant contributions that social workers have made to the socio-economic fabric of our nation. Sadly, I am equally aware of the troubling challenges that prevent my professional colleagues from

continuing to deliver essential social services and interventions to Americans most in need of such support.

This measure could not be introduced at a more critical moment. Our nation is experiencing challenges of a magnitude we have not faced in decades. Unemployment rates are rising, banks across the country are failing, millions of houses are in foreclosure, and a middle-class lifestyle is no longer within reach for the average American. This is placing extreme pressure on families and creating an ever-increasing need for a workforce adept at tackling issues of poverty and inequality, particularly during moments of crisis. The workforce that has historically led this charge in times of turmoil is social work.

My social work colleagues provide essential services to individuals across the lifespan and have long been the workforce to guide people to critical resources, counsel them on important life decisions, and help them reach their full potential. Social workers are society's safety net, and with our current economic challenges, the need for this safety net has grown to include and protect a diverse group of people from all walks of life.

Yet, as I stand before you today, our nation's social workers face daunting challenges, challenges that compromise the ability of these dedicated professionals to provide their clients with unparalleled service and care. These challenges are preventing students from choosing a degree in social work and causing experienced social workers to leave the field. Competing policy priorities, fiscal constraints, safety concerns, significant educational debt, comparatively insufficient salaries, increased administrative burdens, and unsupportive work environments are just a few of the common obstacles encountered by our nation's social workers. Yet, our nation's social workers do not suffer alone. Indeed, just as America's social workers struggle daily to confront mounting barriers impeding the delivery of essential services, so must millions of Americans absorb the direct impact of this compromised access to necessary care. There are already documented social work shortages in the fields of aging and child welfare.

The Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act is designed to address these challenges to the social work profession, thereby helping to ensure that millions of individuals and families throughout the nation can continue to receive necessary social work services. This legislation creates the foundation for a professional workforce to meet the ever-increasing demand for the essential services that social workers provide. Professional social workers have the unique expertise and experience to help solve the social and economic challenges that our nation is facing.

I rise today with grave concern, yet resolute optimism. On one hand, I am convinced that workforce challenges, if left unaddressed, will result in a social work corps ill-equipped to provide comprehensive service to underserved communities throughout the country. Nonetheless, I recognize that we have a unique opportunity to outline, develop, and implement strategies that help the people of America. Like Dr. Dorothy I. Height, I believe that "we hold in our hands the power . . . to shape not only our own but the nation's future," a future that is founded upon the dissolution of imaginary distinctions within our growing society and a

renewed commitment to those struggling to keep pace.

Thus, in the words of Whitney M. Young, Jr., I stand today to "Support the strong, give courage to the timid, remind the indifferent, and warn the opposed." In the name and spirit of Dorothy I. Height and the late Whitney M. Young, Jr., then, I come before you to propose a dramatic reinvestment in our nation's social work community.

I invite my colleagues in the House and Senate to consider the far-reaching effects of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, to say nothing of the persistent echoes of years of conflict in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. More than any other group of professionals, America's social workers provide our armed services and combat veterans with mental health interventions, housing and financial counseling, case management, and advocacy, among other services. Yet, across America, social workers with unmanageable, excessive caseloads cannot properly serve the millions of veterans who will return from the Iraq War experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, suicide, and drug and alcohol addiction. Indeed, despite our best wishes, America will continue to see war-weary soldiers whose otherwise thankful homecoming may be marred by post traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, or substance abuse.

Much the same, social workers with intractable educational debt must balance the burden of repaying student loans with ever-expanding and complex caseloads, leaving young social workers struggling to assist the one in seven adults with dementia, and the hundreds of thousands of older Americans who rely upon their invaluable skills and service. With a full quarter of the American population suffering from a diagnosable mental illness, important caregiver, family, and health counseling, as well as mental health therapy will continue to suffer as professional social workers struggle to repay student loans and are forced into better paying careers.

In addition to these and other invaluable services provided to our nation's veterans and senior citizens, however, the efforts of America's social workers have a direct and measurable impact upon communities throughout the nation. A brief sampling of these efforts includes:

Child Welfare: The Children's Defense Fund has found that an American child is confirmed as abused or neglected every 36 seconds. Similarly, a recent estimate by U.S. Administration for Children and Families indicates that 510,000 children are currently living within the U.S. foster care system, with most children placed under the care of foster parents due to parental abuse or neglect. Research shows that professional social workers in child welfare agencies are more likely to find permanent homes for children who were in foster care for 2 or more years. Unfortunately, fewer than 40 percent of child welfare workers are professional social workers.

Health: The American Cancer Society estimates that there were 1,437,180 new cases of cancer and 565,650 cancer deaths in 2008 alone, while the incidence of cancer will increase dramatically as the population grows older. Similarly, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that as many as 1,285,000 Americans are living with HIV or AIDS. In 2006, 1.3 million people received