

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

GENERATIONS INVIGORATING VOLUNTEERISM AND EDUCATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 18, 2009

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1388) to reauthorize and reform the national service laws:

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Chair, I rise today to show my support for H.R. 1388, the Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education Act of 2009 or the GIVE Act.

President Obama called on Congress to create new opportunities for Americans to build a stronger country by helping students perform better in school, prepare Americans for green and innovative 21st century jobs, rebuild cities in times of disaster, and improve communities. I am proud to say that through the various programs contained in the GIVE Act—whether new or old but reinvigorated—this bill meets President Obama's call.

Most importantly, I am pleased that this bill encourages our younger generations to engage in volunteerism while allowing them the opportunity to gain real-world experience working in our communities and addressing issues that are sometimes hard to face. During these trying times and with so many individuals losing their jobs, it is important to equip our youth with this type of experience.

I support the programs in the GIVE Act because its goals seek to better not only our future, but the future of generations to come. I urge my colleagues support this bill.

IN SUPPORT OF A BILL TO INCLUDE VETERANS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE CLEAN-UP OF ENIWETOK ATOLL AS A RADIATION-RISK ACTIVITY FOR THE PURPOSES OF LAWS ADMINISTERED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 19, 2009

Ms. BORDALLO. Madam Speaker, today I have reintroduced a bill, along with my colleagues, Congressman NEIL ABERCROMBIE of Hawaii and Congressman ENI FALEOMAVAEGA of American Samoa, to amend Title 38 of the United States Code to explicitly define participation in clean-up operations that were undertaken by the United States Army at Eniwetok Atoll of the Republic of the Marshall Islands as a "radiation-risk activity" for the purposes of qualifying veterans who participated in such operations for service-connected benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Af-

fairs. This bill would correct in statute a long-standing inequity for veterans who participated in clean-up of radioactive materials and debris on Eniwetok Atoll resulting from forty-three atmospheric nuclear detonations that occurred there and that were conducted by the United States Government during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s. Servicemembers were detailed to Eniwetok Atoll during or around the years 1977 through 1982 to confine and cap contaminated soil. Part of the clean-up operations involved the construction of a concrete dome to cover a crater.

The legislation we have reintroduced today would simply allow veterans who participated in any clean-up activity on Eniwetok Atoll during their course of their service to be deemed eligible for Department of Veterans Affairs radiation programs. Such programs provide medical benefits to certain veterans who were exposed to radiation while on Active Duty. Veterans who are currently covered under radiation-risk activities include those who participated on-site in executing the atmospheric tests in the Pacific Basin.

We recognize and commend the atomic veterans who performed clean-up operations on Eniwetok Atoll and thank them for their service to our nation. I introduced the same legislation in the 110th Congress to correct this concern. I hope that our legislation will be given fair consideration by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs in the current Congress. I further hope the Department of Defense makes available to the public, to our veterans and their families, and to the Department of Veterans Affairs all recorded relating to the nature of the tests and clean-up activities that were undertaken on Eniwetok Atoll.

COMMEMORATION OF 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION BEING MADE A CABINET LEVEL DEPARTMENT

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 19, 2009

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Veterans Administration as a Cabinet level Department. For some time members of many communities from across the nation have given their loved ones to defend our freedoms as Americans, yet when they returned there was nothing in place to aid them in their transition to civilian life. All of this changed twenty years ago when the Veterans Administration was officially elevated as a cabinet level agency and renamed as the Department of Veterans Affairs. The intrinsic value of having a department such as this has benefited our nation in innumerable ways and now more than ever we see its particular value.

Changes in battle and warfare tactics have caused evolving consequences. It is essential to have a Department that is especially

equipped to handle the consequences of engagement in combat, especially the impact of grievous physical wounds. I am especially supportive of our Department of Veterans affairs and even more pleased to have a person of character and sense of duty such as Eric Shinseki as the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The challenge of military personnel transitioning into civilian life becomes even more daunting especially during this period of economic downturn facing our nation. The Department of Veterans Affairs will have to be prepared now more than ever for the growth in the number of veterans needing our assistance to establish their lives once again.

I believe it is our duty as a nation to ensure the well-being of those who have so valiantly given of themselves to protect our nation and I commend the values that have been upheld by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I introduce into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD the remarks made by President Obama at the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Department of Veterans Affairs as a Cabinet Agency on March 16, 2009.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY,
Washington, DC, March 16, 2009.

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AS A CABINET AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. To Jim Benson for helping to organize this; to Mahdee for your service to our country—a Pledge of Allegiance that you've shown in your own commitment to protecting this country; and obviously, to Secretary Shinseki. It is an honor to join you and the hardworking public servants here at the Department of Veterans Affairs as we mark a milestone in the distinguished history of this department.

You know, 20 years ago, on the day the Veterans Administration was officially elevated to a Cabinet-level agency and renamed the Department of Veterans Affairs, a ceremony was held to swear in the administrator of the old entity as Secretary of the new one. And in his remarks that day, President George H.W. Bush declared that the mission of this agency is "so vital that there's only one place for the veterans of America: in the Cabinet Room, at the table with the President of the United States of America." I could not agree more.

I could not be more pleased that Eric Shinseki has taken a seat at that table. Throughout his long and distinguished career in the Army, Secretary Shinseki won the respect and admiration of our men and women in uniform because they've always been his highest priority—and he has clearly brought that same sense of duty and commitment to the work of serving our veterans.

As he knows, it's no small task. This department has more than a quarter of a million employees across America, and its services range from providing education and training benefits, health care and home loans, to tending those quiet places that remind us of the great debt we owe—and remind me of the heavy responsibility that I bear. It's a commitment that lasts from the

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

day our veterans retire that uniform to the day that they are put to rest—and that continues on for their families.

Without this commitment, I might not be here today. After all, my grandfather enlisted after Pearl Harbor and went on to march in Patton's Army. My grandmother worked on a bomber assembly line while he was gone. My mother was born at Fort Leavenworth while he was away. When my grandfather returned, he went to college on the GI Bill; bought his first home with a loan from the FHA; moved his family west, all the way to Hawaii, where he and my grandmother helped to raise me.

And I think about my grandfather whenever I have the privilege of meeting the young men and women who serve in our military today. They are our best and brightest, and they're our bravest—enlisting in a time of war; enduring tour after tour of duty; serving with honor under the most difficult circumstances; and making sacrifices that many of us cannot begin to imagine. The same can be said of their families. As my wife, Michelle, has seen firsthand during visits to military bases across this country, we don't just deploy our troops in a time of war—we deploy their families, too.

So while the mission of this department is always vital, it is even more so during long and difficult conflicts like those that we're engaged in today. Because when the guns finally fall silent and the cameras are turned off and our troops return home, they deserve the same commitment from their government as my grandparents received.

Last month, I announced my strategy for ending the war in Iraq. And I made it very clear that this strategy would not end with military plans and diplomatic agendas, but would endure through my commitment to upholding our sacred trust with every man and woman who has served this country. And the same holds true for our troops serving in Afghanistan.

The homecoming we face over the next year and a half will be the true test of this commitment: whether we will stand with our veterans as they face new challenges—physical, psychological and economic—here at home.

I intend to start that work by making good on my pledge to transform the Department of Veterans Affairs for the 21st century. That's an effort that, under Secretary Shinseki's leadership, all of you have already begun—conducting a thorough review of your operations all across this agency. And I intend to support this effort not just with words of encouragement, but with resources. That's why the budget I sent to Congress increases funding for this department by \$25 billion over the next five years.

With this budget, we don't just fully fund our VA health care program—we expand it to serve an additional 500,000 veterans by 2013; to provide better health care in more places; and to dramatically improve services related to mental health and injuries like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury. We also invest in the technology to cut red tape and ease the transition from active duty. And we provide new help for homeless veterans, because those heroes have a home—it's the country they served, the United States of America. And until we reach a day when not a single veteran sleeps on our nation's streets, our work remains unfinished. (Applause.)

Finally, in this new century, it's time to heed the lesson of history, that our returning veterans can form the backbone of our middle class—by implementing a GI Bill for the 21st century. I know you're working hard under a tough deadline, but I am confident that we will be ready for August 1st. And that's how we'll show our servicemen and

women that when you come home to America, America will be here for you. That's how we will ensure that those who have "borne the battle"—and their families—will have every chance to live out their dreams.

I've had the privilege of meeting so many of these heroes. Some of the most inspiring are those that I've met in places like Walter Reed—young men and women who've lost a limb or even their ability to take care of themselves, but who never lose the pride they feel for their country. And that is, after all, what led them to wear the uniform in the first place—their unwavering belief in the idea of America; that no matter where you come from, what you look like, who your parents are, this is a place where anything is possible, where anyone can make it, where we take care of each other and look out for each other—especially for those who've sacrificed so much for this country.

These are the ideals that generations of Americans have fought for and bled for and died for. These are the ideals at the core of your mission—a mission that dates back before our founding—one taken up by our first President years before he took office, back when he served as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army. Then-General Washington fought tirelessly to support the veterans of America's Revolutionary War. Such support, he argued, should "never be considered as a pension or gratuity . . ." Rather, ". . . it was the price of their blood," and of our independence; ". . . it is, therefore," he said, "more than a common debt, it is a debt of honor . . ." A debt of honor.

Washington understood that caring for our veterans was more than just a way of thanking them for their service. He recognized the obligation is deeper than that—that when our fellow citizens commit themselves to shed blood for us, that binds our fates with theirs in a way that nothing else can. And in the end, caring for those who have given their fullest measure of devotion to us—and for their families—is a matter of honor—as a nation and as a people.

That's a responsibility you hold, that's the work that you do—repaying that debt of honor, a debt we can never fully discharge. And I know it's not always easy. I know there's much work ahead to transform this agency for the 21st century. But I have the fullest confidence that with Secretary Shinseki's leadership, and with the hard work of the men and women of this department, we will fulfill our sacred trust and serve our returning heroes as well as they've served us.

Thank you. God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you, everybody.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF MILDRED JUANITA NETTLES COOK

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 19, 2009

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, Wilcox County recently lost a dear friend, and I rise today to honor Mildred Juanita Nettles Cook and pay tribute to her memory.

A lifelong resident of Arlington, Mrs. Cook graduated from Wilcox County High School and, in 1940, she graduated with honors from Alabama State College for Women in Montevallo.

Mrs. Cook was also a lifelong member of the Arlington United Methodist Church, where she served as treasurer and Sunday school

superintendent for many years. She was also a member of the United Methodist Women and the Friday Afternoon Club. She was a member of Alabama Charter Chapter #36 United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Lt. Joseph M. Wilcox Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She served as president of both the Alabama Division and the General Division of the UDC and was known and respected throughout the nation for her leadership in both the Daughters of the Confederacy and the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Mrs. Cook was a charter director of the Town-Country National Bank in Camden. She also served as treasurer of the Arlington Methodist Community and Cemetery Foundation.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering a dedicated community leader and friend to many throughout south Alabama. "Miss Mildred" will be dearly missed by her family—her sons, Daniel Bragg Cook Jr. and his wife Angela, Samuel McPherson Cook and his wife Claudia, and Abe Crum Cook III and his wife Helen; her grandchildren, Jennifer Mildred Cook Nice, Richard Daniel Cook, Samuel McPherson Cook Jr., John Roan Cook, Claudina Pereira, Marian Denisse Cook, Abe Crum Cook IV, Braxton Dauphin Cook, and Kathryn Elizabeth Cook; her great-grandchildren, Leina Tsou Cook, Anara Tsou Cook, and Samuel Rikard Cook; and many nieces, nephews, and cousins—as well as the countless friends she leaves behind.

Our thoughts and prayers are with them all during this difficult time.

A TRIBUTE TO JOYLENE WAGNER

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 19, 2009

Mr. SCHIFF. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Mrs. Joylene Wagner of Glendale, California. Every March we celebrate Women's History Month in recognition of the contributions and the sacrifices made by our nation's women. Accordingly it is my privilege to highlight Mrs. Wagner as a woman whose extraordinary efforts are vital to my district.

Born and raised in Monrovia, California, Joylene graduated in 1976 from University of California, Santa Cruz with a degree in Western Civilization and continued on to the University of San Diego's Legal Assistant program. During her five years working as a litigation paralegal in San Diego and later in Los Angeles, she served on the founding board of the San Diego Association of Legal Assistants and in the La Jolla University/Community Chorus and Orchestra Association.

Joylene and her husband Robert moved to Glendale in 1981, where they both became active in the Adams Hill Homeowners Association. They are very proud of their 3 children, who all attended Glendale schools. Their daughter Meg now teaches children with autism in Fairfax County, Virginia, son Will serves on the staff of Senator ARLEN SPECTER, and son Nick will graduate from Glendale High School this year.

Since 1985, in addition to singing in the First United Methodist Church choir, Joylene has split her time between volunteering in the schools and community and working part-time