

INTRODUCING THE DEPARTMENT
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ACQUISITION
IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2009

HON. STEVE BUYER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, today, I am introducing the Department of Veterans Affairs Acquisition Improvement Act of 2009. This legislation addresses serious long-term procurement problems within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and would provide the VA with greater oversight of its contracting and asset management processes.

VA has annual expenditures of more than \$14.1 billion for supplies, services, and construction. The Department of Veterans Affairs Acquisition Reform Act of 2009 is a first step to provide a centralized oversight and policy for contracting and acquisition within the Department by streamlining business operations under an Assistant Secretary for Acquisition, Construction and Asset Management. This bill will improve procurement processes by:

Establishing the position of the Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Acquisition, Construction and Asset Management who would serve as the Chief Acquisition Officer for the VA.

Providing an appropriate structure for acquisition policy and oversight over contracts and purchases.

Requiring the Secretary to establish and maintain a comprehensive centralized Department-wide acquisition program, and to develop a streamlined approach to purchasing goods and services.

Providing VA the authority to use personal services contracts to ensure patients at VA medical facilities are provided quality contract care without unnecessary expenses.

Authorizing the VA to have complete responsibility and auditing authority for the two Federal Supply Schedules delegated to the VA by the General Services Administration.

Providing a clear definition for small business concerns to be listed in the database of veteran-owned businesses maintained by the VA.

I am pleased to be joined by a number of members in introducing this much needed legislation, and urge my colleagues to support the bill.

COMMENDING THE SOLDIERS AND
CIVILIAN PERSONNEL STA-
TIONED AT FORT GORDON

SPEECH OF

HON. PHIL GINGREY

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 7, 2009

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a cosponsor of H. Con. Res. 206, a resolution commending the soldiers and civilian personnel stationed at Fort Gordon and their families for their service and dedication to the United States and recognizing the contributions of Fort Gordon to Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom and its role as a pivotal communications training installation.

Fort Gordon dates to 1940, when the United States Army recognized a need for a military installation near Augusta, Georgia that could aid in combat during the ensuing Second World War. The groundbreaking actually took place in 1941, and the base was originally named Camp Gordon after John B. Gordon, a general during the Civil War and former Governor of Georgia. During World War II, Camp Gordon was home to the 4th Infantry Division, 26th Infantry Division, and 10th Armored Division of the Army until they were deployed to Europe. However, in 1948, Camp Gordon became the home of the Signal Corps Training Center—for which it is most commonly known today.

Throughout the Korean war the need for signalmen grew, and the Signal Corps Training Center became the largest single source for Army communications specialists. Camp Gordon was also made a permanent installation in 1956 and was renamed Fort Gordon. Further, during the Vietnam war era and after, communications specialists became an absolutely necessary component of highly technological and modernized warfare, and Fort Gordon was recognized as an exemplary institution for these soldiers as the Signal Corps Training Center came to be known as the United States Army Signal Center at Fort Gordon.

Fort Gordon and the troops and families stationed there were instrumental in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and during the 1990s the installation was responsible for training most of the DoD personnel who operate and maintain satellites, as well as training signal troops of allied and former nations.

Currently, approximately 19,000 soldiers are stationed at Fort Gordon, and Augusta has been a welcome home to all of them. To this day, the base continues its tradition of success in the Signal Corps, as it trains soldiers for deployment into theater in Iraq and Afghanistan. On behalf of Georgia's 11th Congressional District, I am proud of the continued dedication to the safety and security of the United States of the men and women at Fort Gordon and thank them for their nearly 60 years of service to this Nation. Georgia has been blessed with an abundance of willing men and women who are committed to ensuring freedom and liberty for America, and I thank each of them for their service.

I believe that the brave men and women at Fort Gordon and every military installation who sacrifice for our present freedoms deserve our fullest support. Our Nation's service men and women represent the best our country has to offer, and they must be treated with the respect and honor they deserve. As we ask these courageous soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines—and their families—to do more and more, it's only right we continue doing all we can for them. Commending the accomplishments and service of our troops at Fort Gordon is just one small example of the gratitude that every American should express to our troops at home and abroad.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to support this resolution.

IN MEMORY OF JODIE MAHONY

HON. MIKE ROSS

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

Mr. ROSS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Joseph "Jodie" Mahony II of El Dorado, Arkansas, who passed away on Saturday, December 5, 2009, at the age of 70. Having served 36 years in the Arkansas state legislature, Jodie was a legend in Arkansas government and politics and his presence will be deeply missed.

Jodie committed his life to making Arkansas a better place to get an education, to live and to work. He was first elected to the Arkansas House of Representatives in 1970 and served 24 years before winning a Senate seat in 1994. In 2002, after two 4-year terms, when newly adopted term limits kept him from seeking re-election as senator, he ran for the House again, where he was still eligible to serve two more 2-year terms.

Jodie retired officially from elected office in 2006, but his presence remained at the State Capitol where he served as a part-time aide to the House Speaker during the 2007 legislative session. Throughout his career, Jodie filed 1,429 bills, with much of his efforts focused on public and higher education, the developmentally disabled, child support enforcement and natural resources conservation.

In addition to Jodie's public service, he and his family have played an influential role in the state's legal history. The grandson and son of lawyers, Jodie followed in his family's footsteps to become a lawyer, and today, in its 113th year, the Mahony law firm is the oldest operating law firm in the State of Arkansas. Jodie also served in the U.S. Marine Corps in active duty and the reserves.

Our State is better for Jodie's service to it and its people. I never thought of Jodie as a politician, but rather as a statesman. He had the respect of every legislator for his knowledge, fairness and commitment to our great State. I had the privilege of serving with Jodie during my time in the Arkansas state legislature from 1991 through 2000 and he was a friend, a role model and someone I trusted for sincere advice and counsel.

My thoughts and prayers and those of every Arkansan are with Jodie's family during this difficult time, especially to his wife, Bettie Anne; his two sons, Joseph K. Mahony III and Michael Emon Mahony; and three grandchildren, Jordan, Alexandra and Joseph K. Mahony IV.

Jodie will be deeply missed, but never forgotten. Although he is no longer with us, Jodie's many contributions to improving our state will continue on forever, serving as a reminder of his hard work and many good deeds throughout an accomplished legislative career and life.

IN HONOR OF MRS. EDITH
ARMSTEAD GRAY

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and the legacy of

Mrs. Edith Armstead Gray. Mrs. Gray passed away December 1 at the age of 99. Mrs. Gray was a lady of style, grace, and compassion. But, most of all, Mrs. Gray earned the highest honor that could be bestowed upon any of us: "Servant."

Mrs. Gray was born in Galveston, Texas, in 1910 to Henry and Millie Armstead. She enrolled at Tuskegee Institute, now University, as a student majoring in home economics. She accepted her first and only teaching job in Conecuh County, Alabama, and returned to summer school to earn her B.S. degree from Tuskegee in 1940.

During her extraordinary teaching career, she became a great role model for thousands of young men and women who entered her classroom. But, her commitment and dedication to humankind did not limit itself to the classroom.

Shirley Chisholm once said that "Service is the rent that we pay for the space that we occupy here on this earth." Mrs. Gray paid her rent and she paid it well. She gave dedicated service to many community organizations to include: the Conecuh County branch of the NAACP; the Evergreen Housing Authority board of directors; the Neoteric Club, now associated with Neoteric Clubs of Alabama; the Mt. Zion A.M.E. Zion Church; the County Retired Teachers Association; and a life member of the advisory board at Reid Technical College. Because of her dedicated service to Reid Technical College, the library and technology center now proudly bears her name.

Mrs. Gray was a trailblazer. She was a founding member of the Conecuh branch of the NAACP and the Neoteric Club. She worked tirelessly to make sure that citizens in her community exercised their power of the ballot.

Mrs. Gray married Philander A. Gray in 1936. From that union came three accomplished children: Phyllis Hallmon, my chief of staff, Frederick Gray, and Jerome Gray. Upon the death of her husband in 1953, as a single parent, she reared her three children and passed on to each of them a love for people and public service. All of them have had distinguished careers and are making their mark on the world because of their mother's strong influence. Frederick has served for many years as a United Methodist pastor. His charge has been to bring souls to Jesus Christ for His service. Jerome has served as the State Field Director for the Alabama Democratic Conference. Like his dear mother, he has devoted his life and work to the expansion of political and civic opportunities for African-Americans. He has been involved in many capacities at the local and state levels in the fight for civil rights and equal opportunities. He currently serves as a Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture for the State of Alabama. Phyllis has also had a distinguished career, serving as a public school teacher, government lawyer, legislative director to a United States Senator, and chief of staff to two Members of the United States House of Representatives. In the same vein as her mother, she has distinguished herself as a woman of hard work and compassion. The legacy of Mrs. Gray will live on through each of them and their progeny.

Her legacy of good will is something that we all should seek to replicate. Our country and our world are better because Edith Armstead Gray passed this way. She will be sorely missed. I know that after 99 years of dedi-

cated earthly service, she has now claimed her crown of righteousness.

I extend my deepest sympathies to the Gray family and thank them for sharing this special woman with the world for so many years.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR PAULA
HAWKINS

HON. JOHN L. MICA

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

Mr. MICA. Madam Speaker, it is with sadness that I report to the House of Representatives the passing of former United States Senator Paula Hawkins. Florida's former State Public Service Commissioner and U.S. Senator died Friday, December 4 in Orlando, Florida. With Paula Hawkins' passing, we have lost a remarkable public servant and trailblazer for women and all Americans in the state and national political landscape.

A resident of Winter Park, Florida, who began her public career in nearby Maitland, Florida, was born Paula Fickes in Salt Lake City, Utah, on January 24, 1927. She received her education from the public school systems in Salt Lake City and Richmond, Utah, as well as, Atlanta, Georgia, attending Utah State University from 1944–1947.

In 1972, she became the first woman in Florida elected statewide with her winning a seat on the Public Service Commission. With her election and work to reform Florida's State Utility Commission, she gained the name as the battling "Maitland Housewife." In 1980, she became the first woman elected to the United States Senate without being preceded in office by a husband or family member.

In the United States Senate, she authored the Missing Children's Act in 1982. During her 6-year term, she championed children's and women's issues and created a public dialogue on the subject of missing, exploited and abused children. "Senator Paula Hawkins was tireless, tenacious and an incredible champion for America's children," said Ernie Allen, President of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. "We will cherish her memory and miss her very much."

Senator Hawkins was also responsible for the passage of Radio Marti legislation and a number of measures assisting women in the workforce. She Chaired the Investigation and Oversight Subcommittee of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. In addition, the Senator served as Chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Children, Family, Youth and Drugs and was responsible for establishing the U.S. Senate Child Care Center.

Mrs. Hawkins was instrumental in building the Republican Party, both at the state and national level. She began her GOP work at the local level, served as National Republican Committeewoman from Florida and co-chaired the 1984 Republican Convention Platform Committee. Senator Hawkins was also state co-chair in Florida for several successful Republican Presidential campaigns.

Senator Hawkins received numerous awards and was honored by selection to Florida's Outstanding Women's Hall of Fame.

Prior to election to the U.S. Senate she served as a vice president of Air Florida 1979–1980; director, Rural Telephone Bank

board 1972–1978; member President's Commission on White House fellowships 1975; served on Federal Energy Administration Consumer Affairs/Special Impact Advisory Committee 1974–1976; and served for 7 years as a representative for the United States on the Organization of American States Inter-American Drug Abuse Commission.

Senator Hawkins is survived by her husband Gene Hawkins of Winter Park, Florida and three children, Genean McKinnon of Winter Park and Montreal, Kevin Hawkins of Denver, Colorado and Kelly McCoy of Orlando, Florida, as well as, 11 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

SPEECH ON AFGHANISTAN

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, on Friday December 4, 2009, I had an opportunity to address the American Security Project Conference regarding the situation in Afghanistan. This speech followed a hearing of the House Armed Services Committee, which I chair, the day before. My address is as follows:

[Speech given at the American Security Project Conference, Dec. 4, 2009]

BEYOND THE SURGE: ASSESSING THE
PRESIDENT'S AFGHANISTAN STRATEGY

(By Ike Skelton)

First, let me take a moment to thank Admiral Gunn for that introduction. You're too kind. I'd like to extend that thanks to Senator Hart and the American Security Project as a whole. You're doing great work, and I appreciate your efforts. I'd also like to say happy birthday to Evelyn Farkas, here at ASP. I would also like to thank our brave men and women in uniform. We have asked much of them in the past decade, and they have not failed to deliver.

Two months ago, I wrote a letter to the President saying, essentially, that he should listen to his commanders in the field. Being a member of Congress, I took six pages to say that, but that was the basic message. I made that same point in private conversations with the President. And so it pleased me the other night when the President agreed to provide General McChrystal with additional forces needed to make this new strategy work.

But before assessing the overall strategy, I think we should take a moment to remind ourselves why we're in Afghanistan and the threat we face there.

Al Qaeda presents a serious threat to our nation. Osama bin Laden and his minions have attacked us or attempted to attack us many times over the years. The most remarkable attack involved the murder of 3000 civilians—men, women, and children—but it was hardly the only attack. And I do not believe that anyone has a good reason to believe that they have given up their attempts to attack us.

Following our invasion of Afghanistan in response to this attack, al Qaeda largely fled to the border regions of Pakistan. Their Taliban allies, meanwhile, continue to escalate their attacks in an attempt to overthrow the Afghan government and drive out the international coalition.

Others have differing opinions on this, but I do not believe that we can ultimately destroy al Qaeda if we cannot prevent them from recreating a safe haven in Afghanistan.