EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

PROVIDING SURVIVING MILITARY SPOUSES WITH MORTGAGE PROTECTION

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 11, 2011

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1263, ''to amend Service Members' Civil Relief Act.'' This legislation would provide surviving spouses of service members with certain protections relating to mortgages and mortgage foreclosures.

The proposed bill to amend Service Members Civil Relief Act will afford surviving spouses of service members who die while in the military and whose death is service-connected, the same protections against sale, foreclosure, and seizure of property currently applicable to their husbands who while in military service are unable to meet an obligation on real or personal property. It is in a spirit of deep gratitude and appreciation that I fight to provide for the surviving spouses of our deceased military men and women, in order to provide them with the tools they need to maintain ownership of their homestead after supporting members of our community who served our country. It is the responsibility of all Members of Congress and the Administration to fulfill our moral obligation to those men and women who have fought to protect our freedom and democracy, and the families that supported their courageous lives.

In the State of Texas, we have nearly 1.7 million veterans, and 18th District is home to 32,000 of them. Of the 200,000 veterans of military service who live and work in Houston, more than 13,000 are veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Additionally, there are almost 34,000 soldiers from Texas currently deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. I am pained by the numbers of fine men and women who have lost their lives during their deployment.

As of August 2, 4,683 brave Americans have died in Iraq and Afghanistan since the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) on October 7, 2001 and Operation Iraqi Freedom, which began with the invasion of Iraq on March 19, 2003. Of the total deaths, 3,708 were due to hostile fire, and the remainder due to non-hostile actions (such as accident, suicide, or illness).

In August, 66 American troops died in violence, the bulk of them during a devastating helicopter crash on Aug. 6, which killed 30 special operations troops and eight Afghans on a high-risk raid. The 66 deaths were the highest count for that war since July 2010, when 65 Americans were killed. Nora Bensahel, a military strategist with the Center for a New American Security, said the numbers may not mean as much as they seem. ''In Afghanistan, the number of people killed overall was very high, but that doesn't say much about number of attacks—half of those [killed] were from a single incident—a particularly devastating one,'' referring to the Aug. 6 crash.

Monthly American casualties in Iraq have largely been in the single digits for several years now, but the war there has not been without perils: last July, 14 American servicemen died amid fighting there, many of whom leave spouses and children behind.

According to the Department of Labor, as of June 2011 there have been more than 2,500 coalition troops that have now been killed—with 1,644 of them being American. Further, the Defense Manpower Data Center Statistical Analysis Division has identified 3,215 Americans killed in the Iraq war, with 23 having been from Texas. This legislation addresses a need to find ways to provide mortgage assistance to the surviving spouses of the men and women who have fought for our country.

After dedicating their lives to serving our country it is important to assist the family members of deceased service members.

In order to address this obstacle to employment, The Veterans Opportunity Work Act (VOW) makes the Transition Assistance Program mandatory. The Department of Labor must thereby create a system by which licensure and certifications are translatable to those available at the state level. This is done in an effort to address the barriers between the skills and training received in the military and requirements for civilian licenses and other credentials.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 1263, to amend Service Members Civil Relief Act.

HOSPICE OF HARNETT COUNTY RECOGNIZED FOR 25 YEARS OF SERVICE

HON. RENEE L. ELLMERS

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

Mrs. ELLMERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize 25 years of service by Hospice of Harnett County (North Carolina). They offer the highest quality non-profit hospice services and support to Harnett County patients and family caregivers facing serious and life-limiting illness regardless of their income or ability to pay.

Hospice of Harnett County providers take the time to ask what's important to those they are caring for—and listen to what their patients and families say.

For 25 years, Hospice of Harnett County's skilled and compassionate hospice and palliative care professionals-including physicians, nurses, social workers, therapists, counselors, health aides, and clergy-provide comprehensive care focused on the wishes of each individual patient.

Through pain management and symptom control, caregiver training and assistance, and emotional and spiritual support, Hospice of Harnett County helps patients to live fully up until the final moments, surrounded and supported by the faces of loved ones, friends, and committed caregivers.

The provision of quality hospice and palliative care reaffirms our belief in the essential dignity of every person, regardless of age, health, or social status, and that every stage of human life deserves to be treated with the utmost respect and care.

Since 1986, more than 1,700 persons in Harnett County living with life-limiting illness, and their families, received care from Hospice of Harnett County.

Hospice of Harnett County encourages all people to learn more about options of care and to share their wishes with family, loved ones, and their healthcare professionals through community events, educational activities, and public awareness.

I would like to proclaim November 2011 the 25th Anniversary of Hospice of Harnett County by encouraging citizens to increase their understanding and awareness of care at the end of life and to celebrate Hospice of Harnett County's 25 years of service to the citizens of Harnett County.

RECOGNIZING SILVA HEALTH MAGNET HIGH SCHOOL'S BLUE RIBBON AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

HON. SILVESTRE REYES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the achievements of Silva Health Magnet High School. Silva Health was recently honored with the 2011 National Blue Ribbon award from the United States Department of Education for excellence in education.

The National Blue Ribbon School award honors both public and private elementary, middle and high schools where students achieve at high levels and also schools where the achievement gap is narrowing. Since 1982, approximately 6,500 American schools have received this coveted award.

I want to personally congratulate the teachers, administrators, and staff of Silva Health Magnet High School for their commitment and dedication to our young students in El Paso. This year only 304 schools nationwide received the award, and they will be honored at a ceremony in Washington, DC. The Blue Ribbon validates the efforts of these schools in creating a positive and effective learning environment. These schools and their communities have achieved a degree of excellence of which they can justifiably be proud.

Silva Health Magnet is a fitting example of the type of educational curriculum and environment that encourages students to become interested in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Our

nation must provide more opportunities, like those at this outstanding school, to encourage our children and youth to focus on STEM fields and to help our nation remain competitive in the global economy.

In times of economic uncertainty, we cannot lose sight of the paramount importance of our children's education, and I am honored to represent Silva Health Magnet High School.

VETERANS SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND HEALTHCARE ENHANCEMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 11, 2011

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2074, ''the Veterans Sexual Assault Prevention and Healthcare Enhancement Act of 2011.'' This legislation requires the Veterans' Administration, VA, to report and track sexual assaults and other safety related incidents at its medical facilities. Further, it requires: a payment of nursing home care for veterans with service-connected disabilities, requires individualized care for traumatic brain injuries (TBI), allows service dogs on VA properties, and establishes a three year pilot program to assess the effectiveness of mental health and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatments of veterans who are utilizing dog training therapy.

Throughout my tenure in Congress, I have remained committed to meeting the needs of veterans. They have kept their promise to serve our nation and have willingly risked their lives to protect the country we all love. We must now ensure that we keep our promises to our veterans. It is only prudent to require the VA to take steps to ensure that our veterans are safe while in their care.

In the State of Texas, we have nearly 1.7 million veterans, and 18th District is home to 32,000 of them. The veterans I represent are aware of the services provided by the Veterans' Administration. When they return home, the least we can do is to ensure that while they are receiving care their physical safety concerns are being addressed.

The Veterans' Administration is charged with providing for the healthcare needs of our nation's veterans. Part of this care includes providing for their safety. Although the majority of the men and women who have served our country are upright and law abiding citizens there are always a few bad actors. The veterans must be protected against bad actors in the same way that they have helped to protect the United States against our enemies.

The Department of Defense estimates that in 2010 alone, there were over 19,000 sexual assaults in the military, which amounts to nearly 52 sexual assaults per day. It is not unreasonable to imagine that those tens of thousands of survivors and their perpetrators vanish after they are discharged from the military. There are substantial numbers of veterans who are survivors of sexual trauma, survivors utilizing the VA services. According to a VA report in FY 2010 68,379 patients had at least one outpatient visit to a VHA facility that was for the treatment of a condition related to military sexual trauma: 61 percent, or 41,475, of those patients were women; 39 percent, or 26,904, were men.

We must remember that the Veterans' Administration does serve tens of thousands of veterans every year. This number will continue to grow as more of our troops return home. As with any institution that meets the needs of so many the VA must ensure the safety of the patients under their care. To do so the VA must train members of their staff on sexual harassment and sexual assault responses, and educate patients on the process to file a sexual assault allegation.

According to the Government Accountability Office, GAO, there were nearly 300 sexual assault incidents reported to the VA police from January 2007 through July 2010—including alleged incidents that involved rape, inappropriate touching, forceful medical examinations, forced or inappropriate oral sex, and other types of sexual assault incidents. Many of these sexual assault incidents were not reported to officials within the management reporting stream which is a direct violation of VA policy and Federal Regulations.

H.R. 2074 addresses some of the factors identified by the GAO, namely that the VA did not have a consistent sexual assault definition that could be utilized for reporting purposes. The VA also did not have clear expectations for incident reporting across VA medical facilities. In addition, the VA does not have the ability or mechanisms in place to monitor sexual assault incidents reported through the management reporting stream. H.R. 2074 would require the VA to establish a comprehensive policy to report and track all incidents of sexual assault and other safety concerns.

It is important that the men and women receiving care at VA medical facilities are adequately protected from harm. It is unfathomable that this issue has not been addressed sooner. We must remember that although sexual assault is often considered an issue only affecting women, in fact, both men and women have suffered sexual assaults. Further, victims may be assaulted by predators of the same or the opposite sex. Like other types of trauma, sexual trauma can leave lasting scars upon the physical and mental health of its victims. Veterans who are already receiving care for their wounds should not be left to defend themselves against aggressors.

In addition, the GAO determined that five VA medical facilities visited, had poorly monitored surveillance cameras, alarm system malfunctions, and the failure of alarms to alert both VA police and clinical staff when triggered. Inadequate system configuration and testing procedures contributed to these weaknesses. Further, facility officials at most of the locations GAO visited said the VA police were understaffed. These issues could have dire consequences, as it could lead to delayed response time to incidents and seriously erode the VA's efforts to prevent or mitigate sexual assaults and other safety incidents. This is simply outrageous.

H.R. 2074 requires the VA to take this matter seriously. As it stands this bill requires the VA to have clear accountability goals for VA staff. Every VA medical facility is required to have a military sexual trauma coordinator; considering the volume of patients who are coping with this condition that should not be a surprise. What is surprising is that at most VA facilities this position is not a full time job. These employees are often given additional duties and obligations not related to military sexual trauma. This legislation should be a wakeup call. Protecting the safety of our veterans while they are in our care is a top priority.

In addition, this legislation opens the possibility of meeting the health needs of veterans who reside in nursing homes, are receiving treatment for PTSD and other mental health services. It is important to note that when a solider returns from the battlefield he or she brings with them both physical and mental wounds. It is our duty to ensure that each and every one of those veterans who survive the fields of combat are able to receive the care they need when they make it home.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 2074, the Veterans Sexual Assault Prevention and Healthcare Enhancement Act.

USDA PROPOSED RULE FOR SCHOOL MEALS

HON. RENEE L. ELLMERS

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

Mrs. ELLMERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today during National School Lunch Week to express my concern about the U.S. Department of Agriculture's proposed rule change to the National School Lunch Program. As a mother and a nurse and a representative of the medical community, families, and farmers in the second district of North Carolina, I fully support improving nutrition for our nation's school children, and I believe that we must do everything we can to protect against childhood obesity.

But in this time of economic uncertainty, we cannot overlook the unintended consequences of these new and conflicting standards. A recent Gallup poll found that 19 percent of American families are food insecure. According to a study by the USDA, nearly 17 million American children struggle with hunger. For many of these children, school is their most reliable source of a well balanced meal.

In my state more than half of the school food programs in the state are operating in the red, losing a total of $28 million in 2008. Their financial problems are mounting at a time when parents, child health advocates and legislators are looking to school food programs to improve students' nutrition at a sensible and affordable price. In 2006, the state legislature required schools to serve more fruits, vegetables and whole-grain food, and fewer dishes with lots of fat and sugar. However, it did not kick in extra money for the higher costs of the more nutritious foods. Collectively, school food programs in North Carolina spent $683 million during the last school year. Almost half, 47 percent, went to salaries and benefits. The rest went to food purchases (44 percent) and other expenses (9 percent).

According to USDA estimates, this new school meals rule will cost taxpayers $6.8 billion over the next ten years. How are we going to afford that?

At a time when so many are hungry and the National School Lunch Program is serving more children than ever, I have strong reservations with USDA's proposal to place serious limitations on school nutritionists' options

in building nutritious meal plans for the nation's school children and increase the price of school meals. In many cases, the proposal would eliminate foods that are both nutritious and popular with children. The school lunch program is intended to feed hungry kids, not pick "good foods" and "bad foods". The new guidelines would limit starchy vegetables—corn, peas and lima beans, in addition to potatoes—to two servings a week. That's about one cup. As a parent, I would like to see more of these vegetables consumed, not less. School nutritionists should be applauded for the work they do in constructing meals that kids love and give them the energy they need to succeed in the classroom.

This rule will cost taxpayers $6.8 billion over the next ten years. In this current fiscal crisis, our school children and taxpayers cannot afford to adapt to inconsistent, costly and unproven regulations. USDA should revisit its proposal and write a rule that does not put limitations on school nutritionists' choices in how to best feed hungry children or put further economic pressures on food companies that supply schools and the American taxpayer.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF GLEN KERSLAKE

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, today I honor Mr. Glen Kerslake of Tucson, Arizona, for a lifetime of service to country and community. Mr. Kerslake, who I had the pleasure of meeting in Tucson, is known to me for his close work with our colleague, Congresswoman GABRIELLE GIFFORDS, to support southern Arizona's military members, veterans, and military and veterans' families.

Glen joined the Tucson community in 1994 and quickly developed a record of deep and devoted service to southern Arizona—serving on the boards of the Tucson Arizona Boys Chorus and National Apartment Association, as a member of the Southern Arizona Leadership Council, and as President of the Arizona Conservation Land Stewards, among other community contributions.

Glen made one of his greatest civic impacts serving Tucson's military community and the proud men and women who make it up. He has served as a member, president, and board-member of the Davis-Monthan 50, a committed group of Tucson civic and business leaders dedicated to strengthening the relationship between Davis-Monthan Air Force Base and the civilian population of the region. As a DM–50 member and then president of the organization, Glen helped thousands of airmen through the child car safety seat program, which supplies car seats to young military families, and the development of the important Bachelor of Applied Science in Meteorology program at the University of Arizona. He also made critical contributions to Tucson's Military Community Relations Committee, a local organization dedicated to resolution of key issues between Davis-Monthan Air Force Base and the community.

Recently, Glen was most passionate about his role as the Honorary Commander of the 612th Air and Space Operations Center. Glen took great pride in the critical nature of the 612th AOC's mission and its heritage springing from the famous Doolittle Raiders of World War II. The Raiders took great risk performing a tactical mission, executed in a joint manner, at a crucial juncture for our nation, ultimately demonstrating the strategic reach of American airpower. The 612th AOC was dedicated the Gen. James H. Doolittle Center in honor of the leader of the Doolittle raid, who was also the first commanding general of 12th Air Force.

I was this heritage and the 612th AOC's unit motto, "Leading the Fight—Ever Vigilant, Omnis Vigilantia," along with an abiding commitment to Davis-Monthan's airmen and women, that inspired Glen's efforts to ensure the unit would remain at Davis-Monthan when its continued existence in Arizona was threatened. Glen sprung into action and worked closely with Congresswoman GIFFORDS' office to lead a diverse group of community and governmental stakeholders to stop the effort to move the 612th AOC's operations.

The Congress and this country owe Glen, his family, and countless community leaders in Glen's mold a debt of gratitude for their selfless and inspired service. Please join Congresswoman GIFFORDS and me today in honoring Mr. Glen Kerslake of Tucson, Arizona.

PROTECT LIFE ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 13, 2011

Ms. RICHARDSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition of H.R. 358, the misnamed "Protect Life Act". At a time when the American people's top priority is job creation, Republicans continue to waste valuable time advancing legislation that has no chance of being signed into law. The real aim of the Protect Life Act is to restrict, if not eliminate all together, reproductive health options for American women. H.R. 358 is a callous piece of legislation that disrespects the judgment of American women.

The Protect Life Act imposes an unprecedented limitation on abortion coverage and takes extreme measures to prevent women from accessing safe and legal abortion services. This legislation even prevents women from using their own money to purchase private insurance coverage for abortion, worse; the bill would relieve hospitals of their obligation to treat women who need an emergency abortion to save their life.

The Affordable Care Act already contains strict safeguards at multiple levels to prevent federal funds from being used to pay for abortion services beyond those in cases of rape, incest or where the life of woman would be in grave and eminent danger. But the Protect Life Act goes further, much further. It is reckless and endangers women's lives.

The Protect Life Act makes it virtually impossible for insurance companies in state health-insurance exchanges to offer abortion coverage, including those paying for coverage entirely with private dollars. The bill also prohibits all individuals who receive federal subsidies from purchasing a plan that includes abortion coverage, as well as barring insurance plans from covering abortion if they include even one individual who receives a subsidy.

Today, nearly 87 percent of private employer-sponsored insurance offer plans which include abortion coverage. This bill would deter insurance companies from offering plans with such options and would likely force millions of women to drop the coverage they currently have.

Currently, all hospitals in America that receive Medicare or Medicaid funding are bound by the 1986 law known as the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA), to provide emergency care to all patients, regardless of the circumstance. Under EMTALA, if a woman required an emergency abortion to save her life and she was a patient at an anti-abortion hospital or being treated by a health care provider against abortion on religious or moral grounds, the hospital would be required to either perform the abortion or transfer the patient.

The Affordable Care Act leaves laws that protect medical providers who have religious or moral objections to abortion services intact. But the Protect Life Act goes even further by removing the obligation for medical providers who are not willing to terminate a pregnancy to facilitate a transfer to a hospital that is willing to save the woman's life.

Madam Speaker, in short, this irresponsible and dangerous legislation would allow a hospital to let a pregnant woman die rather than perform a life-saving procedure. Saving a woman's life should be every hospital's first priority, especially hospitals that receive federal funding.

The Protect Life Act amends the historic Affordable Care Act, which was passed by the Democratic 111th Congress, so that it does not ensure access to abortion services. This broad language could prevent states and state-based health insurance exchanges from ensuring that women get information about the health care coverage options available to them. It should be an ethical healthcare provision that patients be presented with accurate and complete information about their medical options in order to make the best decisions regarding their health care. This bill denies women that fundamental right.

In addition, another provision of the Protect Life Act could allow insurers to refuse to offer important services that are part of the minimum standards for health coverage such as services and supplies related to contraception, infertility and sexually transmitted diseases.

Our friends across the aisle are fond of saying they are against government intrusion into the market place, excessive regulation, and limits on personal freedom. But here they are again trying to deny women the right to choose what is best for themselves and their families. Eliminating access to legal abortions denies women the right to make their own health decisions in accordance with their religious and moral beliefs and as a result, infringes on their equal rights. When it comes to attacking women's freedom and privacy, this legislation knows no bounds. It is an extreme attack against women's reproductive rights and undermines women's access to quality healthcare.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons I am proud to stand in strong opposition of H.R. 358, the

so-called Protect Life Act and urge my colleagues to join me. This bill is not only unconstitutional, but it is dangerous. A more accurate name for this bill is the ''Endanger Women's Lives Act of 2011.'' In a time of such tough economic hardship, we should be concentrated on created jobs and stabilizing the economy, not advancing extreme legislation that is nothing less than the most comprehensive and radical assault of women's health in our lifetime.

REMEMBERING THE 55TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

HON. ANDY HARRIS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

Mr. HARRIS. Mr. Speaker, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was not only a culmination of Hungary's struggle for freedom, democracy and independence, but also presaged the collapse of the Soviet Empire. Indeed, the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and Fight for Freedom was the first tear in the Iron Curtain. Hungarians from all walks of life rose up against insurmountable odds to fight the brutal Soviet-installed Hungarian communist government. Many died fighting, others were tortured and executed, while 200,000 were forced to flee. 2011 marks the 55th anniversary of that historical chain of events.

The American Hungarian Federation, founded over 100 years ago and the oldest and largest umbrella Hungarian American organization in the United States, honors those whose enormous sacrifice seemed futile 55 years ago but that today is universally recognized as having contributed to the ultimate demise of Soviet domination of central and eastern Europe and the restoration of freedom and independence in Hungary and the region.

We must never forget the heroes of 1956—the students, the intellectuals, the workers, the farmers and the cross-section of the entire Hungarian nation—who knew exactly what they wanted 55 years ago and were prepared to realize their dreams at great personal sacrifice. They fought and died for freedom, a multi-party democracy and independence from the Soviet Union.

Two of our great presidents, among many others who cherish freedom and the courage to struggle for it, remembered the Hungarian Revolution as follows:

''October 23, 1956, is a day that will live forever in the annals of free men and nations. It was a day of courage, conscience and triumph. No other day since history began has shown more clearly the eternal unquenchability of man's desire to be free, whatever the odds against success, whatever the sacrifice required.''—John F. Kennedy, on the first anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution.

''The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was a true revolution of, by and for the people. Its motivations were humanity's universal longings to live, worship, and work in peace and to determine one's own destiny. The Hungarian Revolution forever gave the lie to communism's claim to represent the people, and told the world that brave hearts still exist to challenge injustice.''—Excerpt from Ronald Reagan's Presidential Proclamation issued on October 20, 1986.

We also recall the impact the massive Soviet invasion had on the Hungarian communities in states neighboring Hungary. One consequence was the solidly Stalinist Romanian government's virtual liquidation of the Hungarian-language Bolyai University in Romania, which was implemented by the secretary of the Central Committee, Nicolae Ceausescu. Five years ago Nobel Laureates and Wolf Prize Laureates, including Elie Wiesel and George Olah, and 69 other internationally acclaimed scholars called upon Romania to take ''immediate steps'' to ''re-establish the public Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvar.'' The university has yet to be restored.

Another victim of communism was Janos Esterhazy, who despite being the only member of Slovakia's parliament to vote against the deportation of Jews in 1942, nevertheless died in a Czechoslovak prison in 1957. While Russia has done so, Slovakia has yet to exonerate him.

Righting wrongs against Hungarian minorities (e.g., the Esterhazy case and the Bolyai University matter) that extend back to the Cold War period and respecting the rights of such minorities would be a fitting commemoration of 1956 and a tribute to the memory of thousands of unsung heroes who did not compromise but sacrificed their lives for the cause of liberty fifty-five years ago. Moreover, in order to strengthen democracy and safeguard freedoms throughout the region, today's generation—the beneficiary of the restored freedoms following the demise of communism—must be vigilant and guard against the curtailment of democracy and infringement of fundamental human rights and Western standards relating to minority rights.

Consistent with its practice of fifty-five years, the American Hungarian Federation is committed to keep the memory of the heroes of 1956 alive. As we contemplate the promise of Hungary 1956, we are reminded that that promise must never be forgotten or abandoned, as the heroes of 1956 deserve nothing less.

SUPPORT FOR H.R. 639, THE CURRENCY REFORM FAIR TRADE ACT

HON. PATRICK MEEHAN

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my continued support for H.R. 639, the Currency Reform for Fair Trade Act. This legislation will provide the United States an important tool to address unfair currency manipulation practices, and I hope that it can receive a debate and a clean, up-or-down vote in the House.

I voted against the Motion to Recommit to H.R. 3078, the U.S. Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement Act because it was a poison pill motion that would have derailed this important, carefully negotiated trade agreement that enjoyed the support of President Barack Obama as well as 262 bipartisan members of the House. Were one word to change in the U.S.-Colombia agreement, this agreement, that has taken years to reach, would have lost its legislative protections in the Senate under the Trade Promotion Authority Act. Doing so would have killed this agreement and further delayed action to level the playing field for U.S. workers and create jobs here at home.

VETERANS' BENEFITS TRAINING IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 11, 2011

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2349, ''Veterans' Benefits Training Improvement Act of 2011,'' which directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to annually assess the skills of appropriate Veterans Benefits Administration employees and managers responsible for processing VA compensation and pension benefit claims, implement individualized training plans related to such skills, provide remediation for deficiently skilled employees or managers receiving a less than satisfactory result on any portion of the assessment, take appropriate disciplinary actions with respect to individuals failing to receive a satisfactory result after being given two opportunities for such remediation, and requires the Secretary to submit a related annual report to Congress.

It is essential that employees and managers responsible for VA compensation receive sufficient training to better assist our veterans. These employees need to be well aware of the range of possible benefits and packages that are available for our service men and women so that they can take full advantage of every opportunity that they rightfully deserve. I suspect that this legislation will address any areas of concern in regard to training so that the Veterans Benefits Administration can be of better service to our veterans.

As the Representative from the 18th Congressional District of Houston I am thoroughly familiar with the issues faced by our veterans when they return from deployment. I believe that any man or woman who risks their lives for the freedom and rights of others deserves to receive the benefits they have earned. I know first-hand how my constituents feel regarding this issue. In the State of Texas, we have nearly 1.7 million veterans, and 18th District is home to 32,000 of them. I feel that it is my duty, as well as that of my colleagues to ensure that employees and managers who are responsible for VA compensation and pension benefit claims adhere to proper protocol when processing funds for our veterans.

My office receives calls from disheartened constituents who cannot understand why it is such a challenge to receive the appropriate VA benefits. The fact that anyone has to call and to seek help outside of the VA regarding VA benefits deeply concerns me.

This matter can be addressed by properly training those responsible for determining the benefits in the first place. The role of these individuals is to assist veterans in the process and to adequately educate veterans about what is and is not available to them. We must remember that there is no greater love than for that of a man or a woman who is willing to lay down their life for their country. I hope

that my colleagues would agree with me when I say there is no greater love than this. We owe it to the men and women who have risked their lives for our freedom to ensure that procedures are being adhered to where VA benefits are concerned.

H.R. 2349 will benefit the well-being of the public by ensuring that employees and managers of the Veterans Benefits Administration possess the adequate skills that are necessary to fulfill their duties, and if any train employees when necessary. This is the least we can do to assist our service men and women when they seek to attain the benefits that they have already earned.

HONORING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF COMUNIDADES LATINAS UNIDAS EN SERVICIO (CLUES)

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

Ms. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES) on its 30th anniversary celebration. For three decades, this vibrant non-profit community organization has been a life-line support for the Latino community in Minnesota.

Since its inception in 1981, CLUES has been charged with a noble mission to promote equality for all, seek to improve the health of individuals and families, and to transform the lives of all families in Minnesota, this organization has made a positive impact on the lives of so many individuals and families. The support services provided by CLUES that help individuals and families recover from chemical dependency, help people become self-sufficient through employment and educational opportunity, and offer a comfort zone for senior citizens to maintain their well-being are commendable.

As the representative in Congress for Saint Paul, Minnesota and the east metropolitan area, I have had the opportunity to work with CLUES executive director, Jesse Bethke Gomez and the staff and board to address the needs and challenges facing Latinos and our entire community in Minnesota. CLUES would not be successful without the caring and dedicated staff, volunteers and supporters who serve the public each day. They deserve congratulations for reaching this milestone, and gratitude for all that they do to make our community and our state a caring place that helps families and individuals realize their dreams for the future. I wish them the very best, and I look forward to celebrating their continued success.

HONORING THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RESTORATION OF AZERBAIJAN'S INDEPENDENCE

HON. BILL SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, as the Co-Chairman of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus, I would like to take this opportunity to honor the Republic of Azerbaijan as it celebrates the 20th anniversary of the restoration of Azerbaijan's independence.

Located in a geopolitically dynamic region between Europe and Asia and sandwiched between Russia and Iran, Azerbaijan is a secular county with a predominantly Muslim population that has also been home for more than a millennia for vibrant Christian and Jewish communities.

Azerbaijan and the United States enjoy a strong partnership founded on shared interests in global and regional security, energy and economic development, democratic reforms, and respect for human rights. President Obama has called Azerbaijan a ''young democracy'' during his meeting with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev in September 2010, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stressed during her July 2010 trip to Azerbaijan that ''the bonds between the United States and Azerbaijan and deep, important, and durable.''

The past 20 years have seen Azerbaijan make great leaps in consolidating its sovereignty and political independence, and they are on the path towards building strong democratic institutions and a diversified economy that will further contribute to the welfare of the people of Azerbaijan. As I frequently remind my colleagues, the United States has more than 230 years of experience developing into the modern democracy we are today. It is critical that the United States provide our support and friendship to our partners in Azerbaijan as they continue to develop.

Azerbaijan has opened Caspian energy resources to development by U.S. companies and has emerged as a key player for global energy security. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project is the most successful project contributing to the development of the South Caucasus region and has become the main artery delivering Caspian Sea hydrocarbons to the U.S. and our partners in Europe. Notably, in 2009 Azerbaijan provided nearly one quarter of all crude oil supplies to Israel and is considered a leading potential natural gas provider for the U.S.-supported Nabucco pipeline. It is important for the United States to continue to provide support for the development of the Southern Corridor that will further strengthen energy security.

On the security front, immediately after 9/11 Azerbaijan was among the first to offer strong support and assistance to the United States. Azerbaijan participated in operations in Kosovo and Iraq and is actively engaged in Afghanistan, having recently doubled its military presence there. Azerbaijan has extended important over-flight clearances for U.S. and NATO flights to support ISAF and has regularly provided landing and refueling operations at its airports for U.S. and NATO forces. Also, Azerbaijan, as highlighted by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, plays an important role in the Northern Distribution Network, a supply route to Afghanistan by making available its ground and Caspian naval transportation facilities. Moreover, Azerbaijan provides vital support for U.S. nonproliferation efforts.

Again, as the Co-Chairman of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus, it is my distinct pleasure to congratulate the people of Azerbaijan and President Ilham Aliyev on the occasion of this important anniversary. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this important milestone in the history of Azerbaijan also encourage my colleagues who are interested in supporting Azerbaijan to join me as a member of Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus, a bipartisan group of nearly 40 Members of Congress working to help foster the growing partnership between the United States and Azerbaijan and to advance U.S. interests in this pivotal region.

HONORING THE LIFE OF LANCE CORPORAL TRAVIS M. NELSON, USMC

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, it is with great respect and honor that I rise today to recognize the life of Northwest Florida's beloved Lance Corporal Travis M. Nelson.

Lance Corporal Nelson succumbed to wounds sustained in combat operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan on August 18, 2011. At the time, he was assigned as a rifleman with 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2d Marine Division, based at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Born in Orlando, Florida on August 5, 1992, Lance Corporal Nelson was a true American patriot. Drawn to military service at an early age, with the support of his family, he joined the Young Marines of Pensacola at 14. He later participated in the Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program at Pace High School, where he graduated from in 2010. He then enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, and upon completion of basic training in January 2011, Lance Corporal Nelson chose to serve in the infantry. He knew of the challenging role; however, he felt that the job should not be left for someone else. His decision to join the Marine Corps is a true testament to his character's strength and selflessness.

Lance Corporal Nelson was a beloved member of his community, remembered as an athlete, an avid fisherman, and a friend by those who knew him. He is survived by his parents, Scott and Beckie; his sisters, Anna and Jenna; his brother, Daniel; and his fiancée, Madeline Cates.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, I am privileged to honor the life of Lance Corporal Travis Nelson for his selfless service and sacrifice in defense of our nation. My wife Vicki and I offer our prayers for his entire family. He will be truly missed by all.

VETERANS OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ACT OF 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 11, 2011

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2433, ''the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act 2011.'' This legislation would provide honorably discharged, unemployed veterans who are between the ages of 35 to 60 with who are currently not eligible for certain veterans benefits

will be provided with retraining assistance for a limited period of time.

The Veterans Opportunity to Work Act provides services for the courageous men and women who served in the Armed Forces. It is in a spirit of deep gratitude and appreciation that I fight to provide for our veterans with the tools they need to find employment after serving our country. It is the responsibility of all Members of Congress and the Administration to fulfill our moral obligation to those who have fought to protect our freedom and democracy.

In the State of Texas, we have nearly 1.7 million veterans, and 18th District is home to 32,000 of them. Of the 200,000 veterans of military service who live and work in Houston; more than 13,000 are veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Additionally, there are almost 34,000 soldiers from Texas currently deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. I am supporting this legislation to ensure that our men and women in uniform are taken care of when they return from combat.

According to the Department of Labor as of June 2011 there are over 1 million unemployed veterans; over 632,000 are between the ages of 35 and 54. As Iraq and Afghanistan veterans come home, and as Vietnam, Cold War, and Persian Gulf War veterans can't find or lost their jobs, this results in a real loss of talented leaders and workers. Currently, there are 236,000 Vietnam Era veterans; 258,000 Cold War Era veterans; 182,000 Persian Gulf War veterans, and 192,000 Iraq and Afghanistan Era Veterans who are unemployed. These men and women have faced the enemy and lived to tell the tale, the least we can do is give them an opportunity to retain and enhance their skills in order to attain civilian employment.

This legislation addresses a need to find ways to provide training and employment assistance for the men and women who have fought for our country. Post 9/11 veterans who are now leaving the military may go to school on the 9/11 GI Bill; however veterans of previous conflicts are not afforded the same opportunity. To address the needs of these veterans this bill will provide for a limited time an educational benefit to unemployed veterans between the ages of 35 to 60 at community colleges and technical training schools.

After dedicating their lives to serving our country it is important to assist veterans at all stages of their transition back to civilian life. A major part of transiting into civilian life is to ensure that skills that were attained while in service are translatable to civilian employment. Veterans face a variety of obstacles to employment namely the language used to describe particular skill sets in the military does not correspond with the terminology used by civilian employers. This disconnect has created problems for veterans who are seeking certain types of employment and or licenses. The veterans are not able to translate their skills into terms that would demonstrate to civilian employers that they already posses the certain key skills.

In order to address this obstacle to employment, The Veterans Opportunity to Work Act (VOW) makes the Transition Assistance Program mandatory. The Department of Labor must thereby create a system by which licensure and certifications are translatable to those available at the state level. This is done in an effort to address the barriers between the skills and training received in the military and requirements for civilian licenses and other credentials'.

In addition, under H.R. 2433 the Department of Labor must work with states to implement new performance measures to evaluate the priority of services provided to eligible veterans and mandates that Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representatives sole duty will be to assist eligible veterans in finding suitable employment.

Throughout my tenure in Congress, I have remained committed to meeting both the needs of veterans of previous wars, and to those who are now serving. Veterans have kept their promise to serve our nation; they have willingly risked their lives to protect the country we all love. We must now ensure that we keep our promises to our veterans.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 2433, the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act.

RECOGNIZING ESCONTRIAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S BLUE RIBBON AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

HON. SILVESTRE REYES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the achievements of Escontrias Elementary School. Escontrias was recently honored with the 2011 National Blue Ribbon award from the United States Department of Education for excellence in education.

The National Blue Ribbon School award honors both public and private elementary, middle and high schools where students achieve at high levels and also schools where the achievement gap is narrowing. Since 1982, approximately 6,500 American schools have received this coveted award.

I want to personally congratulate the teachers, administrators, and staff of Escontrias Elementary. This year only 304 schools nationwide received the award, and they will be honored at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. The Blue Ribbon validates the efforts of these schools to create a positive and effective learning environment.

Escontrias principal Marivel Macias noted that the award ''has solidified the notion that all things are possible''. This national award exemplifies the dedication, persistence, and commitment that the Escontrias faculty, staff and community has for their students, and by closing the achievement gap, they will acquire the tools necessary to compete at a global academic level and become future world leaders.

In times of economic uncertainty, we cannot lose sight of the paramount importance of our children's education, and I am honored to represent Escontrias Elementary School.