

am committed to upholding his legacy of support and respect for America's veterans.

Vietnam veterans were his teachers, as they have been ours. From their painful experiences, we have learned that when we send our soldiers to war we must always welcome them home. But, whether a veteran of Vietnam, of World War II, Kosovo, the Gulf War, or Korea, they are to be commended for their great accomplishments and tremendous sacrifice. Whether called to safeguard the world from a menacing dictator, to fight the spread of tyranny, or to maintain a fragile peace, our nation owes a priceless debt of gratitude to each and every veteran.

Veterans Day also allows veterans to come together to continue a much needed healing process. Just as Walter invited Vietnam vets into his classroom to share their stories, veterans will come together to share each other's stories and gain comfort from each other.

As a Member of Congress, I have the distinct—almost sacred—responsibility to preserve our nation's security. This means ensuring that our military remains the best trained, best equipped, and most prepared in the world. It also means providing today's fighting men and women, and those who have retired, with the support they need to maintain the quality of life they deserve. This is especially true at a time when military personnel are being deployed more frequently, and in more places around the world.

In Congress, I am working hard to support increased military pay, improved health care coverage, and a strengthened retirement system.

I am proud to note that we recently passed a Defense bill which provides much needed improvements for current and retired military personnel. It included a 4.8% pay raise, and authorized bonuses and other incentives to retain and promote our servicemen and women. It will also change the unfair REDUX retirement plan—giving veterans the choice to return to the more generous pre-REDUX retirement system or receive a \$30,000 retirement bonus.

When talking to veterans up and down the Central Coast—whether it be in Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, Arroyo Grande, or Paso Robles—I hear a common refrain. Vets are increasingly concerned about benefits they have earned and maintaining access to quality health care. I am working on a number of initiatives to address these concerns.

I recently introduced the Veterans Emergency Telephone Service Act. The VETS Act would set up a national veterans' hotline service operating 24-hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week. This hotline would provide vets immediate access to a staff knowledgeable in VA benefits and programs. This combination "411-911" number for veterans would provide a one-stop, toll free number veterans can call at any time of day or night to receive encouragement and assistance.

I am also supporting a bill requiring the VA to institute an annual outreach plan to insure that veterans are informed about the entire range of benefits and health care services available to them. Too often veterans are not informed about benefits they are eligible for, or how to receive them. This bill also assists widows and survivors of veterans obtain important assistance.

And I'm working hard to pass landmark legislation—known as the Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act. This bill would allow all military retirees to participate in the same health care programs federal employees currently enjoy and provides free lifetime health care to those who enrolled in the services prior to 1956.

Many Americans made sacrifices to defend our country with the understanding that upon retirement the government would provide them with lifetime health care. But for too many military retirees there is little or no health care available.

In addition, I support legislation allowing military retirees with service connected disabilities to receive the full amount of their retired pay along with VA disability compensation—without a deduction from either source of support. We need to take extra special care of those whose service has left them with an injury or disability.

I will always support our fighting men and women, whether in peace time or in war.

I will always support the benefits our veterans need and deserve.

And I will forever cherish the honor my constituents have bestowed upon me by allowing me to serve as their Representative.

TRIBUTE TO LEON FOY

HON. SUE WILKINS MYRICK

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, on the eve of Veterans Day, I rise to bring to the attention of the House the extraordinary accomplishments of Leon Foy. Mr. Foy, a recipient of the Silver Star, deserves recognition for his valiant bravery on behalf of the American people while a member of our Armed Forces. I am proud to represent Mr. Foy in Congress.

Leon Foy, now 78, served in the 8th Air Force during World War II. On May 29, 1944, during his 15th bombing mission, Mr. Foy and his nine-member crew were raiding a ball-bearing plant near Berlin. German aircraft attacked and a bullet struck Mr. Foy's head. Ever strong and brave, Mr. Foy continued to fly his B-24 until he was in Sweden, a neutral country, where he landed safely on a very short runway.

Mr. Leon Foy is an outstanding and inspirational individual. His bravery and courage during this operation and throughout his service to our country is admirable and should be commended.

SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT SCHOOLS SHOULD USE PHONICS

SPEECH OF

HON. BARON P. HILL

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 4, 1999

Mr. HILL of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague from Indiana, I regret that I cannot support this resolution.

Phonics is a proven method of reading instruction that has a place alongside other approaches to teaching reading. But I think this resolution goes a bit too far. The Federal Government should not tell professional educators in our States and local school districts how to teach reading to their students. I believe communities know best when it comes to educating their kids and I had thought my colleague, Mr. MCINTOSH, would agree with this sentiment.

I'm concerned about education policy as a representative in Congress, but I have a much greater stake in education as the father of public school kids and the husband of a public school teacher. My wife, Betty, is a middle school math teacher. My two oldest daughters are products of the public schools and my youngest still attends a public school.

I hear every day from them about the successes and challenges in our schools. That's how I know the power to make decisions should be at the local level and the focus should be on how to help our communities better educate our students.

We should always keep in mind that the Federal Government is only a junior partner in our Nation's education process. More than 95 percent of the money our country spends on education comes from the States or from local communities. The ultimate day-to-day responsibility of running our Nation's schools does not belong to the Federal Government, but to the parents, teachers, and administrators who work with our children every day.

The Federal Government plays a limited, but important, role in our education system. Its role is to help States and localities address their toughest challenges. Through programs like Title I and Head Start, the Federal Government helps disadvantaged kids and schools with challenging student populations. It helps millions of kids to go to college through student loan programs. It also provides educators with important research on teaching methods and school performance.

When the Federal Government addresses these important education priorities, it must spend the taxpayers' money responsibly. The Federal Government has a duty to ensure that its resources are actually being spent on the problems we are trying to solve. But beyond targeting federal funds to specific areas where local schools need help. Congress should resist micro-managing and allow local schools to make their own decisions.

We have to maintain the delicate balance between Federal educational priorities and local control of schools. States and localities must have the flexibility to address their problems in ways that make sense for them, but our Federal resources must remain targeted at the people and communities who need them most. While it makes sense to give States and localities discretion, I don't believe we should send money to States without asking for accountability and results.

Governor George W. Bush of Texas was on the right track when he recently said: "The Federal Government must be humble enough to stay out of the day-to-day operation of local schools. It must be wise enough to give States and schools more authority and freedom. And it must be strong enough to require proven performance in return."