

Rule to allow suspension bills to be brought up on Wednesday: I would have voted "no".

H.R. 2336, United States Marshals Service Improvement Act of 1999—Amends the Federal judicial code to provide for the appointment of U.S. marshals for each judicial district of the United States and for the Superior Court of the District of Columbia by the Attorney General of the United States (currently, by the President), subject to Federal law governing appointments in the competitive civil service: I would have voted "no".

H.J. Res. 80, Continuing Resolution: I would have voted "aye".

S. 440, Provides Support for Certain Institutes: I would have voted "no".

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS
VETERANS BRAINTRUST

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 18, 1999

Mr. BISHOP. The Honorable CORRINE BROWN and I recently convened the 11th Annual Congressional Black Caucus Veterans Braintrust. Traditionally known as one of the highlights of the CBCF Legislative Conference, the Veterans Braintrust has truly become a family affair bringing together African American veterans and supporters from across the nation.

This year's Braintrust forum entitled, "Veterans Health Care Issues for 2000 and Beyond" convened with the hope of facilitating a national dialogue between the veterans community and lawmakers. The Braintrust addressed the future course of the veterans health care system with an emphasis in planning for the needs of an aging veterans population. The moderator, Dr. Lawrence Gary, a preeminent scholar from Howard University, led a distinguished panel of experts that included doctors, researchers, government officials, veterans service representatives and community advocates. Participants at the event included: Dr. Eugene Oddone, Dr. Jeff Whittle, Georgia State Senator Ed Harbison, Dr. Sissy Awoke, Mr. Charles McLeod, Jr., Mr. Ralph Cooper, Mr. Dennis Wannemacher, Mr. Carroll Williams, Mr. Calvin Gross and Dr. Erwin Parson.

The panel was invited to help focus our attention on racial disparities in the veterans health care arena. The implications of these preliminary findings, as well as the urgent need to eliminate racial disparities in veterans health care led Congresswoman BROWN to call for the creation of a national working group to develop a series of legislative and policy recommendations to address these issues.

Our keynote speaker was Dr. Thomas Garthwaite, the Acting Under Secretary for Health at the Department of Veterans Affairs. Dr. Garthwaite stated that the VA is facing new challenges in the health care arena, specifically issues relating to veterans of African-American descent. He noted concerns in the area of long-term care, increased rates of Hepatitis C, behavioral and mental illnesses, and homeless veterans. He stated that these

problems are compounded by a rapidly aging veteran population and a continued lack of sufficient funding for veteran-related expenditures.

Congresswoman BROWN and I agreed that funding for veterans health care is inadequate. We believe that we cannot have a budget surplus, if we have not paid our dues to America's veterans. Georgia State Senator Ed Harbison expressed the sentiment of many at the Braintrust when he stated, "It used to be said, that 'old soldiers never die, they just simply fade away.' But in 2000, its more like 'old soldiers never die, they're just ignored to death!'"

Dr. Erwin Parson, Vietnam veteran and health care professional, summarized the essence of the forum by acknowledging, "We know too well that little attention has been given to the issue of African American elderly health by society. Our elderly veterans, especially our African American elderly, have important health care needs that are not being met satisfactorily. We are aware that the stream of scientific studies on comparative health seem to always reach the same conclusion: race is a factor in access and quality care for many life-threatening medical conditions which afflict African Americans."

We found it disconcerting that studies found that race is often a controlling factor in the assessment and management of many administrative and clinical decisions in veterans health care. We all realize that accurate data is vital to evaluating the true health care needs of African American veterans. However, current research is much too sparse and fragmented. It is obvious that we urgently need to get better, more meaningful data on African American elderly veterans.

Finally, the reality is simply this: The aging veterans population is upon us now! We are grateful and will never forget that African Americans have fought gallantly for America, beginning as far back as the Revolutionary War. They are our living 'Legacy' and, today, we honor that legacy when we care for those who gave all they had. Therefore, I believe we do owe them a special debt of gratitude. Health care is something promised, a promise that must be paid in full. So let us honor them who honored us, and give them the best health care to be found anywhere in America, or the world.

At the conclusion of the session, Congresswoman BROWN and Ron Armstead, Executive Coordinator for the Veterans Braintrust, presided over our 11th annual awards ceremony. This event was conceived by Congressman CHARLES RANGEL and begun 11 years ago with General Colin Powell in attendance. At this historical gathering General Powell was joined by some of the highest ranking African-American military officers ever to serve this great Nation: Lt. Gen. Julius Becton, USA, Ret., Brig. Gen. Hazel Johnson-Brown, USA, Ret., Dr. Roscoe Brown, Vice Adm. Samuel Gravely, Jr., USN, Ret., Gen. Frank Petersen, Jr., USMC, Ret., and Col. Fred Cherry, USAF, Ret.

Commenting on the significance and rich tradition of this awards ceremony, Congressman RANGEL noted that each of these recipients has distinguished themselves as true patriots in the war for veterans' rights, and they

have not allowed racism to hamper their achievements.

The 1999 awards were presented to twenty-nine exemplary veteran supporters. Individual winners of the 1999 CBC Veterans Braintrust Awards included: Julius Allen, John "Buddy" Andrade, Charles Blatcher, III, Delegate Clarence "Tiger" Davis, Jeff Hansen, Alex Holmes, John Howe, Chris Jenkins, Sgt. Henry Johnson (Posthumous), John Johnson, John J. Johnson, Karen Johnson, Ruben "Sugar Bear" Johnson, Phillip "Jay" Jones, Kathleen Andrews-Lindo, Frankie Manning, Charles McLeod, Jr., Dr. Shari Miles, Wallace "Wally" Miles, W. Roy Owens (Posthumous), Robert "Pope" Powell, Larry Smith, Alexander Vernon, Cordell Walker, Barbara Waiters, and Martha Watts.

Organizations receiving this year's honors were: The Civil War Memorial Freedom Foundation, The Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Project (CWSS), and the National Minority Museum Foundation.

We also took a moment to recognize Jeanette Boone and Roy Martin from the Office of Senator JOHN KERRY for their excellent assistance on behalf of African-American veterans.

Special citations were given to stalwarts in the battle for veterans rights. The first award was given to Dr. Erwin Parson, co-founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus Veterans Braintrust and renowned expert in trauma/PTSD mental health. He was recognized for his 22 years of dedicated service to veterans and their families. The second award went to Congresswoman CORRINE BROWN (D-FL) Co-Chair of the CBC Veterans Braintrust and Ranking Member of the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation. Ms. BROWN has shown her continued and steadfast commitment to our nation's veterans.

At the end of the ceremony, the Executive Committee members of the Braintrust and past awardees in attendance—Jerry Cochran, Arthur Barham, Morocco Coleman, Joann Williams, Ralph Cooper, Robert Blackwell, Ruben Johnson, Leroy Colston, Robert Powell, Calvin Gross, Daniel Smith and Brig. Gen. Clara Adams-Ender, USA, Ret.—were asked to stand and be publicly recognized.

In closing, I want to personally thank Congressional staff members Brittley Wise and Nick Martinelli, Executive Director of the Braintrust Ron Armstead and forum moderator Dr. Lawrence Gary for everything they did to make the event a success. We appreciate the assistance of forum evaluators Dr. Shari Miles, Director of the African American Women's Institute, and Michael Tanner, Director of Health and Welfare Studies at the Cato Institute for all their hard work.

As I have said before and will say again, when veterans answered the call in faithful service, the nation in essence wrote them a check for certain benefits—and it is our duty as members of Congress and as American citizens to make sure this check never comes back marked "insufficient funds!" They were promised more. They have earned more. They deserve no less.