

dedicated the past 25 years of his career and life to serving the people of Fairfax County, VA. On Friday, February 26, 1999, Mr. Walter D. Webdale will retire as Director of the Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

The Department of Housing and Community Development was established in 1974, and Mr. Webdale has been the Director since its inception. Under his leadership of the last 25 years the HCD has won nationwide recognition as one of the preeminent policy leaders and innovators in the fields of affordable housing and community development. The Agency has been the recipient of more than 40 major awards and special recognitions for project design and development, community development, property management, and affordable housing finance.

But more important than the national accolades are the tangible improvements he was able to provide to the people of Fairfax County. During Mr. Webdale's 25 years of service, the HCD built or acquired more than 800 units of public housing. Additionally, 1,500 more units were developed under the Fairfax County Rental Program, an initiative of Mr. Webdale's, which preserved existing affordable housing and made it available to seniors and moderate income households not able to find housing through Federal housing projects.

One of Mr. Webdale's most lasting contributions to Fairfax County, and the Nation, will be the mixed income/mixed financing program which combines the use of Low Income Housing Tax Credits with Public Housing development funds, and has become the model which is being replicated across the Nation. Because of this innovative program, coupled with the Agency's financing expertise, the HCD secured the designation as an FHA Risk-Sharing Agency in Virginia. The Fairfax County Housing and Community Development Agency was the only local housing authority in Virginia to qualify for this designation.

While Mr. Webdale dedicated much of the Agency's resources to developing low-income housing, the HCD also implemented a strong series of programs to support and encourage first-time home buyers. All told over the past 25 years more than \$26 million was invested in needed home improvements to almost 1,700 qualified homeowners under the Home Improvement Loan Program. Complimenting the improvement funds, two separate home ownership programs were created which have subsequently provided more than 1,000 first-time home buyers with home ownership opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I have merely hinted at the contribution Walter Webdale has made to Fairfax County. He is recognized nationwide as one of the leading Housing and Community Development professionals in the country. A number of the initiatives he developed in Fairfax County have been adopted by other Housing Authorities across the Nation. Mr. Walter D. Webdale has dedicated the best years of his life in the service of others, and has done it with a determination and professionalism well beyond the norm. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Fairfax County, VA, I wish to sincerely thank Mr. Webdale for all he has done and wish him well as he enjoys a long-overdue vacation.

TRIBUTE TO THE WHITE MOUNTAIN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL CLASS M CHAMPION GIRL'S BASKETBALL TEAM

HON. CHARLES F. BASS

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 1999

Mr. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the White Mountain Regional High School Class M Champion Girl's Basketball team. On Saturday, February 27, 1999, the Regional Girl's Basketball team capped what can only be described as a perfect season. It was perfect not only because the team won the first Class M Girls Basketball Title in the 30 year history of the regional high school, but because they did so by going an impressive 22-0 over the course of the entire season.

It should be said, however, that the climax of this spectacular season was not a fluke, as they say, but, instead, the result of years of practice, preparation, and commitment. In particular, the dedication of the team's coach, James Haley, has been instrumental to the success of the team over the last several years. Coach Haley revitalized the girl's basketball program by instituting summer programs and traveling teams that developed the girls' skill on and off the court. The results for Coach Haley have been obvious. Over the last four seasons, the White Mountain Regional Girl's Basketball program has amassed a record of 79 wins and only 6 losses.

Coach Haley deflects any praise he receives to his talented team and players. A few highlights from this team include all six seniors being selected for the 1999 Class M All-Academic Team. Senior Becky Hilton broke her own school record for the most 3-point shots made during a season. Senior Jennifer Martin scored her 1000th high school career point during the team's quarter final game against Mascota, which is a tremendous achievement for any high school basketball player.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to list all the coaches, members, and managers of the 1999 Class M Champion Girl's Basketball Team: Coach James Haley, Coach Adrianna Champney, Captain Jennifer Martin, Captain Becky Hilton, Stephanie Wallace, Kris Odell, Keira Russell, Liz Ehlert, Jaclyn Comeau, Kerry Brady, Jessica LaPlante, Becky Quay, Martha Harris, Amanda Kay, Gail Snowman, Adriane Kilby, Liz Samson, Manager Christi Nugent, and Manager Emily Tenney.

Mr. Speaker, the White Mountain Regional Girl's Basketball Team's coaches, team members, fans, family, and school should be extremely proud of this accomplishment. Through no small effort are state championships won, and for 1999 the Class M Girl's Basketball Championship is going home to the White Mountain Regional High School.

THE SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO DEMOCRACY ACT OF 1999

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 1999

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Serbia and Montenegro Democracy Act of 1999, a bill which will target much needed assistance to democratic groups in Serbia and Montenegro. I am joined by Representatives BEN GILMAN, STENY HOYER, JOHN PORTER, DAN BURTON, ELIOT ENGEL, DANA ROHRBACHER, LOUISE SLAUGHTER and JIM MORAN, all strong promoters of human rights worldwide and the original co-sponsors of this Act.

It is fitting that this important piece of legislation be introduced today, as a high-level envoy for the United States is in Belgrade to seek the blessing of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic for a political settlement which hopefully will restore peace to the troubled region of Kosovo. We are dealing directly with the man most responsible for the conflict in Kosovo, not to mention Bosnia and Croatia. Milosevic has maintained his power from within Serbia throughout the 1990s at the cost of 300,000 lives and the displacement of 3 million people. He has relied on virulent Serbian nationalism to instigate conflict which will divide the people of the region for decades.

The most fundamental flaw in U.S. policy toward the region is that it relies on getting Milosevic's agreement, when Milosevic simply should be forced to stop his assaults on innocent civilians. It relies on Milosevic's dictatorial powers to implement an agreement, undermining support for democratic alternatives. In short, U.S. policy perpetuates Milosevic's rule and ensures that more trouble will come to the Balkans. There can be no long-term stability in the Balkans without a democratic Serbia.

Moreover, we need to be clear that the people of Serbia deserve the same rights and freedoms which other people in Europe enjoy today. They also deserve greater prosperity. Milosevic and his criminal thugs deny the same Serbian people they claim to defend these very rights, freedoms and economic opportunities. Independent media is repeatedly harassed, fined and sometimes just closed down. University professors are forced to take a ridiculous loyalty oath or are replaced by know-nothing party hacks. The regime goes after the political leadership of Montenegro, which is federated with Serbia in a new Yugoslav state but is undergoing democratic change itself. The regime goes after the successful Serb-American pharmaceutical executive Milan Panic, seizing his company's assets in Serbia to intimidate a potentially serious political rival and get its hands on the hard currency it desperately needs to sustain itself. The regime also goes after young students, like Boris Karajcic, who was beaten on the streets of Belgrade for his public advocacy of academic freedom and social tolerance.

Building a democracy in Serbia will be difficult, and it is largely in the hands of those democratic forces within Serbia to do the job. However, given how the regime has stacked the situation against them—through endless

propaganda, harassment and violence—they need help. This Act intends to do just that. It would allocate \$41 million in various sectors of Serbian society where democratic forces can be strengthened, and to encourage further strengthening of these forces in neighboring Montenegro. It would ensure that this funding will, in fact, go to these areas, in contrast to the Administration's budget request which indicates that much of this funding could be siphoned off to implement a peace agreement in Kosovo. Another \$350,000 would go to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly, which could provide assistance on a multilateral basis and demonstrate that Serbia can rejoin Europe—through the OSCE—once it moves in a democratic direction and ends its instigation of conflict.

This Act also states what policy toward Serbia and Montenegro must be: to promote the development of democracy and to support those who are committed to the building of democratic institutions, defending human rights, promoting rule of law and fostering tolerance in society.

This funding, authorized by the Support for East European Democracy Act of 1989, represents a tremendous increase for building democratic institutions in Serbia and Montenegro. This fiscal year, an anticipated \$25 million will be spent, but most of that is going to Kosovo. The President's budget request for the next fiscal year is a welcome \$55 million, but, with international attention focused on Kosovo, too much of that will likely go toward implementing a peace agreement. Make no mistake—I support strongly assistance for Kosovo. I simply view it as a mistake to get that assistance by diverting it from Serbia and Montenegro. We have spent billions of dollars in Bosnia and will likely spend at least hundreds of millions more in Kosovo, cleaning up the messes Milosevic has made. The least we can do is invest in democracy in Serbia, which can stop Milosevic from making more problems in the future.

Building democracy in Serbia will be difficult, given all of the harm Milosevic has done to Serbian society. The opposition has traditionally been weak and divided, and sometimes compromised by Milosevic's political maneuvering. There are signs, however, the new Alliance for Change could make a difference, and there certainly is substantial social unrest in Serbia from which opposition can gain support. In addition, there are very good people working in human rights organizations, and very capable independent journalists and editors. The independent labor movement has serious potential to gain support, and the student and academic communities are organized to defend the integrity of the universities. Simply demonstrating our real support for the democratic movement in Serbia could convince more people to become involved.

Finally, Montenegro's democratic changes in the last year place that republic in a difficult position. A federation in which one republic is becoming more free and open while the other, much larger republic remains repressive and controls federal institutions cannot last for long, yet Montenegrins know they could be the next victims of Milosevic. It would be a mistake to leave those building a democracy in

Montenegro out on that limb. They need our support as well.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am today introducing the Serbia and Democracy Act of 1999 because I feel our country's policy in the Balkans has all too long been based on false assumptions about the region. Granted, social tensions, primarily based on ethnic issues, were bound to have plagued the former Yugoslavia, but it is an absolute fact that violence could have been avoided if Slobodan Milosevic did not play on those tensions to enhance his power. As we prepare debate the sending of American forces to Kosovo to keep a peace which does not yet exist, we must address the root cause of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia from 1991 to today. This Act, Mr. Speaker, does just that, and I urge my colleagues to support its swift and overwhelming passage by the House. The Senate is working on similar legislation, and hopefully the Congress can help put U.S. policy back on the right track.

WINTHROP EAGLES WINS THE BIG
SOUTH CONFERENCE TOUR-
NAMENT

HON. JOHN M. SPRATT JR.

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 1999

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I want to salute the Winthrop Eagles—the men's basketball team at Winthrop University, located in my district in Rock Hill, South Carolina. For the first time in the program's 20-year history, the team has won not only the regular season championship, but the Big South Conference Tournament as well, and will go on to compete in the NCAA tournament.

The Eagles racked up 12 wins in a row—the longest winning streak in the history of the university and the conference. Nine were against Big South teams, the most Winthrop has ever had. It is no wonder the Eagles were the top seed in the Big South Conference Tournament, and no wonder that Coach Gregg Marshall, in his first year, was named the Big South Conference men's basketball coach of the year.

This is a sports success story I wanted to share with the House. Congratulations on a job well done are due all of the Eagles, Coach Gregg Marshall and his fine staff, and everyone who helped make this a real win for Winthrop.

INTRODUCTION OF THE SSI
BENEFIT PROTECTION ACT

HON. WILLIAM J. COYNE

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 1999

Mr. COYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the "SSI Benefit Protection Act."

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program serves some of our poorest and most vulnerable citizens. SSI recipients qualify because they are elderly, blind, or disabled, and

have annual income of less than \$6,000 a year—a total income of less than \$500 a month. Qualified medical personnel have determined that their disabilities are so severe that they are incapable of gainful employment. Nationally, about 6.6 million people qualify for SSI.

SSI is a subsistence income that barely pays for life's basic necessities. The maximum federal payment is less than 75% of the poverty level. And the average federal SSI payment is about \$340 a month—over \$100 less than the maximum.

15 states and the District of Columbia offer additional help to their aged and disabled citizens by sending money to the Social Security Administration to supplement payments to their residents. The average state supplement is between \$50 and \$100 a month, which brings SSI recipients a little closer to the poverty line.

A little-noticed provision in the 1993 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act began charging the states that supplemented SSI payments a small monthly "processing fee" for each check. The fee was not based on any assessment of SSA's costs and in fact, did not go to SSA. It was simply a revenue-raiser. The fee was increased substantially in the 1997 Balanced Budget Act, and it is now scheduled to increase to \$8.50 per recipient, per month, in 2002. This year in my home state of Pennsylvania, the governor's office estimated that the fees paid for "processing" totaled about \$24 million. In Pennsylvania, if the whole fee was passed on to recipients it would reduce their state supplement by almost 25%.

Understandably, this rapidly increasing fee has had a chilling effect on state willingness to increase the supplement. State program costs have continued to increase because of the fee, but no state being charged the fee has increased its payment to beneficiaries since 1993, not even to keep up with inflation. Six states have reduced their supplement and one eliminated it.

The Congress should be encouraging states to maintain and increase the supplement so that our most vulnerable citizens can afford food and shelter, not punishing those states that have reached out to help. Even a small increase in benefits can markedly improve life for SSI recipients, and even a small cut has devastating consequences.

That is why I have introduced the "SSI Benefit Protection Act." It would repeal this unfair fee, which is not justified by any analysis of SSA's costs. I hope removing this burden from states will encourage them to reassess their current SSI supplementation levels and increase them to a reasonable level. I hope the Congress and the states can work together to provide for our aged and disabled citizens.

HAPPY 30TH BIRTHDAY, WTOP

HON. J.C. WATTS, JR.

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 1999

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, today I want to wish WTOP, 1500 AM, 107.7 FM, a happy 30th birthday. From the Apollo XI