

March 11, 1999

ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE
STONEVILLE TORNADO

HON. RICHARD BURR

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 1999

Mr. BURR of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on the afternoon of March 20, 1998, a tornado ripped through the town of Stoneville, NC which is in my district. The people of this small town had no warning before the powerful winds of an F2 tornado ravaged the downtown area and touched the surrounding towns of Madison and Mayodan.

The path of the tornado was 12 miles long and 100 to 400 yards wide. It claimed the lives of 2 individuals while damaging or destroying 500 to 600 homes and nearly all of the businesses in the downtown area.

Yet, after facing this devastating force of nature, the people of Stoneville did not give up. They pulled together with the aid of their neighbors and have been rebuilding their homes, their businesses and their lives over the past 12 months.

I was there the night of the tornado, and from that time until now I have witnessed the best in the human spirit as everyone has volunteered to help those in need.

The buildings were destroyed, but not the determination to survive. This is a true example of American's working together for the good of their fellow man.

I salute the people of Stoneville and all of their neighbors who have volunteered for their will to rebuild rather than to let their heritage be destroyed. I wish them the best and brightest future which they surely deserve.

HONORING VALERIA SOWELL

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 1999

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Ms. Valeria Sowell for her distinguished service to the Brooklyn community of East New York. A teacher for fifteen years, Ms. Sowell has served her community as educator, lobbyist, and activist.

Known for her no nonsense approach to solving problems, Ms. Sowell earned the respect and admiration of members of the community by helping to establish The Cleveland Street Block Association. In addition to community development, Ms. Sowell is concerned about health issues in Brooklyn. Wearing her hat as community lobbyist, Ms. Sowell is presently working with members of the New York General Assembly to change state law to permit HMO coverage of alternative forms of medicine.

While serving as American Federation of Teachers School Delegate, Ms. Sowell was honored by her peers with the prestigious Very Special Arts Award and later the Impact Award. She is affiliated with several organizations, including the NAACP, Democratic National Committee, New York Alliance of Black School Educators, New York Coalition of

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

Black School Educators, Association of Orthodox Jewish Teachers, and the New York Coalition of 100 Black Women.

Ms. Sowell is an active member of the Christian Life Center in Brooklyn. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Ms. Sowell was the fourth of five children from the union of her beloved parents, Mildred and Clyburn Sowell.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to honor an unselfish, positive role model for the community, Ms. Valeria Sowell.

A BUDGET WORTHY OF OUR
NATION'S VETERANS

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 1999

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about a travesty that happened in the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs just a few hours ago. As we all know, this committee has had a long-standing tradition of bipartisanship, of working together, of advocacy for our nation's veterans.

That all changed today. Unbelievably, on the eve of the bipartisan retreat in Hershey, Pennsylvania, the Members of the majority on this committee decided not to allow a discussion or a vote on an alternative budget that was derived from the Independent Budget for Fiscal Year 2000, a comprehensive policy document created by veterans for veterans and endorsed by over 50 veterans' service organizations.

As we are well aware, the Administration's fiscal year 2000 budget for veterans is completely unacceptable. Under this budget, the VA health care system is drastically underfunded and in danger of actual collapse. This budget for the GI Bill is far short of realistic needs and failing as a readjustment benefit and as a recruitment incentive. Desperately needed staffing increases included in this budget appear to be phony—little more than transparent shell games. The National Cemetery System has been underfunded for years, and the money needed for the most basic repairs and upkeep is unavailable. These are drastic problems and they demand serious, substantial solutions! Veterans have been wronged by this budget, and it is the responsibility of Congress to right that wrong.

For many, many years, America's veterans have been good soldiers. They have done their duty and been conscientious, responsible citizens. Every time the Veteran's Affairs Committee was handed a reconciliation target, it met that target. Billions of veterans' dollars have been handed over in order to balance the budget and eliminate the deficit. Time and time again, America's veterans answered their nation's call. The country needed their support, and America's veterans gave all that they could give.

Well, the budget deficit has been eliminated. That battle has been won. I believe that this year, it is time for America's veterans to come first. We, as a nation, owe them that.

I listened closely to the testimony of the many veterans' service organizations as they have come to Washington to appear before

the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees over the past few weeks. I carefully studied the Independent Budget for Fiscal Year 2000, which I mentioned earlier. I hear a strong sense of urgency and frustration and even anger that I've never heard before. America's veterans are telling us that they have done more than their fair share—and now they expect us to be their advocates.

As I read the Independent Budget, I was struck by this powerful statement that I would like to share with you. The signers of the Independent Budget said, "As the Administration and Congress develop budgets and policies for the new millennium, we urge them to look up from their balance sheets and into the faces of the men and women who risked their lives to defend our country. We ask them to consider the human consequences of inadequate budgets and benefit denials for those who answered the call to military service."

I took this to heart! Because, as I said earlier, the Administration budget of \$43.6 billion is completely unacceptable, we Democrats on the Veterans' Affairs Committee developed a proposal, based on this Independent Budget, that would add \$3.19 billion to the Administration proposal.

We came to the meeting today, hoping for a full discussion of the chairman's proposal which added \$1.9 billion to the Administration's request, the Democratic alternative which added \$3.19 billion—and a vote on which one to send to the Budget Committee. For I believe that it is our duty, as members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, to send to the Budget Committee the very best "views and estimates" on the VA budget that we can.

In a democratic society, it is our right to be able to express ourselves, to debate and discuss various alternatives, and to vote!

The chairman's recommendation could have gained more votes than the Democratic alternative proposal, but we will never know. Because a vote was not permitted. Not to allow a full discussion of the needs of veterans and the best way to meet those needs—this is simply outrageous. These are the needs of our veterans that we are talking about! Let us hope that the travesty that occurred this afternoon in the Veterans' Affairs Committee will not be repeated for a very long time.

As the Independent Budget asks of us, I ask my colleagues to remember the faces of the men and women who sacrificed so much as we develop a budget worthy of our nation's veterans.

TRIBUTE TO DR. MARLENE DAVIS

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 1999

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Dr. Marlene Davis, Superintendent of the Southfield Public Schools.

Dr. Davis recently was named the 1999 Michigan School Superintendent of the Year. A native of Dearborn, Michigan, Dr. Davis has an extensive educational background. She holds a Bachelors of Arts in Art History, from Michigan State University; a Masters of Arts in