

The idea behind our proposal is simple: we want pregnant women to be healthy, and we want children to be healthy. To accomplish this, we must remove some of the barriers women and children encounter in receiving adequate, appropriate health care.

The Healthy Kids 2000 Act will allow States greater flexibility in ensuring quality prenatal care by allowing States to enroll eligible pregnant women in the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), for which Congress provided \$25 billion in 1997 to assist 10 million uninsured children in receiving the most basic health care. A recent study by the March of Dimes estimates that 45,000 uninsured pregnant women who are not eligible for Medicaid could be covered by S-CHIP if States were given the flexibility of extending coverage to income eligible pregnant women age 19 or older.

Additionally, the bill increases enrollment of Medicaid-eligible pregnant women. Currently, approximately 77 percent of uninsured pregnant women are eligible for Medicaid but are not enrolled. The bill also ensures direct access to obstetric care for women, and direct access to pediatric care, since children have health needs that are very different than those of the adult population.

Another crucial element of our bill allows our Nation's independent children's hospitals to receive Federal funding for graduate medical education. Currently, children's hospitals receive almost no Federal GME funding. With few Medicare patients, these children's hospitals receive less than \$400 in Federal funds for each medical resident they train, while other teaching hospitals receive on average more than \$79,000 for each resident—creating a serious inequity in the competitive market for these children's hospitals. As these hospitals try to fulfill their teaching missions, competitive market pressures provide little incentive for private payers to contribute toward teaching costs.

In an effort to reduce our Nation's infant death rate and to improve the chances of healthy birth outcomes, the Healthy Kids 2000 Act establishes a National Center for Birth Defects Research and Prevention, and strengthens local initiatives for drug, alcohol, and smoking prevention and cessation programs for pregnant mothers. An estimated 150,000 infants are born each year with a birth defect, resulting in one out of every five infant deaths. More children die in the U.S. from birth defects in the first year of life than from any other cause. Effective locally-based programs will prevent these horrific outcomes by equipping mothers, families, and health care providers with information and approaches needed to ensure women safer pregnancies.

Furthermore, our bill increases funding for the National Institutes of Health by creating the Pediatric Research Initiative, which will provide further money to research efforts on diseases and conditions which afflict our Nation's children, such as birth defects, SIDS, cystic fibrosis, juvenile diabetes, and muscular dystrophy.

Our health care professionals in southern Missouri and across the Nation work very hard to provide the highest quality care for our children. The reality is that pediatric care, like all health care, does cost money. We need to take positive steps to ensure that every mother-to-be and their children are able to access this quality care. I am very pleased to again be working with Senator BOND on an important children's health initiative. On behalf of our youngest and most vulnerable citizens, I urge my colleagues to review the Healthy Kids 2000 Act, to discuss this bill with families in their districts, and to join me in cosponsoring this important legislation.

DELAURO-LOWEY WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AND ESTUARY RESTORATION ACT

HON. NITA M. LOWEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 1999

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, today Congresswoman DELAURO, Congressman SHAYS, and I are once again joining with a geographically diverse group of our colleagues in reintroducing legislation to renew and expand the Federal Government's role in controlling pollution and in stewarding our coastal resources.

Without question, much remains to be done to take our Nation's estuaries off the endangered list. Nationally, we face an appalling backlog of water quality infrastructure upgrade needs that threatens to choke our economy just as it is robbing our waters of life-giving oxygen. Quite simply, we need leadership at the Federal level to match the energy and ingenuity of our communities that are working toward a better environmental and economic future. Without strong Federal leadership and substantial funds to back it up, we run the risk of squandering over 20 years of progress in cleaning up and protecting our waters.

Therefore, our legislation will re-ignite Federal, State, and local cooperation in water pollution control by significantly increasing annual authorization levels for the State Revolving Fund [SRF] Program to \$4 billion in 2005, thereby providing the resources to expand and modernize the Nation's water pollution control infrastructure.

Moreover, our legislation would strengthen section 320 of the Clean Water Act, which authorizes the National Estuary Program. First established under the Water Quality Act of 1987, the NEP provides a mechanism for bringing together Federal, State, and local authorities—and interested citizens—to develop comprehensive, watershed-based plans for cleaning up and protecting nationally significant estuaries. In Long Island Sound, Puget Sound, Massachusetts Bay, and a number of other estuaries, the NEP has helped bring about unprecedented cooperation aimed at saving these threatened waters and the economies that rely on them.

Our bill would build on the success of the NEP by clarifying the funding and staffing responsibilities of Federal agencies concerned with the program, including the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [NOAA]. Specifically, the bill states that implementation of estuary management plans is a nondiscretionary duty of the EPA. The measure seeks to improve Federal leadership in the NEP by directing the EPA to promulgate guidelines for development, approval, and implementation of comprehensive management plans. Other important proposed changes include measures to improve coordination of clean-up efforts with other Federal activities in estuaries. In short, this bill is designed to make certain that those plans do not end up on shelves in bureaucrats' offices, but instead truly clean up these critical bodies of water.

Mr. Speaker, our legislation is a call to action that says through sensible investments in water pollution control we can help ensure our economic and environmental future. Without Federal assistance, our estuaries will die while the long-term growth of our economies suffers.

The time has come to act, Mr. Speaker.

MILITARY RESERVE (DUAL STATUS) TECHNICIANS RETIREMENT EQUITY BILL

HON. NEIL ABERCROMBIE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 1999

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, our National Guard and Reservists have performed admirably whenever called upon to assist our military at home and abroad and to aid federal, state and local emergencies. Serving side by side with active military personnel, fire fighters and other professional counterparts, some Guard and Reservists are exposed to hazardous and physically demanding duty as a routine part of their job. A well-earned and timely retirement should be a welcome relief from a job that requires youth, strength and virgo. Yet, for a select group of talented individuals, known as Dual Status Technicians, retirement eligibility is several years beyond that of their counterparts.

Dual Status Technicians are held to the same physical and mental criteria as their military counterparts and the jobs they perform are likewise challenging. Although active military personnel, fire fighters and federal police can retire after 20 years of service, Technicians must work until age 55 with 30 years of service to receive full benefits. This bill gives Dual Status Technicians retirement eligibility equity with their counterparts.

The Military Reserve (Dual Status) Technicians Retirement Equity Bill allows qualified National Guard and Reservists the option to retire under the same criteria as other professionals in similar challenging careers.