

work. In fact, most VA nurses have devoted their entire careers to caring for our Nation's veterans. The average VA nurse is a 47-year-old female with 11 years tenure.

As a Congress we strive to take care of our veterans. Therefore, we should feel embarrassed that we haven't taken better care of the dedicated nurses who care for our veterans. The Congress never meant to create a mechanism where a VA nurse could receive an annual raise worth 92 cents a week before taxes or go several years without a raise. It's no way to treat those who care for our Nation's veterans, and we have an obligation to fix it.

Mr. Speaker, our VA nurses perform a vital service for our Nation's veterans with great care, professionalism, and compassion. We now have an opportunity to demonstrate to our nurses that they are truly appreciated by passing the VA Nurse Appreciation Act of 1999.

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CONGRATULATIONS TO NATALIA  
TORO

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 23, 1999*

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Natalia Toro, who took top honors in the Intel Science Talent Search. Ms. Toro is a 14 year-old senior at Fairview High School in Boulder, Colorado.

In winning this prestigious award, Natalia bested 40 finalists, who were selected from a nationwide pool of 300 semi-finalists. In addition, she is the youngest winner ever of the Intel Science Talent Search.

Ms. Toro's entry was a physics project in which she studied oscillation of neutrinos, the most elusive of subatomic particles. She completed her research on this subject while participating in the Research Science Institute at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology last summer.

While I take pride in highlighting Ms. Toro's achievement in this competition, I am equally happy to salute her love of science and learning. I firmly believe that we can offer our children no greater gift than to instill in them a love of learning. The Toros are an example of how parental involvement can play a critical role in a child's intellectual development, as well as the child's overall success in life.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to share with my fellow members of the House of Representatives the outstanding achievement of Natalia Toro. I would like to acknowledge her parents, Beatriz and Gabriel Toro, for inspiring her thirst for knowledge. The Denver Post Recently highlighted Natalia's achievement. Mr. Speaker I submit a Denver Post article to be included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

[From the Denver Post, July 14, 1998]

THE SCIENCE OF NURTURING

Congratulations to Natalia Toro, who at age 14 already has become a role model, especially for other first-generation American youths.

Natalia's proficiency in mathematics and science propelled her into first place in the

Intel Science Talent Search for her work in high-energy physics. She is the youngest winner ever in the 58-year-old contest formerly run by Westinghouse.

With her prize \$50,000 scholarship, the Fairview High senior now plans to attend either Stanford University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or the California Institute of Technology.

How did this daughter of Colombian immigrants achieve academic excellence?

Her mother credits Natalia's natural curiosity.

"She's very curious. And she's a hard-working person, and I think she really has a passion for learning. I don't think we did anything special," says Beatriz Toro.

But while Natalia's parents won't take credit for her accomplishments, they surely fueled her love of learning.

Beatriz and Gabriel Toro came to America from Colombia in 1979. They chose to teach their only child English as her first language. She learned Spanish later "with our help," her mother says, and is fluent in both.

Toro, a civil engineer, and his wife, who has degrees in psychology and nursing, sent Natalia to the small, private Bixby Elementary School in Boulder, then to the public Fairview. She also has attended classes at the University of Colorado.

"Those schools, they did their part with my daughter," Mrs. Toro says.

But the parents did their part, too. When Natalia asked questions, they tried to answer them. When they didn't know the answers, they headed to the library to find the answers.

"I think the most important thing is that your kids are happy," Mrs. Toro says. "When you're telling the kid, 'You have to do this and you have to do that,' I don't think it works. I wouldn't push a child."

"It sounds funny, but I didn't do anything special with my daughter."

That depends on what constitutes "special."

Not all parents take a child's questions seriously enough to research until they find the answers. But doing so surely send the message that learning is fun.

Not all immigrants are able to make sure their children learn English before the parents' native language. But doing so surely eases a child's way through U.S. schools.

And not all families place a priority on happiness. But it seems only natural that a happy child would be a curious, alert and motivated child.

We salute Natalia for the path she has taken, and we commend her parents and her schools for helping her to find that path. This is a girl who does Colorado proud.

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SERVICEMEMBERS EDUCATIONAL  
OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 1999

HON. BOB STUMP

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 23, 1999*

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, on March 18, 1999, I introduced H.R. 1182, the Servicemembers Educational Opportunity Act of 1999, along with Mr. SPENCE, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. QUINN, Mr. EVERETT, Mr. HAYWORTH, Ms. CHENOWETH, Mr. LAHOOD, Mr. HANSEN, Mr. MCKEON, Mr. GIBBONS, Mr. TALENT, and Mr. BILIRAKIS. This measure would enhance benefits under the Montgomery GI

Bill for persons who enlist in the armed services for 4 years of active duty service or reenlist for 4 years of such service effective October 1, 1999.

In exchange for a 4-year enlistment or reenlistment, individuals would receive an enhanced Montgomery GI Bill that would (a) pay 90 percent of the costs of tuition and fees, (b) pay a sum equal to the reasonable costs of books and supplies, (c) pay a monthly stipend of \$600 per month for full-time enrollment (or proportional amount for less than full-time enrollment), and (d) repeal the current \$1,200 reduction-in-pay to be eligible for the benefit. Each individual would be eligible for 36 months (4 academic years) of benefits.

Our goal in introducing H.R. 1182 is twofold. First, when high school students consider their post-high school plans, we want them to consider military service as their first option, not their last. It is no wonder the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard are experiencing major recruitment problems. Most college-bound youth and their parents see a tour of military service as a detour from their college plans, not as a way to achieve that goal. We want to reverse that way of thinking.

Second, we want to empower the youth of America—our future veterans—with a GI Bill that would be limited only by their aspirations, initiative, and abilities. We want a GI Bill that would allow a young person to be able to afford any educational institution in America to which that individual could competitively gain admittance.

Our legislation is inspired by, and is substantively very similar to, a recommendation made in the comprehensive January 14, 1999, report of the Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, chaired by Anthony J. Principi.

As we look to the future, I believe it's instructive to glance at our past. As my colleagues are aware, 55 years ago the Congress sent to President Roosevelt's desk a piece of legislation that truly transformed our Nation—arguably the greatest domestic legislation since the Homestead Act. Legislation that is popularly known as the GI Bill of Rights. The World War II GI Bill was one of the boldest investments our Nation has ever made. It was certainly one of Congress' finest hours, because World War II veteran-students did not just pass through the American system of higher education, they transformed it. That legislation, and those veteran-students, created today's leaders and the modern middle class.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot recount how many times in my 22 years here that a Member of this body has said he probably would not be here today if it were not for the World War II GI Bill. Our proposal to return to a World War II-type GI Bill is not about a program of the past, it's about empowerment for the future. Has society, and our values, changed so dramatically that a revered education program that was so successful 55 years ago no longer applies to today's servicemembers?

For 223 years, military service has been our Nation's most fundamental form of National Service. When we talk about education policy in this country, I think our starting point is that we owe more to those who voluntarily have worn the uniform because they have earned