

housing and community development issues for over 25 years. John Murphy is the Executive Director of the National Association of County Community and Economic Development. He has worked with my Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee on a number of programs.

The efforts of John Murphy have allowed counties around the country to build affordable housing, to provide seriously needed infrastructure, to alleviate homelessness, and to build senior support centers that allow our elderly citizens to remain in their own homes. He has worked endlessly to support vital public services that build stronger neighborhoods and help children grow up in safe communities.

The American dream is to own a home, an impossible dream for far too many people in our country. Mr. Murphy has helped make that dream a reality for tens of thousands of American families by helping numerous organizations maintain critically needed federal programs such as the Community Development Block Grant program, the HOME Investment Partnership Program and the Low Income Tax Credit Program. In addition, he has created opportunities to share information and ideas about housing programs that make the dream of homeownership possible for working class families all across our country.

Mr. Murphy has worked tirelessly to help communities find unique solutions to their housing and community development needs. At the same time, his efforts with Congress, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the National Association of Counties, and many other organizations are well recognized.

Again, I would like to commend John Murphy for a job well done and extend my best wishes for his continued success.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDENT
CONGRESSIONAL TOWN MEETING

HON. BERNARD SANDERS

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 20, 2000

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize the outstanding work done by participants in my Student Congressional Town Meeting held this summer. These participants were part of a group of high school students from around Vermont who testified about the concerns they have as teenagers, and about what they would like to see the government do regarding these concerns.

I submit the following statements into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, as I believe that the views of these young persons will benefit my colleagues.

RAMI FAOUR AND PAT GRIFFIN REGARDING THE
LEGAL DRINKING AGE

Rami Faour: Representative Sanders, and other distinguished guests, we are here to speak about lowering the drinking age to help alleviate the problem with teen drinking. We understand that there are a large number of people between the ages of 18 and 20 who drink regardless of the law, and many of them even binge drink. Even though the legal drinking age is 21, many teens are able

to purchase alcohol to consume on their own. 18 to 20 year olds can pay taxes, adopt a child, be drafted into the military, hold firearms, but they are not allowed to touch alcohol. This is an illogical inconsistency and infringement of civil rights on this age group. They are legal adults in every other respect and ironically not a lot of these legal adults who drink illegally increase the alcohol use and abuse it is meant to reduce.

Alcohol has become a forbidden fruit for teens. Drinking is more exciting when it is illegal than when it is legal. So many people go out and get drunk simply because they know they should not be drinking at all. Just look at our American history, we saw prohibition backfire. Instead of stopping it, it glorified it and we had increased alcohol. We see teens following that pattern.

Pat Griffin: The solution to this topic is a realistic drinking age combined with education of teens about drinking. There is no reason that an 18-year-old cannot drink as responsibly or even more responsibly than a 24-year-old. The level of maturity between these two ages are about the same. The solution is to educate young youths in how to drink responsibly for the first step but current alcohol education in high school, and in college set up on how to drink responsibly and ending with the message "Do not drink because you would be too young." First we need to educate teens, then we need to trust them. If we treat them like children, they will act like children. If you treat them as responsible adults, they will act maturely. With these steps we see many different changes of attitudes and behavior of young adults.

We wish to thank you for your time to educate young adults in how to drink responsibly and then let them drink responsibly. Thank you.

KYLE ROSE, ERIN GOVER AND KIM KLEIN
REGARDING TEEN CENTERS

Erin Gover: Good morning. My name is Erin Gover and today I will be speaking on the topic of funding of teen centers throughout Vermont.

For years society has been asking why teens turn to alcohol and drugs. So far we have concluded that the solution to this issue is positive alternatives. Well, teen centers are positive alternatives. Yet, out of all the towns in Vermont, Colchester is one of the only ones that does not have one. Yet, for three years organizations like the Colchester Growth Group have founded buildings, got the community's support and fundraised the money for a teen center, but to no avail. In its place is a gas station, a quicky mart, or even a bar. I do not know about you, but I would rather have my child going to a teen center where he or she can hang out with his friends, get help on homework, or just have a good time rather than hanging out at a bar.

To compensate for this teens founded Club 242 located under Memorial Auditorium in downtown Burlington. Club 242 is a place where high school bands can play, get their start, and other high schoolers can come watch, have a good time, and just hang out. And there is absolutely no alcohol, no drugs and no smoking, a positive alternative you might say. Yet funding is currently being taken away from Club 242. Why? This leaves Burlington and Colchester with about three alternatives: shopping, movies and drugs. And it is the City of Burlington and the Town of Colchester that are making this decision, not the teens.

It is also your decision. As our representative, I believe you should make it your goal

to not only make all of your fellow congressmen aware of the need for funding, but also to use your influence to pass a bill making it possibly a requirement for each town to have a teen center, a positive alternative. You should make yourself aware of these teen centers and make sure funding is not taken

The youth of Vermont have worked on this for years and continue to rally the support of the community. We are trying, but it is now your turn to help. And remember, actions speak louder than words.

Kim Klein: 90 percent of the reason why children go out and cause trouble is because there is not really anything for them to do. I mean there are parks and stuff like that, but most children will either go out and hand out in front of stores or stuff like that and go to parties, because there is nothing constructive for them to do. And as Erin said, Club 242, being a musician and playing in high school bands, it is hard for us to get anywhere. I mean, we played there, but to be able to play in other towns and stuff, there aren't places for us to do that because they are all bars.

MATT PLUNKETT AND RYAN ESBJERG
REGARDING TEEN DRINKING AND DRIVING

Matthew Plunkett: Congressman Sanders, eight young people die a day in alcohol-related crashes. During a typical weekend and average of one teenager dies each hour in a car crash; nearly 50 percent of those crashes involve alcohol. Alcohol is the number one drug problem among young people. This is a serious problem not only here in Vermont, but also across the nation. Drunk driving causes many deaths each year and many of us have suffered from the loss of friends and family who have died because of bad decisions involving alcohol and vehicles. When we look at the statistics on a national level, they may not seem very high but there is still a problem and more needs to be done, but then there is never enough that can be done until the problem ceases to exist.

We feel there should be more programs helping inform young drivers in training of the risks of how much more of a chance they have of getting in an accident while intoxicated. In our opinion there should be more funding or there should be funding for a problem that states some of the evils involved in alcohol-related crashes.

Ryan Esbjerg: These vehicles should not be overlooked. They are an educational resource that could be placed on display in private locations or driver's education classes can view the crash first-hand. Once young people see the results of one of these crashes, it might prevent them from making the same mistake as others. The viewing of the wreckage of cars in which people have died makes an impression that no film or lecture can match.

We keep track of history for a reason, to learn from mistakes and the mistake of drinking and driving is repeated too often. The accidents do not just affect the family of the driver or the passenger, they affect the whole community. We are urging you to extend the education of this subject, help save lives in any way that is possible, because you never know when it is your family member or your best friend you could read about in the newspaper.

Thank you for your time.