

In Beaumont there were originally two Head Start Centers, one at Dunbar and the other at South Park. Mavis Bryant was the director at Dunbar from 1965–1984, and Claire Collier was the director at South Park from 1966–1984. In 1984, the districts merged and the center became known as Southerland Head Start, where Claire Collier served as director until her retirement in 1994. Two principals/directors have followed Claire Collier, Charles Vanderburg served from 1994–1999, and Gloria Harrison is currently serving.

Southerland serves the community well, and there are currently 460 students enrolled in the program. Southerland's motto is "Touching Children . . . Reaching Families," and they truly live up to that motto. They reach out to children, improving their self esteem, health, and physical development. Children at Southerland learn and grow in an environment that promotes positive experiences and an understanding of the world around them.

I believe that we must provide an opportunity for every child in America to fulfill her or his potential through participation in an enriching and challenging learning environment starting at birth, and programs such as Southerland Head Start help us achieve that goal. I would like to thank Dr. Carrol Thomas, Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Mae E. Jones-Clark, Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, and Gloria Harrison, Head Start Director/Principal, and all of the other people who are serving the school with unparalleled dedication.

Mr. Speaker, Southerland has served the children of Beaumont for thirty-five years, and I congratulate them as they celebrate this milestone of achievement.

LET'S CRAFT A FAIR DEAL FOR
OUR VETERANS

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 11, 2000

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, today I testified before the VA, HUD Appropriations Subcommittee. In that testimony which follows, I emphasized our duty to provide adequate funds for the vital programs that serve our Nation's veterans.

I am pleased that the administration's budget for the year 2001 recognizes that the men and women who have served in uniform deserve an adequate budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs [VA], and I believe that the efforts of many members of the House VA Committee and the efforts of our veterans' service organizations, specifically in formulating the Independent Budget, have been instrumental in producing a much better budget proposal than last year. I want to acknowledge these efforts.

The \$1.4 billion increase in the health care budget will assure our aging and disabled veterans who need medical care—especially long-term care, emergency care and specialized services—that their needs are a high priority. However, I join my colleagues and the authors of this year's Independent Budget in objecting to the proposal that \$350 million of

new resources for medical care authorized by the recently passed Veterans Millennium Act be deposited to the Treasury. Funds collected from veterans for the provision of veterans' health care should be used to enhance the health care for veterans—not as a substitute for appropriated dollars.

I also want to emphasize my continuing concern that the VA is not adequately meeting the benefit and health care needs of veterans who served in the Gulf war and who now suffer from various diagnosed and undiagnosed disabilities. It has been almost 10 years since the men and women of our armed services were sent to the gulf! The veterans of the Gulf war are sick with illnesses whose causes and cures remain a mystery. We must not relax our efforts to fund necessary and appropriate research. I join the authors of the Independent Budget in supporting an increase in funding for VA medical research, and specifically request that the medical research budget be increased by \$65 million as recommended in the Independent Budget and that at least \$30 million of that increase be directed to research involving the health of Gulf war veterans.

As our veterans population ages, the need for long-term care increases. One means of providing access to such care is through the funding of State Veterans Homes. A new home will be opening in April in my congressional district, and already there is a waiting list. I want other areas to have the same opportunity as the veterans in the San Diego region will have with the opening of this new home. Therefore, I am opposed to the proposed decrease in funding for State Homes and urge this committee to provide adequate funding for this critical program.

I am also pleased that this administration has recognized what Members of Congress have known for years. Additional personnel are needed if the VA is to promptly and accurately adjudicate claims for compensation and pension benefits. This budget will help to provide a well-trained corps of adjudicators to replace those who are nearing retirement age. I want to emphasize that the continued loss of experienced adjudicators over the past 7 years together with an increased workload in the number of issues which must be decided in each claim have led to serious problems of quality and timeliness. The increased staffing in this budget is essential to stem the tide of deterioration in claims processing.

As a former college professor, I recognize the value of a quality education for our Nation's veterans. I am disappointed that no increase for the G.I. bill is provided in the administration's budget. The G.I. bill currently provides far less than is needed to obtain an education at a public institution, and I support raising the basic education benefit. I have joined with The Partnership for Veterans' Education, a coalition representing a number of associations advocating on behalf of veterans, in calling, as a first step, for an increase in the basic monthly stipend from \$535 to \$975 a month.

Veterans comprise about one-third of our Nation's homeless population, but only 3 percent of HUD funding for the homeless is directed to specific programs for homeless veterans. I strongly urge this committee to heed the testimony of Ms. Heather French, Miss

America 2000, and allocate \$750,000 from the HUD fiscal year 2001 appropriation to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans to provide technical assistance to homeless providers. This assistance is critically needed to help veteran specific homeless programs receive a fair share of Federal funding for our Nation's homeless veterans.

I also urge the committee to fund the Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program [HVRP] at its authorized level of \$15,000,000 for fiscal year 2001. These programs are effective in placing homeless veterans in taxpaying jobs. They work and should be funded.

The administration's budget proposal recommends paying full disability benefits to Filipino World War II veterans who reside in the United States. Currently, these brave veterans who were drafted into service by President Roosevelt receive only half the amount received by their counterparts—U.S. veterans with whom they fought side by side to defeat our mutual enemy. I support this increase as an important step toward equity for Filipino World War II veterans.

However, more is needed. Because Congress, in 1946, rescinded the health care benefits for most of these veterans, Congressman GILMAN and I have introduced legislation, H.R. 1594, to provide access to VA medical facilities—both in the United States and in the Philippines—for Filipino World War II veterans. Health care is a crucial need for these men who are now in their 70s and 80s! \$30 million is all that is required to provide health care access to Filipino veterans, with the same priority status as veterans currently using the VA. I request that this amount be added to the fiscal year 2001 budget.

As we honor our veterans during their lives, so must we honor their remembrance in death. The administration's increase in funding for the National Cemetery System will improve the appearance of our cemeteries by a long-overdue and much needed renovation of grounds, gravesites, and grave-markers. I urge this committee to fund the National Cemetery Administration and the State Cemetery Grants at the levels recommended by the House Veterans Affairs' Committee.

Again, may I say that the proposal before you represents a fine starting point. I hope that my suggestions will be useful as the members of this committee work toward a budget that gives our Nation's veterans a fair deal.

TRIBUTE TO GRAND MASTER
JHOON GOO RHEE

HON. NICK SMITH

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 11, 2000

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor today to recognize a great American on the occasion of his recent selection by the National Immigrant Forum, in conjunction with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, as one of 200 most famous American immigrants of all time: Grand Master Jhoon Goo Rhee.

Master Rhee, who shares the honor with such American icons as Albert Einstein,