

He opposed Bill Lann Lee because Mr. Lee expressed support for constitutionally permissible affirmative action programs—applying an ideological litmus test to this nomination as he has with judicial nominations. Ashcroft's efforts helped to prevent a vote before the full United States Senate.

As Attorney General and then as Governor, Ashcroft vigorously opposed efforts to desegregate St. Louis' public schools. His opposition was so great that the court almost ordered the State in contempt citing "continual delay and failure to comply" with a court order to submit a voluntary desegregation plan.

Governor Ashcroft vetoed legislation that would have allowed private non-profit, civic, religious and political groups to register voters in the City of St. Louis, he later vetoed a bill that would have allowed such registration in all of Missouri.

During testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Ashcroft said that he believed in and supported the President's ideas, which he termed "affirmative access"—already at work in California, Texas and Florida. He calls these programs

The Attorney General is the gatekeeper to the federal judiciary—playing a key role in whom the President selects for the federal bench.

Ashcroft has repeatedly blocked the consideration of qualified nominees. His record shows that, as a Senator, he has repeatedly used tactics to block and delay votes on qualified women and minorities nominated to the federal courts.

Senator Ashcroft's decisive role in sabotaging the nomination of a well qualified African American, Judge Ronnie White, to the federal bench points to his disregard for judicial independence and his willingness to use ideological litmus tests in the judicial selection process.

Ashcroft spearheaded the party-line vote to defeat Judge Ronnie White's confirmation to a federal district court judgeship. He did this by misrepresenting Judge White's record, labeling him pro-criminal because of his death penalty record even though White voted to uphold the death penalty over 70% of the time.

The Attorney General should have the temperament, objectivity and commitment to fairness necessary to carry the awesome responsibilities of Attorney General.

Ashcroft's fervent and long-term commitment to his extremist political beliefs call into question his ability to suppress those political beliefs and enforce the constitutional principles with which he so profoundly disagrees. This extremist ideology also raises questions about his objectivity.

As a member of the Senate he made racially insensitive comments to Southern Partisan magazine that were divisive. Ashcroft applauded the magazine for its "heritage of doing that, of defending Southern patriots like [Robert E.] Lee, [Stonewall] Jackson, and [Jefferson] Davis." Southern Partisan has printed articles stating that African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and other immigrants have "no temperament for democracy, never had, [and] never will" and that these groups have dissipated the nation's "genetic race pool."

He further demonstrated his racial insensitivity when, as a United States Senator from a state with over 500,000 African Americans, he gave the commencement address and received an honorary degree from Bob Jones University, a school known for its racist policies and anti-Catholic bigotry. Although Ashcroft has claimed that he did not

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know about the policies of the University, he has refused to return the degree. The credibility of his denial is called into question when as governor he declined to appoint a professor to a state judgeship who had made supportive comments of the University in a law review article.

We are communicating our opposition to Senators Helms and Edwards as well as members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. We urge our membership to oppose vigorously this nomination. We join the multitude of organizations opposing this nomination.

EXPRESSING SYMPATHY FOR VICTIMS OF EARTHQUAKE IN INDIA ON JANUARY 26, 2001, AND SUPPORT FOR ONGOING AID EFFORTS

SPEECH OF

HON. ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Mr. BLAGOJEVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my sympathy for the victims of the earthquake in Gujarat state in India, and I am proud to be a cosponsor of this resolution, which demonstrates our commitment here in Congress to the victims of this tragedy.

Over the past few days, Americans have been confronted with images of the devastation in Western India. Of course, Americans of Indian descent have been concerned for their family and friends. But no American who saw the extent of the tragedy in Gujarat could be unmoved by the fate of the citizens of our sister democracy. Americans and Indians share a bond forged by shared values. And that bond has motivated Americans to ask their government to play an active role in assisting the victims of this earthquake.

Thankfully, the administration has been quick to respond. By Sunday morning, an assessment team from the United States Agency for International Development was on the ground in Gujarat, determining needs and offering immediate comfort to victims. Since that time, the United States has provided generators, water purification equipment, tents and food to assist the survivors. The United States is continuing to work with relief agencies to get more critical assistance into the crisis zone as soon as possible. My colleagues and I in the Caucus for India and Indo-Americans have been working with the administration to minimize any roadblocks which could prevent the delivery of assistance.

I commend the administration for their quick response. But we here in Congress must ensure that as the immediate shock of this tragedy fades, our commitment to the victims does not fade along with it. Long after this earthquake passes from the headlines of American papers, we need to remember that people in Gujarat will be working to rebuild their homes, their businesses, and their lives. The leaders of our nation, the world's oldest democracy, must never forget our bond with the people of India, the world's largest democracy. I have written to the President and the Director of the United States Agency for International Development

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to urge them to show their commitment to assist India in the aftermath of this crisis. I will be working over the coming months to ensure that the United States provides what ever is necessary to ease the suffering of the victims of the Gujarat earthquake.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS MINUTEMAN MARCHING BAND

HON. JOHN W. OLVER

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 6, 2001

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the University of Massachusetts Minuteman Marching Band on its appearance in the 2001 Presidential Inaugural Parade. The Minuteman Marching Band was nominated by the Governor of Massachusetts and was selected by the Inaugural Committee to appear in the parade.

The Minuteman Marching Band has long been recognized for its excellence, receiving the prestigious Sudler Trophy in 1998. In addition, the band has a history of participation in Presidential inaugural festivities. The Minutemen marched in the 1981 Presidential Inaugural Parade and performed at the Inaugural Ceremonies in 1985.

The band, made up of 300 students, represents 16 states and over 90 Massachusetts communities. These talented students provide an invaluable service to the student body of UMass-Amherst, and to the citizens of the state of Massachusetts. They performed admirably in the 2001 Inaugural Parade, and everyone from the UMass community is proud of their achievement. I am pleased to recognize the band's director, George Parks, and all the students in the band for their outstanding performance.

SUPPORT THE MONTGOMERY G.I. BILL IMPROVEMENTS ACT

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 6, 2001

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to join my colleague and fellow veteran, LANE EVANS, in reintroducing the Montgomery G.I. Bill Improvements Act. H.R. 1071 had the support of 160 of my colleagues in the 106th Congress, all of whom recognized, like our new Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony Principi, that improving the military's primary education benefit, the Montgomery G.I. Bill, is wise policy for a number of reasons. It will reverse the military's deteriorating ability to recruit the number and quality of individuals it needs; it provides veterans the tools necessary to reenter the workforce; and, it expands access to higher education to the young men and women in uniform.

In 1999, the Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, chaired by now Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony Principi, recommended

overhauling and greatly improving the G.I. Bill. Our legislation is modeled on the Commission's recommendation, and I am encouraged and hopeful that the new Administration will work with us to pass this important bill. Clearly, Sec. Principi's appointment is a positive development.

America's military supremacy has been unquestioned since the end of the Cold War. In the Gulf War, Bosnia, and Kosovo we proved that our armed forces set the world standard for excellence. While much of our battlefield success has to do with the superiority of our weapons systems, weapons are only as good as the people who operate them. Our success on the battlefield boils down to the quality and ability of our troops.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the military is having increasing difficulty recruiting the quantity and quality of troops it needs to meet today's challenges. Recruiting shortfalls are a serious problem, and as statistics have grown worse, recruiting budgets have soared. In addition to new advertising campaigns, the services have resorted to gimmicks, including sponsoring drag racers, deploying psychedelic humvees, and offering emergency cash giveaways. I do not criticize the armed forces for these efforts, but they highlight the need for a greater, more effective recruiting tool. The best recruiting tool is education, and we would best help our armed forces by modernizing the military's primary education benefit, the Montgomery G.I. Bill.

The Department of Defense's Youth Attitude Tracking Studies (YATS) confirm that fewer young men and women are considering serving. This shouldn't come as a surprise. "Money for college" is the top reason young men and women choose to serve. College costs have quadrupled in the last 20 years, but the G.I. Bill hasn't. At the same time, more non-service financial assistance has become available, which has benefited society but not the military.

Today's G.I. Bill does not provide enough assistance to attract the number of high quality high school graduates the armed forces need, especially when considering the risks of service. This has forced the military to accept lower quality recruits. Statistics tell us that lower quality recruits, as measured by aptitude tests, have a much greater attrition rate. Troops that fail to make it through training or fulfill their service obligations cost taxpayers dearly.

The Montgomery GI Bill Improvements Act ensures that our all volunteer armed forces have the ability to attract quality recruits, and provides veterans with skills to better our economy and their lives. In exchange for four years of service, our legislation would provide servicemembers a benefit covering the full cost of tuition, fees and books and provide a subsistence allowance. Those opting for a shorter enlistment or enrolled in the current program would earn a basic benefit of \$900/month. Our legislation is not inexpensive, but we must invest to stay the best. The young men and women who will benefit from this legislation will have to earn it through service to our country.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join us in standing up for our armed forces, servicemembers and

veterans by supporting this much needed legislation.

HIGH-ACHIEVEMENT FOR SILVER GROVE HIGH SCHOOL

HON. KEN LUCAS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 6, 2001

Mr. LUCAS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Silver Grove High School. This is a success story about a school in a high poverty district that has overcome adversity and has become one of the models in education reform.

Silver Grove High School is one of eight schools to be recognized by Kentucky's Commissioner of Education for its outstanding performance in Kentucky's state testing program. Silver Grove High performed so well that it has become a model of the best Kentucky's public schools have to offer.

I rise today to commend Silver Grove High School and all of the educators, staff and students of this fine educational institution. I ask you to join me in congratulating Silver Grove High School and the entire community of Silver Grove on their achievements.

TRIBUTE TO MAYOR AND MRS. BILL HEXT

HON. LARRY COMBEST

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 6, 2001

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend Mayor Bill Hext and Jane Hext for their tremendous contributions to the city of Odessa, Texas. They were recently honored by being named "Outstanding Citizen(s) of the Year" for 2000.

The "Outstanding Citizen of the Year" award was established some 44 years ago to recognize those who dedicate their time, talent and resources to improve the quality of life for the community. Mayor and Mrs. Hext are more than civil servants, but also leaders and role-models.

Their commitment to public and community service and their adherence to family- and faithbased principles truly make them ideal for such an honor. Mayor Hext has been actively involved in such organizations as the Texas Municipal League, the MOTRAN policy advisory committee and Grace Christian Fellowship, serving in various leadership positions. He was inducted into the Business Hall of Fame in 1995 in recognition of his entrepreneurial ventures in two successful businesses and served as a member of the City Council for two years. Last May Mayor Hext was elected mayor of Odessa with the focus to continue the successes and build upon new opportunities in education, health care and the economy.

Mrs. Hext has dedicated her time and talents over the years to the Ector County Independent School District schools, Meals on Wheels, the Girl Scouts, Operation Blessing,

and the Boys and Girls Club of Odessa. Mayor and Mrs. Hext went above and beyond the call to service when they established the Hext Family Foundation committed to providing resources to foster educational, medical and faith-based organizations in Odessa.

It is with great pride that I commend Mayor Bill Hext and Jane Hext for their active involvement and leadership in the community and I congratulate them on being awarded the "Outstanding Citizen(s) of the Year."

CELEBRATING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MRS. MARY COOK, CONGRESSIONAL LIAISON, V.A. REGIONAL OFFICE, DECATUR, GEORGIA

HON. MAC COLLINS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 6, 2001

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mrs. Mary Cook for her contributions to the veterans of the State of Georgia. Over the past 34 years, Mrs. Cook, who works in the V.A. Regional Office in Decatur, Georgia, has gone above and beyond the call of duty. She has always assisted my office and other legislative offices in providing courteous, expeditious and judicial treatment of veterans in the Southeast area.

Mrs. Cook began her career in federal service in 1960 with the Federal Aviation Agency. In 1970, she came on board with the Veterans Administration, where she has remained for the last 30 years.

In all our dealings Mrs. Cook has never allowed cases to languish in government red tape. She has always been very aggressive in pursuing these cases and making sure our office was kept informed of all developments.

She has taken on many special projects over the years, including serving as the VA Regional Office Women's Veterans Coordinator from January 1993 to March 2000. As the WVC, Mrs. Cook interviewed, counseled and provided help to women veterans seeking specialized assistance. She also worked with the Women Veterans Committees at the Georgia VA Medical Centers to insure coordinated services and assistance were provided to women veterans.

Mr. Speaker, we often overlook the daily sacrifices and dedication of federal employees. Mrs. Cook is an example of a federal employee who not only takes pride in her work, but has a true dedication to the people she is charged with serving. As she retires from federal service and goes on to another phase in her life, please join me in congratulating her on a job well done and wishing her the very best in the future.

TRIBUTE TO RETIRING CARRIER EXECUTIVE T. HUME LAIDMAN

HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 6, 2001

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, today I want to congratulate a man from my New York's 25th