

19738

TRIBUTE TO ANNA MARIA ARIAS

HON. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 12, 2001

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to honor the memory of an exceptional woman, Anna Maria Arias. On Monday, October 1, 2001, Anna Maria lost a seven-year battle against aplastic anemia and passed away from complications related to a bone marrow transplant procedure at MD Anderson Medical Center in Houston, TX.

Anna Maria Arias was born on July 12, 1960 in San Bernardino, California. She attended San Diego State University but her passion for media and journalism eventually led her to Hawaii Pacific University where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in communications. When she was offered a Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Fellowship to Washington, D.C. Anna Maria saw her opportunity. She accepted the CHCI fellowship and was assigned to the Washington, D.C. bureau of CNN where she became part of the production team at CNN's Crossfire program.

As the founder and president of Arias Communications, Anna Maria enjoyed a varied and accomplished communications career. She worked as a radio news anchor, news-writer, and as a media and campaign organizer for presidential and local candidates at the Democratic National Committee. Anna Maria honed her publishing skills and earned the respect of her peers during her five years as managing editor for Hispanic Magazine. Her editorial direction and keen insight into the issues affecting the Hispanic community were instrumental in making the publication one of the most respected media vehicles in the Hispanic market.

In October of 1994, she launched a brand new, long awaited Hispanic publication and fittingly named it Latina Style Magazine. To this day, the magazine remains the only national publication that is one hundred percent Latina-owned. With a circulation of 150,000 and a readership of more than 600,000, Latina Style Magazine is the first national magazine that covers issues pertinent to the contemporary, professional, Hispanic working-woman from a Latina point of view.

Anna Maria wanted to make Latina Style Magazine not just a medium to express Latina society and culture, but also a source of valuable information to the Latina professional, business owner, and college student to help them succeed in their endeavors. Anna Maria's passion and commitment bore fruit when Latina Style Magazine was selected by the National Association of Hispanic Publications as the Outstanding English or Bilingual Magazine for 1999. During the same year, Anna Maria was honored by the Greater Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce with the 1999 Entrepreneur of the Year Award and by the Changing Images in America Foundation with the Entrepreneurship Award.

Everyone who knew Anna Maria will tell you that from her youth, she was one of the most dedicated individuals they had ever met. Once she set her sights on something, there was no stopping her. When family and friends asked

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

October 12, 2001

why she was choosing to undergo the complicated bone marrow surgery, Anna Maria simply said, "I have to do this, we have important work to do and this thing keeps getting in the way." That was Anna Maria, totally devoted to her work and committed to serving others.

Last Sunday, I attended Anna Maria Arias' memorial mass at the Church of Guadalupe and her burial ceremony at Mt. View Cemetery, in San Bernardino, CA. Her husband Robert Bard and her mother Rita Valenzuela spoke of the tremendous courage and determination of one so young.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to please join me in honoring the life and achievements of a great Latina role model and leader, Anna Maria Arias. She has, by example, inspired generations of young Latinas to reach for their dreams. Her enthusiasm, her zest of life, her caring nature, and love for her family, friends and co-workers will never be forgotten. Anna Maria, amiga querida, dios te llamo y nos dejoste un gran vacio. Adios.

RECOGNITION OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY PERSONNEL EFFORTS ON SEPTEMBER 11

HON. CURT WELDON

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 12, 2001

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the efforts of America's public safety and military personnel whose heroic actions at the Pentagon, the World Trade Center and the Pennsylvania site saved countless lives. As the Chairman of the House Armed Services Procurement Subcommittee and the founder of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, I know well the overwhelming situations our civilian and military responders faced. That they persevered in the face of this tragedy is a testament to the dedication of these public servants.

All of these personnel, whether local, state or federal, civilian or military, paid or volunteer, deserve the applause of this body. To highlight their combined efforts I wish to recognize three individuals. Their efforts represent the heroic actions of the thousands who responded to the calls for help on September 11 and throughout the days following the attack.

Volunteer firefighter/paramedic Eric Jones, Army Staff Sgt. Christopher Braman, and Marine Corps Major Dan Pantaleo were featured rescuing a Marine Corps flag from the burning Pentagon on the front pages of newspapers and magazines around the world. It is this image that will remain in our memories as a symbol of American patriotism, unity and strength.

In the days following the publication of their picture, they received many requests for press interviews. They declined each of these requests, because as true public servants, they neither expect nor desire any recognition for their efforts. What few know is that these individuals, through their countless acts of bravery, not only saved the flag, but also many Americans. At 9:40 A.M. on September 11 all

three were called by destiny to perform heroic feats. As fire raged through the Pentagon, Mr. Jones, Staff Sgt. Braman, and Major Pantaleo rushed inside. These three men along with all the public safety and military personnel at the scene were responsible for rescuing hundreds of men and women injured by the explosion, the building collapse and burning jet fuel during the first minutes following the attack. After the injured had been saved, they remained on the site for many days to recover the bodies of those who perished.

I salute all Americans who answered the call for help on September 11. I am especially proud to highlight Eric, Christopher and Dan as examples of our public safety and military personnel whose contributions saved thousands from succumbing to the consequences of these terrorist attacks.

THE INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION THAT WILL AMEND THE TRANSPORTATION EQUITY ACT

HON. ROBERT L. EHRLICH, JR.

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 12, 2001

Mr. EHRLICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce the introduction of legislation that will amend the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century ("TEA-21") (Pub. L. 105-178) to provide states with flexibility in complying with the minimum penalties for repeat offenders for driving while intoxicated or driving while under the influence (23 U.S.C. § 164). The bill I am sponsoring is based upon recommendations made by the National Association of Governors' Highway and Safety Representatives in their report entitled "Taking the Temperature of TEA-21: An Evaluation and Prescription for Safety."

Under current federal law, the definition of a "repeat intoxicated driver law" includes a 1-year "hard" suspension of the repeat offender's driver's license; impoundment or installation of an ignition interlock system of the individual's motor vehicles; an assessment of the individuals alcohol abuse and treatment; and community service and imprisonment (23 U.S.C. § 164(a)(5)). If a state does not enact a repeat intoxicated driver law compliant with § 164(a)(5), the Department of Transportation transfers 1.5 percent of funds under § 104(b) to § 402.

In my view, there are two reasons why Congress should improve the current law. First, a 1-year "hard" suspension, in many cases, does not sufficiently deter repeat drunk drivers from driving under the influence. While a 1-year suspension looks good on paper, statistics, sting operations, and just plain common-sense reflect the notion that suspended drivers continue to drive illegally on our roads. For example, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 70 percent of individuals with revoked licenses continue to drive. Second, transferring funds from one transportation account to another may motivate some states to adopt new laws; however, the overall experience since TEA-21 enactment is that many states simply find ways to shift funds within their own accounts.

October 12, 2001

Accordingly, I am introducing legislation that will require states to continue to enact a 1-year "hard" suspension; however, the suspension may be modified if states mandate the use of an ignition interlock system. My own state of Maryland has proven this policy to be an effective tool in the fight against drunk driving. Further, this legislation reflects my philosophy of providing states with flexibility over laws of public safety.

I encourage all members to join with me in supporting this legislation.

"IN HONOR OF MICHELE KRAGAN
BALABAN"

HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 12, 2001

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Michele Kragan Balaban for her long and distinguished record of service to the Silicon Valley Jewish community. This Saturday, I will be joining many friends and community members to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of Hillel of Silicon Valley at "Hillel Goes to Hollywood," a gala which will benefit this campus organization that fosters Jewish identity and connections at eight colleges and universities in the South Bay Area. Michele, known to many as "Mishy," was selected as this year's distinguished guest of honor for her many contributions to Hillel of Silicon Valley and the entire South Bay Area Jewish community.

Mishy Balaban has contributed to the growth of numerous Silicon Valley Jewish organizations. She served for many years as a member of the Allocations Committee, and then as campaign chair and president of the Women's Division, of the Jewish Federation of Greater San Jose. She was also a member of the Yavneh Board of Trustees, and helped to establish Yavneh's Technology Fund. Last year, in her capacity as president of the Yavneh Parent Association, she made great strides in revitalizing that organization.

Under Mishy's guidance as president of the Advisory Board of Hillel of Silicon Valley, the chapter expanded to include students at the College of San Mateo, De Anza College Evergreen College, Foothill College, San Jose City College, Santa Clara University, and West Valley College, in addition the pre-existing members at San Jose State University. This expansion also included a move to a new home, significantly increased professional and volunteer staffing levels, and affiliation with International Hillel, the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

The evolution of Hillel of Silicon Valley into a full-fledged institution of the Jewish community can be greatly attributed to the continuing dedication of Mishy Balaban. She has put her community before her own needs, and set the standard for volunteer leadership. Mishy is the recipient of the "Exemplar of Excellence Award" from International Hillel for her work with Hillel of Silicon Valley, which, I think everyone in the Silicon Valley Jewish community would agree, thrives today thanks in large part to the dedication, love, and energy of this impressive woman.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

INTRODUCING LEGISLATION TO
AMEND THE SOCIAL SECURITY
ACT

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 12, 2001

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation to amend the Social Security Act to increase the maximum amount of the death benefit lump-sum from \$255 to \$1,000. The current benefit is not only grossly inadequate but unfairly distributed. It is an unjust system that deprives individuals and their families of up to a month's worth of compensation. Even when the benefit is received, it is too little to be of much significance. It appears that our Social Security system fails to adequately provide for the care of our elderly citizens, even when they die.

Under current law, social security benefits are not paid for the month in which a recipient dies. For example, if an individual were to die on July 31, his heirs will receive no compensation for all of the expenses incurred during the month of July. If that person had died on August 1 instead, he or she would have received full coverage for the previous month. In some cases, when the Social Security Administration is not told of the death in time to stop the payment, family members of the deceased must return the check for the month. It is nothing short of disgraceful to add the psychological stress of dealing with complex financial legalities to family members who are already grieving for a loved one.

I support legislation that would entitle an individual to benefits proportionate to the number of days during the month that he or she lived. One of my distinguished colleagues has already introduced a bill to this end, H.R. 210, the Social Security Descendent's Family Relief Act of 2001. It makes much more sense that if a person lives until July 15, he should receive compensation for those 15 days.

In addition to this unreasonable benefit system, the \$255 lump-sum available to families of the deceased is woefully inadequate. The \$255 sum, which was provisioned in 1981 and was a modest sum at that time, is not even remotely close to meeting the expenses families face in the 21st century. What cost \$255 in 1981 costs over \$513 today. Surely it is not unreasonable for families to expect an inflation-adjustment for that benefit. Furthermore, the average retired worker receives \$845 in social security monthly benefits. Clearly a \$255 lump sum does not compensate for this amount. And, according to the National Funeral Directors Association, the national average cost of a funeral is \$5700. Families need more, not less, money at this time.

My bill would increase the amount of the lump sum benefit from \$255 to \$1000. That equates to a net gain of \$745, compared to a potential loss of up to \$845 under the current system should an individual die towards the end of the month and thus fall victim to pro-rating.

Mr. Speaker, surely one of our most important priorities should be to give American families the money they need and rightfully deserve. It is our duty to correct the discrep-

19739

ancies in a flawed process so that all Americans enjoy the benefits of a system designed to help them. I sincerely hope that my colleagues will work with me to ensure the passage of this important legislation.

TO HONOR THE PHOENIX FIRE DEPARTMENT'S URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM/ARIZONA TASK FORCE-1

HON. ED PASTOR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 12, 2001

Mr. PASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to honor a group of true American heroes who are a source of great pride for Phoenix, Arizona and our country. The group of people I am speaking about are the Phoenix Fire Department's Urban Search and Rescue Team/Arizona Task Force-1. Sixty-three members of this 200-member team, also known as Phoenix Fire AZTF-1 traveled from Phoenix to New York City on Sept. 19 to offer their assistance to their fellow firefighters in New York and other rescuers helping in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 destruction of the World Trade Centers.

The Phoenix team, which consists of rescue and technical specialists, doctors, paramedics, canine search specialists, logistics specialists, structural engineers, hazardous materials specialists, a chaplain and task force managers, was among the group of rescuers summoned to New York City by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist public safety officials. Although they knew a grim task was before them, they considered it to be an honor to be selected to help out in this time of national tragedy. Eagerly, they awaited to be called to duty in New York City and once they were called, they transported a cache that included 60,000 pounds of specialized equipment, making them fully self-sufficient upon arrival at the scene of the World Trade Center.

Upon arrival, the Phoenix team tirelessly and passionately used their expertise to help other firefighters and public safety officials dig through the rubble for survivors and bodies of the victims. They remained focused on the task, knowing that some of the victims would be other firefighters, police officers or public safety officials. Surrounded by human tragedy, they steadfastly worked for a week assisting where they could.

Personally, I was very moved when I visited the World Trade Center disaster site on Sept. 22 and ran into this team from my hometown. I was filled with pride to see them at work in New York, knowing that they were helping America, again, in its time of need. As you may know, AZTF-1 also was called to duty to Oklahoma City after the bombing in 1995.

Most of us don't have dangerous jobs and will probably never face the devastation seen at the World Trade Center. But everyday, firefighters risk the greatest gift of all—their lives—to save lives. They do it unhesitatingly and with a sense of duty. The incidents of Sept. 11 were very tragic, but the united effort by all firefighters and emergency service workers who came together on that horrible day