

attached to the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps/Division 911 as Personnel Officer at Naval Training Command, Great Lakes, Scout Leader with the Berwyn Air Explorer Post #777, an Emergency Service Disaster Agency volunteer and American Red Cross Disaster Assist Team volunteer serving the citizens of the greater Chicago area. His wife, Diane, and his daughters have come to expect and appreciate this kind of commitment. These efforts are important not only in the organizations which benefit directly from his participation but in the example which is set for his friends, family and colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, even though the sands of the Persian Gulf have passed through the hourglass, it is important that we remember that time in our history. I am thankful for Ed Korczynski's participation in that important mission, and I appreciate his continued involvement in the betterment of our lives.

PROVISION TO HELP PRESERVE VETERANS' FAMILY FARMS INCLUDED IN VETERANS' OPPORTUNITIES ACT OF 2001

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2001

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, in the 106th Congress, I introduced H.R. 5271, the Veterans' Family Farm Preservation Act, to make it possible for more wartime veterans and their survivors to qualify for pension benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) without being forced to sell their family farms and ranches. I am pleased that the provisions of this legislation have been included in the Veterans' Opportunities Act of 2001, H.R. 801, a bipartisan bill introduced on February 28, 2001. This legislation will also benefit low-income veterans who seek to obtain health care from VA.

The productivity of America's family farms is undisputed. Family farms and ranches feed our Nation. Family members and unpaid workers account for 70% of farm labor in the United States. While America's family farmers and ranchers are unmatched in their productivity, they have little or no control over many factors which determine the economic results of their labor.

Veterans who have gone in harm's way and placed their lives on the line by serving our nation in the Armed Forces should not be asked to relinquish their family farm in order to qualify for veterans' benefits. Unfortunately, that is what is occurring today. H.R. 801, which House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Chris Smith and I introduced together with J.D. Hayworth, Benefits Subcommittee Chairman and Ranking Democratic Subcommittee Member Silvestre Reyes, includes provisions to address this problem. I urge Members to support this bipartisan effort.

Pension benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are payable to wartime veterans who are totally and permanently disabled due to a non-service connected medical condition. A small, but important number of these disabled wartime vet-

erans own family farms or ranches, which provide the livelihood for their families. Most family farms in the United States are very small. Over 75% of family farms have less than \$50,000 in gross annual sales. After deductions for costs of operating the farm or ranch, the net income of the family farmer is much lower. Farmers receive an average of 20 cents for every dollar of produce sold. In 1995, the average net farm income for very small farms was \$510. The average net farm income for small farms with gross sales between \$50,000 and \$250,000 averaged \$14,335. Clearly most family farmers have modest annual income.

In determining eligibility for pension benefits, VA is required to consider not only the family income, but also the family's "net worth." Currently, unless VA determines that the land can be sold at "no substantial sacrifice", the value of farm and ranch land is included in determining net worth. Some veteran farmers are "land rich." While having little or no liquid assets, the value of their land makes their "net worth" appear larger on paper.

Family farms are important not only for the food and fiber they produce, but also for the values they represent. Family farms should not be considered as simply substitutes for liquid bank accounts or other liquid assets. In good years, family farms and ranches provide an adequate income. In bad times, adverse crop conditions or illness, the income and liquid resources of family farmers and ranchers are quickly depleted. Wartime veterans have made a substantial sacrifice on behalf of our Nation by serving in the Armed Forces. We should not ask them to sacrifice their family farms in order to receive the assistance they have earned by their wartime service.

I believe that an operating family farm can never be liquidated without substantial sacrifice on the part of the veteran. It is never reasonable to require a veteran to sell his or her means of future livelihood in order to obtain pension benefits or VA health care. If the farm is sold, the assets which in future years can be expected to generate income for the veteran and the veteran's dependents, are permanently lost.

Under H.R. 801, farm and ranch land owned by the veteran and the veteran's dependents would be excluded in determining net worth. The bill would also exclude land used for similar agricultural purposes, such as timberland, Christmas tree farms, or horticultural purposes.

During the past century, the number of family farms in our country has declined dramatically. When a veteran is required to sell his or her farm in order to receive necessary VA assistance, another family farm may be lost forever. No veteran should be called on to make this additional sacrifice. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 801. America's family farmers and ranchers deserve the relief which this legislation will provide.

TRIBUTE TO THE REVEREND DOCTOR BENNETT WALKER SMITH, SR.—ST. JOHN BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. JACK QUINN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2001

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to pay tribute to my friend, Rev. Dr. Bennett Walker Smith, Sr. for his forty years of service in the ministry.

As Pastor of Saint John Baptist Church on Goodell in the City of Buffalo, Rev. Smith leads one of the largest and most vibrant congregations in all of Western New York. His steady message of service to God and community has inspired us all.

Throughout his remarkable life, Rev. Smith has been actively engaged in social and political change which has served to enhance the lives of all people, and African Americans in particular. His early years in the civil rights movement were shared with the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the late Reverend Ralph Abernathy, and the Reverend Jessie Jackson.

Within our Western New York community, Rev. Smith has taken a truly active role in the enhancement of the City of Buffalo. Under his leadership, St. John Baptist Church has built McCarley Gardens and the St. John Senior Citizens Tower, over 300 units in all, which provide housing for our community's seniors. It has also constructed the St. John Christian Academy that provides outstanding educational opportunity to over 250 students. I am honored to be working with him and St. John Baptist Church toward the completion of the next project, a Family Life Center that will provide a host of educational, health, and social services to our community.

In recognition of his service Rev. B.W. Smith has been honored as a member of "Who's Who in Religion," Ebony's "100 Most Influential Black Americans," and by the NCCJ, and has received the prestigious Evans-Young Award from the Buffalo Urban League.

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to join with the congregation of St. John Baptist Church and our entire Western New York community in recognition of the commitment to God, dedicated service, and leadership of Rev. Dr. B.W. Smith. I am honored to bring his great work to the attention of my colleagues and to this honorable body.

GUN VIOLENCE

HON. CAROLYN MCCARTHY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2001

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, one year ago another special life was taken by gun violence in this country. Kayla Rollins was killed in her first grade classroom by a six year old boy who brought a loaded gun to school. The time has come and gone to end these senseless acts of gun violence by passing meaningful gun safety legislation.