

of the Great Sioux Nation. Both border on the Missouri River in central South Dakota and are connected by the Big Bend Dam.

Congress created a trust fund for the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe in 1996, and a separate trust fund for the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe in 1997. These trust funds sought to compensate the tribes for the value of their land that is now permanently inundated as a result of the construction of the Big Bend Dam. Unfortunately, the formula that the Government Accountability Office used to calculate amount of compensation for both tribes was substantially different than the formulas that it has used to calculate damages for many other similarly situated tribes. The result was unfair and inadequate compensation trust funds for these tribes.

Parity for these tribes would mean an ability to actively work for the betterment of their communities. It would mean adequate roads and improved community facilities. It would mean better health care and newer schools. It would mean attracting commercial business and improving the local economy. Most importantly, it would mean a real chance for these tribes to provide future generations with the tools that so many of us take for granted.

I would ask all of my distinguished colleagues to support the Tribal Parity Act and work with me to enact legislation that would fairly and appropriately compensate members of the Lower Brule and Crow Creek Sioux Tribes. I ask you to do it because of the tremendous positive difference it would make in the lives of those affected—and because it is the right and fair thing to do.

THE WORKER REEMPLOYMENT ACCOUNTS ACT OF 2005

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to sponsor the Worker Reemployment Accounts Act of 2005. This important legislation will help thousands of unemployed Americans seeking to return to work by providing them with a Personal Reemployment Account.

The American economy is the fastest growing economy of any industrialized nation in the world. Nationwide, more than 2.4 million jobs have been added since August 2003. The national unemployment rate has declined to 5.4 percent, lower than the average rate during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. In my own state of Nevada, unemployment has fallen to 3.7 percent. Clearly, the Republican tax relief and growth package has helped to drive the strong recovery in our economy. But we still have more work to do.

As the economy is adding thousands of new jobs and the unemployment rate is dropping across the country, the assistance provided by this bill is critical because we want to ensure that every job seeker has the resources they need to find a good job. That is what this bill is all about—helping Americans find careers.

As President Bush proposed in his 2005 budget, the Worker Reemployment Accounts Act permits the Secretary of Labor to use

demonstration funding under the Workforce Investment Act to provide Personal Reemployment Accounts to those with the greatest challenges in returning to work quickly.

Through competitive grants, the local One-Stop Career Center system, where the unemployed already seek assistance in obtaining employment, will offer this important new benefit to unemployed workers, in addition to an array of employment services they already provide.

Under the bill, states and local workforce investment areas will be able to offer unemployed individuals who are most in need of help a reemployment account of up to \$3,000. With these accounts, unemployed workers may purchase a variety of different services to help them find a good job, including job training, child care, transportation, housing assistance, short-term classes to upgrade skills, and employment counseling.

One of the important features of the bill is that it provides individuals with significant new flexibility to design a package of services tailored to meet their needs. By taking into accounts the needs of the unemployed on an individual basis, our local, State, and federal governments will better equip these individuals with the tools they require to secure long-term, meaningful employment.

In addition, recipients will be able to keep the balance of the account as a cash reemployment bonus if they become reemployed within 13 weeks and stay employed for six months.

These new Personal Reemployment Accounts and the current job training services already administered under the Workforce Investment Act are both essential in helping displaced workers in areas of the country facing skill shortages and enhancing the workforce for our increasingly knowledge-based economy.

The Secretary of Labor already has begun the process of testing the PRA concept through a very limited pilot program. However, the authority of this bill would allow the Secretary to test the concept in more areas, either within the seven states already participating or in additional states. The lessons learned through this demonstration program will help inform Congress regarding the best way to serve the unemployed and ultimately will result in better reemployment and training services for all workers.

Over the past two years, Republicans have taken numerous steps to help unemployed workers. I am also proud to join 21st Century Competitiveness Subcommittee Chairman MCKEON and Chairman BOEHNER of the Education and the Workforce Committee in introducing the Job Training Improvement Act of 2005. This bill will reauthorize and enhance the services provided through the Workforce Investment Act and the nation's one-stop deliver system for workforce development. I am pleased that the provisions of the Worker Reemployment Accounts Act are included in this broader reauthorization package.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to improve job training opportunities for all Americans and offer this new innovative option to help workers as quickly as possible. The choice and flexibility available through a Personal Reemployment Account is the additional

assistance American families need to get back into high-wage, steady employment. By providing this enhanced assistance, we can ensure that Americans are able to meet the challenges of the ever-changing economy that they face.

I was proud to see similar legislation pass in the House of Representatives in the 108th Congress, and am excited to see it become law in the 109th Congress. I urge my colleagues to support this critical legislation.

THE REINTRODUCTION OF THE 21ST CENTURY WATER COMMISSION ACT

HON. JOHN LINDER

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, today I reintroduced my proposal, the "21st Century Water Commission Act." This proposal, which was approved by the House on November 21, 2003, but unfortunately not considered by the other body before the 108th Congress adjourned, will bring together our nation's premier water experts to recommend strategies for meeting our water challenges in the 21st century.

Some highlights of my 21st Century Water Commission legislation are as follows:

The commission will look for ways to ensure fresh water for U.S. citizens for the next 50 years;

The commission will be composed of nine members appointed by the President, and key leaders in the House and Senate;

The commission will look for ways to eliminate duplication and conflict among federal governmental agencies;

The commission will consider all available technologies and other methods to optimize water supply reliability, availability, and quality, while safeguarding the environment;

The commission will hold hearings in distinct geographical regions of the United States, and in Washington, D.C., to seek a diversity of views, comments, and input; and

A final report will be due within three years of the commission's inception. The report will include a detailed statement of the findings and conclusions of the commission, as well as recommendations for legislation and other policies.

I want to be clear that this bill does not give the federal government more direct authority or control over water. Rather, this commission will make recommendations on how we can coordinate water management efforts on all levels so that localities, states, and the Federal government can work together to enact a comprehensive water policy to avoid future water shortages.

As Benjamin Franklin noted in 1746, "When the well's dry, we know the worth of water." Nothing could be truer, and many states across the country that are currently facing a water crisis, or have in the last few years, understand the wisdom of these words.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House in moving this bill forward promptly. The U.S. cannot afford to reevaluate

its water policies every time a crisis hits. Now is the time to get ahead of this issue, and I believe that the 21st Century Water Commission can serve as a channel for sharing the successful strategies and ideas that will allow us to do so.

TRIBUTE TO JACK HALPERN

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. Jack Halpern, a highly accomplished Jewish American who will be honored on January 27, 2005, at the Annual Northeast Regional Tribute of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Jack, a resident of Manhattan, lives with his wife Lieba and their two wonderful children. He is a managing member of Atlantic Realty, which develops residential and commercial real estate in New Jersey, New York and Israel.

In addition to his duties with Atlantic Realty, Jack somehow finds the time to work as an activist. Following in the footsteps of his father Sam, who founded the family business after surviving the Holocaust, Jack has become an active supporter of numerous Jewish causes. As a member of AIPAC's National Executive Committee, Jack has been a leader in strengthening ties between the U.S. and Israel for many years.

In 2002, Jack founded the Energy Independence Task Force at the American Jewish Congress, where he currently serves on the Governing Council and Executive Committee. This important task force continues to work for fuel efficiency standards in trucks and SUVs. In addition they have met with many key Congressional and Administration officials in order to deliver the message that a long-term national energy policy focusing on reducing the United States' dependency on Middle East oil is a national security imperative.

Jack's long-time associations also include State of Israel Bonds, the Jewish Community Center of Manhattan, the Holocaust Resource Foundation, the Technion Institute and the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel.

Mr. Speaker, Jack Halpern is a model American citizen worthy of the award which will be bestowed upon him. His efforts have not only helped to strengthen the two countries he cares most deeply for (America and Israel) but have also helped to strengthen their special relationship.

For his continued service on AIPAC's Executive Committee and his work on improving U.S.-Israeli relations, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Mr. Jack Halpern.

INTRODUCING THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION ACT

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to introduce the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Act. Better known as NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration was created by Executive Order in 1970. It is the nation's lead civilian agency for oceans and atmosphere, yet Congress has never passed an overarching organic act describing the mission and functions of the agency. Instead, over the past 34 years Congress has defined the mission of the agency in a piecemeal manner with legislation focused on specific issues. The bill I am introducing today, which passed the Environment, Technology and Standards Subcommittee in the 108th Congress, is a first step toward Congressional passage of comprehensive legislation for NOAA.

Last year, the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy released its long awaited report with recommendations for a coordinated national ocean policy. One of its key recommendations is that Congress should pass an organic act for NOAA. In his response to the Ocean Commission report, President Bush supported this recommendation. The time is right for Congress to consider, and pass, this organic act for NOAA.

My bill establishes the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) within the Department of Commerce. It defines the mission of NOAA as "to understand and predict changes in the Earth's oceans and atmosphere and the effects of such changes on the land environment, to conserve and manage coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes ecosystems, and to educate the public about these topics." The recent Indian Ocean tsunami is just the latest evidence of the need for NOAA's research and services. My bill maintains the current leadership structure at NOAA, but adds a Deputy Assistant Secretary for Science and Technology to serve as the point person for the agency to coordinate the research and science activities of NOAA across the agency.

This bill also describes the functions of NOAA, which are divided into three broad groups to improve cooperation among NOAA's programs, as recommended by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. First is the National Weather Service, which provides weather, water and climate forecasts and warnings to the nation. The second group is operations and services, which includes all of NOAA's satellites services and its mapping and charting services. The third category of functions is research and education.

The bill focuses on pieces of NOAA under Science Committee jurisdiction, and does not currently include any references to NOAA's fisheries or resource management, which are under the jurisdiction of the Resources Committee here in the House. I am hopeful that we can work with other committees in the House and our colleagues in the Senate to pass a truly comprehensive organic act for NOAA, but for now we must start with this legislation.

I believe it is critical for NOAA's mission to be clearly defined so it can better fulfill its role in observing, managing, and protecting our nation's coastal, ocean and Great Lakes resources. I look forward to working with my colleagues in a bipartisan fashion to pass this bill into law this year. This will not be an easy task, but it is so important to our environment, our economy, and our children's and grandchildren's future, that we must succeed.

INTRODUCING THE CONYERS-SHERMAN CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleague, Congressman JOHN CONYERS, the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, in introducing the Conyers-Sherman Presidential Eligibility Constitutional Amendment. This Amendment will allow any foreign-born person who has been a United States citizen for 20 years or longer to qualify to run for President of the United States. Once enacted and ratified, this amendment will allow millions of well qualified Americans to aspire to our nation's highest office.

This bill is not about the election prospects of any one man or woman. It is about the dreams of all Americans. Every year I visit high schools in the San Fernando Valley. I tell those students that America is a great country, a land of opportunity. I want to tell them that it is also a country where any child can grow up to be President of the United States. Unfortunately, for many high school students in my district, the fact that they were born in another country is a complete and unequivocal bar to the Presidency.

All American children regardless of where they are born should have all the rights and responsibilities of native born Americans. All American children should be able to aspire to rise as far as their talent, energy and ability allow them, including our nation's highest office. There is no good reason to exclude Americans who will grow up to attend our colleges and universities, who will protect America in our armed forces, or who will work hard and pay their taxes, from our nation's highest office. When this Constitutional Amendment is passed and ratified each of them will have that opportunity.

The exact reasons for including the natural born citizen language in the Constitution are lost to history. The meticulous record of the Constitutional Convention, kept by James Madison, hardly gives it a mention. Regardless of that lost reasoning, America is now a nation of immigrants. We are a nation that should encourage those who come here to aspire to their highest goals and loftiest dreams. Mr. Speaker, the Constitutional Amendment Mr. CONYERS and I introduce today will make some of those dreams a possible reality for the first time in our history.