

The Lithuanian American Council will celebrate Lithuanian independence, which occurred in 1918 as the Lithuanians were freed from the Soviet Union. They will mark this joyous occasion on Sunday, February 19, 1995, at St. Casimir's Church in Gary, IN. Following tradition, the anniversary ceremony will begin with a church service starting at 11:30 a.m. After the church service, the Lithuanian American Council will hold a flag raising ceremony outside of St. Casimir to honor those Lithuanians who pledged their allegiance to independence for their people. The event will then conclude with a dinner in the church hall.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Lithuanian American Council of Lake County's officers, including: Vincent J. Gumulauskis, who has been president for 3 years; Pete D. Auksel and Casimir Balt, both of whom are vice presidents; Birute Vilutis, secretary; and Walter Ruzga, treasurer. Allow me to also commend the board of directors, whose members include Rev. Ignatius Urbonas, Aleksas Degutis, Alex Navardauskas, Dan Pauls, Frank Petrites, Brone Tampuskas, and Izidorius Tavaras. Finally, I would like to commend every member of the Lithuanian American Council for the loyalty and enthusiasm they have displayed toward their ethnicity.

The Lithuanian American Council of Lake County, IN is a branch of the Lithuanian American Council. It was founded in 1940 and originated in large cities such as Boston, Chicago, and New York. The organization in Lake County initially was headquartered at St. Francis in East Chicago, IN, until recently when the building was demolished. The organization was then moved to St. Casimir where its home is today.

It is my sincere hope that 1995 will bring renewed prosperity for all members of the Lithuanian community and their families. May this 77th anniversary celebration prove to be a most joyous occasion.

JESSIE WILLIAMS PRIDDLE

**HON. BILL EMERSON**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 15, 1995*

Mr. EMERSON. Mr. Speaker, there are so many who serve on Capitol Hill who contribute to the fabric of what this place is, but who never receive a great deal of public attention or acclaim.

For 18 years Jessie Williams Priddle, remembered by most of us as "Miss Williams," taught English in the Page School at the Library of Congress. Several of us serving here now, who had the privilege of having been pages in the House in our youth, have fond memories of Miss Williams as one who left a positive, good, and enduring mark on our lives.

She was a terrific teacher and had a sparkly personality, and was one of those teachers you never forget because she made it all so interesting.

Miss Williams passed away several days ago. She had a long and fruitful life and touched so well and favorably so many people, especially her students.

Her nephew, Paul Hays, the House Reading Clerk, has shared with me a brief biography of Miss Williams, which I in turn wish to share for

the benefit of her former students and all who knew her.

JESSIE WILLIAMS PRIDDLE

Jessie Lutetia Williams Priddle, 90, a former teacher at the Capitol Page School, died February 4 of heart and lung ailments at an Alexandria nursing home. Born in Hutchinson, KS, she attended public schools there, graduated from Southwestern College in Winfield, KS, and earned a masters degree in education from Columbia University.

She taught in elementary and secondary schools in Kansas and New York, and worked for the United Nations Works and Relief Agency [UNWRA] following the Second World War.

She moved to Washington in 1948, and with the exception of 1 year, taught English at the Page School in the Library of Congress until her retirement in 1967. Among her many students over the years were BILL EMERSON, PAUL KANJORSKI, JIM KOLBE, and TOM DAVIS among sitting Members, as well as former Members Bob Bauman and Doug Bosco, and the former Clerk of the House, Donn Anderson. She was granted a Fulbright fellowship for the 1955-56 school year to teach English as a foreign language in the southern Netherlands towns of Goes and Middelburg.

During her teaching years in Washington she was an active member of the National Presbyterian Church, singing regularly in its choir, and played violin with the Washington Civic Orchestra.

After her retirement from the Page School, she donated one semester of service as a visiting professor of English at her alma mater, Southwestern College. At the end of the semester the college hired her for the balance of the school year.

Returning to Washington in 1968, she became active in the D.C. League of Republican Women. She recalled her election to the league's board as having been the result of the organization's desire for some "younger" officers. She also volunteered in the local Daughters of the American Revolution chapter's program of teaching English to the predominantly Spanish-speaking foreign nurses in several local hospitals.

In 1973, she married Horley Priddle, a high school classmate with whom she had renewed her acquaintance at their class 50th reunion the previous summer. It was her first marriage. They traveled together widely, including an around-the-world tour shortly after their marriage.

Mr. Priddle died last July. She is survived by several nieces and nephews, including Paul Hays, the House Reading Clerk. Private services were held on February 11 in Clarksville, TN.

TRIBUTE TO BRYAN WITTMAN

**HON. JACK QUINN**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 15, 1995*

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Mr. Bryan Wittman of Hamburg, NY.

It gives me great joy to share with everyone in the Congress the outstanding achievements of one of my constituents. Bryan is the son of Mrs. Norma Wittman of North Hampton Brook Drive.

Bryan, a native of my hometown of Hamburg, NY, attended St. Peter and Paul Grade School and St. Francis High School. He graduated from Ashland University with a bachelor of arts degree in radio and television.

Bryan began his career in 1976 for the Erie County Fair and as entertainment director of the Darien Lake Theme Park in New York. He then moved on to become promotions director for the Ice Capades.

In 1985 Bryan began his adventure with Disney. While serving as manager of advertising and promotions for Marriott's Great America Theme Park in Chicago, IL, Wittman was recruited to Disney World in Orlando, FL, as senior promotions representative. In 1988 he was relocated to Disneyland in Anaheim, CA, where he became manager of promotions.

Continuing in his career advancement in 1991, Bryan became director of marketing for Disney.

As of February 2, 1995, he has been promoted to vice president for promotions, publicity, and special events.

Bryan's energy and imagination have been praised by Disney executives as his hard work and abundant successes are a testament to his strong character.

Speaking as a President of western New York, and as a Member of Congress, I applaud the outstanding accomplishments of Bryan Wittman.

THE MISSING SERVICE  
PERSONNEL ACT OF 1995, H.R. 945

**HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 15, 1995*

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to introduce the Missing Service Personnel Act of 1995, an important bill for those who care deeply about the POW/MIA issue.

This legislation will make important changes to sections 555 and 556 of the Missing Service Personnel Act of 1942 by reforming the Department of Defense's process for determining whether any member of the Armed Forces should be listed as missing in action. In so doing this bill will unveil the curtain of secrecy which currently surrounds any DOD decision concerning a person's status as missing in action.

Mr. Speaker, legislation pertaining to those missing in action have not changed over the past 50 years. As all of us who care dearly about this important issue know, the Department of Defense and the U.S. Government have been continually criticized for their handling of the POW/MIA issue since the Vietnam war. Accordingly, the time has come to make appropriate corrections in how the Government determines who in the Armed Forces should be classified as missing in action.

The bill I am introducing today will, in turn, ensure fairness to all concerned by involving family members, requiring legal representation, and by permitting Federal court review of all determinations. These significant changes will ensure that no soldier or sailor, currently listed as missing in action, will be declared dead without a full and fair review of all available evidence and until all possible considerations have been examined.

Accordingly, I urge my colleagues who share their concern with the POW/MIA issue to support this important and fair legislation. This legislation is supported by the American

Legion, by the Vietnam Veterans of America, the National Alliance of Families, and other POW/MIA organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I am submitting supporting letters from these organizations to be printed in the RECORD following by statement.

THE AMERICAN LEGION,

Washington, DC, February 1, 1995.

Hon. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN,  
U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE GILMAN: The American Legion is extremely appreciative of your past efforts and actions to obtain the fullest possible accounting of American prisoners of war and those missing in action from previous conflicts and the Cold War. We are pleased to hear that you are again leading an effort to introduce legislation that will go even further toward addressing the plight of the missing and the concerns of their families.

The American Legion has supported the POW/MIA issue as a matter of the highest priority for many years. Your sponsorship of such a bill is significant for all who served in the past, those who now serve and those who will serve in the future. It also comes at a time when concern for our missing is becoming obscured by potentially lucrative business contacts with former adversaries. We must not let those who are missing be forgotten.

We recognize that the families of the missing and other veterans organizations have pertinent and valid views that may be considered for incorporation into any legislation dealing with the missing. It is also the opinion of the Legion that it is most imperative a bill be introduced as soon as possible on this issue.

The American Legion believes such legislation will provide a more equitable basis for making status determinations for all who are missing, and those who may be captured or otherwise become missing in future military operations.

Sincerely,

JOHN F. SOMMER, JR.,  
Executive Director.

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC.,  
Washington, DC, February 6, 1995.

Hon. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN,  
House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE GILMAN: Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) salutes you for introducing "the Missing Service Personnel Act of 1995." VVA's Board of Directors voted unanimously to put the full force of our organization in support of this legislation.

No group of veterans knows more about how divisive and bitter the unsettled questions about the fate of missing-in-action military personnel can be. Had such a law been in place during the Vietnam War, many of the over 2,200 unresolved POW/MIA cases would have been resolved long ago, and their families allowed a sense of closure and dignity for the loss of their loved ones.

Because the Missing Service Personnel Act of 1995 would spell out in law a procedure for handling the very delicate question of how and when a member of the Armed Forces considered missing in action can be declared legally dead, we believe this legislation will correct mistakes realized in past wars. Although the new procedure could take a year, it is a relatively short time compared to the decades of uncertainty MIA families have experienced in the past. We believe the process is not excessively complex, and does not create undue burdens upon the Department of Defense. Most importantly, families would know what to expect and would be spared years of turmoil and pain.

Quick action on the Missing Service Personnel Act of 1995 will assure that the men and women of our nation's Armed Forces will not be subjected to the mistakes of the past. Vietnam Veterans of America will lobby actively in support of this bill, and we appreciate your introducing it.

Sincerely,

JAMES L. BRAZEE, JR.,  
President.

N.Y. STATE POW/MIA  
ACTION GROUP,  
Utica, NY, January 20, 1995.

Re letter of support for your introduction of the Missing Service Personnel Act of 1995.

Hon. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN,  
Chairman, International Relations, Wash-  
ington, DC.

Representative SUSAN MOLINARI,  
Representative LEE HAMILTON,  
Representative KAREN THURMAN.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVES GILMAN; MOLINARI; HAMILTON; and THURMAN: On behalf of the members and supporters of the N.Y. State POW/MIA Action Group, I extend to you all our profound gratitude for your bipartisan sponsorship and cosponsorship, of the Missing Service Personnel Act of 1995.

This Act is both long overdue, and well crafted. The MIA and their families deserve the peace of mind, and respect, that the Act provides.

Our support for this legislation is long-standing and we look forward to the entire New York State delegation's support, if not cosponsorship, for the Act.

We stand ready to assist you in your efforts on behalf of the Act, and hope and expect swift passage of this most important legislation. Thank you again.

MR. JOSEPH AMEROSA,  
President.

AMERICAN DEFENSE INSTITUTE,  
January 19, 1995.

Hon. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN,  
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN GILMAN: The Missing Service Personnel Act of 1995 is the most important piece of legislation written to comprehensively protect service members from wars past and future. Passage of this legislation, which you, Senator Dole, and Senator Lautenberg are sponsoring in the House and the Senate, will protect the service member's legal status from arbitrarily being changed from POW to MIA to "presumptive finding of death." This measure will also permit families to be better informed and give them authority to challenge adverse decisions in court.

Congressman, I want to thank you for introducing this bill, which is near and dear to my heart. I have personally seen many friends from years past "written off" by our government, despite their families' objections. You have performed a valuable service to the families of our missing men and to those members of the armed forces who are or will be missing in action. This bill has my full support.

Sincerely,

EUGENE "RED" MCDANIEL,  
CAPT, USN (Ret).

VIETNOW,  
Rockford, IL, December 23, 1994.

Hon. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN,  
Rayburn House Office Building, Washington,  
DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN GILMAN: We, as Veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States of America, realize the importance and the immediate need for "The Missing Service Personnel Act," which is long over due.

The practice of changing the classification of those listed as Prisoner of War or Missing In Action to Killed In Action based on the presumption of death, due solely to the passage of time, is an outrage! In the proposed "Missing Service Personnel Act," "conclusive proof of death" is required to be established and based upon evidence that death is the only plausible explanation for the absence of the missing person.

Important provisions of this legislation, are the inclusion of family members in the review process, their access to information gained during the investigation and a set time frame for the review process.

Passage of the "Missing Service Personnel Act" is vital and will restore a sense of confidence not only to those effected by previous wars, but to those who may become Prisoner Of War or listed as Missing In Action as a result of future wars.

Congressman Gilman, we thank you for your support and would encourage you to re-introduce the "Missing Service Personnel Act" as one of the first items to be introduced before the House Of Representatives of the 104th Congress.

Sincerely,  
RICH TEAGUE,  
ViewNow National POW/MIA Chairman.

MARINE CORPS LEAGUE,  
January 20, 1995.

Hon. BENJAMIN GILMAN,  
International Relations, Rayburn HOB, Wash-  
ington, DC.

Representative SUSAN MOLINARI,  
Representative LEE HAMILTON,  
Representative KAREN THURMAN.

Re: Support for the Missing Service Personnel Act of 1995

DEAR MEMBERS GILMAN, MOLINARI, HAMILTON, and THURMAN: The Marines and Auxiliary of the Department of New York, want to make clear our deep and widespread thanks to you all for your introduction of the Act of 1995. Individually, you are to be congratulated for your vision and courage to address this element of the POW/MIA issue.

We are aware of all the work put into developing the language of this bill and salute you for an excellent piece of legislation. This Act of 1995, must pass as introduced. We also recognize the work by staff and veteran and POW/MIA organizations.

On behalf of those who have worn the uniform of the United States, those who wear it today, and those who will wear it in the future, and their families, may I express my sincere gratitude for the introduction of the Act of 1995, and your efforts to secure passage. We stand ready to assist you in this effort.

Yours truly,  
JOSEPH WISE,  
Commandant.

TASK FORCE OMEGA INC.,  
Glendale, AZ, January 10, 1995.

Hon. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN,  
Rayburn House Office Building, Washington,  
DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN GILMAN: The purpose of this letter is to thank you for agreeing to re-introduce The Missing Service Personnel Act in the House of Representatives and to encourage you, in the strongest possible terms, to introduce the bill early this legislative year.

I am the father of an Air Force pilot, Lt. Col. Earl P. Hopper, Jr. who became Missing in Action in North Vietnam on 10 January 1968—27 years ago this day. Statements of pilots who were escorting him and his crippled aircraft out of North Vietnam towards Laos verify that he safely ejected from his aircraft and was alive when he reached the

ground. There is other information to support the fact that my son survived his incident and was captured to become a Prisoner of War. In fact, a three-man Commission of the Department of Justice reviewed my son's case in 1982 and ruled that he was captured and was a Prisoner of War based upon information provided by it by the United States Air Force and other Government agencies.

I gave 30 years of my life to my country in the United States Army. I am a veteran of World War II, Korea and Vietnam. Until I became involved actively in the POW-MIA issue upon my retirement in November 1969, I had never witnessed the military services nor the United States Government treat its service men and women, and their families, in such a blatant—and openly perfidious—manner as they have the Prisoners of War and Missing in Action of the Vietnam War.

In February 1980 I represented my son before a Status Review Hearing Board at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. In order to represent my son at this hearing, I had to pay for the travel, meals and lodging for my civilian attorney, my wife and myself. Across the table I faced three Air Force Colonels, each of whom had set on a minimum of twelve previous Status Review Boards. In each of the previous Status Review Board hearings in which these Colonels participated, each of them voted in favor of changing the man's status from a living category of Prisoner of War or Missing in Action to a deceased category of Killed in Action. Interestingly, in every status review case, none of the Colonels ever voted to keep the man in a POW-MIA status. In each of the hearings, including my son's, there was never any presentation of "proof of death" by the Air Force.

In my son's case, it is a matter of record that classified documents/information were provided to the three Board members, but neither I nor my attorney were allowed to see them. This was also true at those Status Review Board hearings held by the other branches of the service.

The ruse of the military services to have Status Review Board hearings was simply to meet the minimal requirements set down by the First Federal District Court of New York in 1975 when it ruled that the old Missing Persons Act of 1942 was unconstitutional—both on its face and in the manner in which it was being implemented by the military services. The burden to prove a man is alive rested upon the shoulders of the primary next of kin of the POW-MIA. There is no requirement, under the old act, to force the military service to prove the individual is dead before his status is changed to Killed in Action. This action constitutes a procedure wherein an individual is legally dead but could very well be physically alive—a major violation of the individual Prisoner of War or Missing Person's civil rights.

Further, the old law does not provide the next of kin the right to appeal an adverse ruling by the military services. This violates the principle used in the civilian justice system, therefore the 1942 Act is prejudiced against the POW-MIAs (a living category) and their next of kin.

The manner in which the military services have administered the Missing Persons Act of 1942, and the Act itself, is arbitrary, capricious and very biased against the missing Serviceman. In each case, without exception, the Status Review Boards have recommended a change of status for each and every one of the POWs and MIAs from the Vietnam War. (Note: One man was maintained in a POW status by the direction of the Secretary of the Air Force only for "symbolic" purposes after the review board recommended a change in his status.) These decisions were made with complete disregard

of the great volume of intelligence available to—and presented to—the Review Boards before and during these individual hearings.

Your bill, The Missing Service Personnel Act, allows all of the direct next of kin, wives, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters the rightful access to government information and intelligence which it receives on their respective loved one. This is only correct and logical since each of the principal relatives has the right to know and to receive information on their family member as well as the privilege—and responsibility—to seek that knowledge.

The bill also brings into line the protection of the civil rights of a military person equal to that provided to civilian citizens of the United States. The Missing Persons Act of 1942 does not provide that protection, therefore it is unconstitutional and must be changed.

I can safely say that this bill, and its counterpart in the United States Senate, would be enthusiastically supported by a vast majority of the POW-MIA families. I also can safely state that a large majority of the veterans of this country would support these Bills.

Rescinding the old law and the passage of a new one by Congress would not only right a wrong which has hovered over the heads of military personnel since 1942, but would also provide an assurance that the rights of a serviceman or woman would be equal to that granted to the civilian citizens of the United States.

In view of the above, Congressman Gilman, again I strongly urge you to re-introduce The Missing Service Personnel Act in the House of Representatives.

Respectfully,

EARL P. HOPPER, Sr.,  
Colonel, United States Army, Retired.

LIVE POW LOBBY OF AMERICA,  
Stewartstown, PA, December 21, 1994.  
Re the Missing Service Personnel Act.

Representative BEN GILMAN (NY),  
Longworth HOB, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. GILMAN, I understand that you are prepared to introduce in 1995, The Missing Service Personnel Act. My organization completely and 100% supports and induces The Missing Service Personnel Act, as we are a membership advocacy group, for a full accounting of the POWs, who were captured alive, but not released or accounted-for. Our 3,000 members, all, have asked me to forward this letter request to your help in changing the way in which we declare dead the once captured prisoner cases.

The 83 U.S. Senators signed a letter to the Postmaster General requesting that he have a POW/MIA POSTAGE STAMP approved and issued by May 1995—Memorial day. And, several veterans groups, MIA family groups and POW/MIA advocacy groups have asked that a POW/MIA POSTAGE STAMP be issued.

The current Administration and the Department of Defense have made the accounting for the POW/MIA's a matter of the Highest National Priority and are committed to all efforts to show the American voters—that not all of the Americans who went missing, are yet accounted-for. The Department of Defense employs over 250 people, who work full time on trying to find missing Americans, lost in wars. The Russians and Americans have set up a task force that is working to find missing Americans, who after capture, ended up in the old Soviet Union. There are about 2,200 from Vietnam, 8,100 from Korea and 76,000 from WWII who are still missing—all who have been declared dead under an old out dated process. To honor the price POWs paid for freedom and their country, a more effective way of changing their

status needs to be approved. Please feel free to share the Live POW Lobby of America's views with other Congressmen and Senators, so that they might take our views into consideration in support of this bill.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL VAN ATTA,  
Chairman.

ALLENTOWN, PA,  
February 2, 1995.

Hon. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN,  
U.S. House of Representatives, Rayburn House  
Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE GILMAN: Thank you for your support of the Missing Service Personnel Act of 1995. I believe that this important legislation will greatly improve the availability of information to the families of our M.I.A.'s both in the past and in the future.

We, as a government, owe to our armed forces the knowledge that any and all information on an M.I.A. will be communicated to that person's family. I urge you to please bring this bill to the House floor for a vote as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

DAVID E. BEGLEY,  
U.S.M.C., Bien Hoa V.N. 1972.

GEOFFREY BRUEN,  
Easton, PA, February 1, 1995.

Hon. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN,  
U.S. House of Representatives, Rayburn House  
Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE GILMAN: It is with great relief and pleasure that I write this short letter to you sir.

I want to thank you for being a champion to our cause and supporting the "Missing Service Personnel Act of 1995". Without you and your help to introduce this important bill, it might have gone by the wayside.

As a member of a Viet Nam Veterans Organization in Pennsylvania, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks and gratitude on behalf of all of us.

God bless you.

Sincerely yours,

GEOFFREY BRUEN.

TASK FORCE OMEGA OF COLORADO,  
Colorado Springs, CO, January 31, 1995.

Hon. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN,  
Chairman, International Relations, Rayburn  
House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN GILMAN: The membership of Task Force Omega of Colorado is made up of veterans, family members of those still listed as missing in action during the Vietnam War, and concerned citizens. Many of the members live in the Colorado Springs area, home of the U.S. Air Force Academy, Ft. Carson Army Base, Peterson Air Force Base and U.S. Space Command and the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD).

Your efforts introducing the "Missing Service Personnel Act" to the 104th Congress are most appreciated by all of us here. We are proud of our men and women who currently serve in the military and want to see their rights protected, if ever any of them goes missing in defense of our Country.

The provisions of this piece of legislation will guarantee them their individual rights as members of this Nation's military force and as citizens of the United States of America. We applaud your diligence and express our gratitude for the work accomplished by you and your staff on this critical bill.

Thank you, congressman Gilman.

Very truly yours,

DAWN D. LINDSEY,  
Chairman.