

issued by the Congressional-Executive Commission on Human and Labor Rights created in this legislation. If China's behavior does not improve and if they do not abide by the agreements they have signed, I am sure that Congress will respond accordingly. I certainly intend to.

As many of my colleagues may know, both my wife and I grew up in union households. Her father was a member of the United Auto Workers. And my father was a UAW member as well. That is not an uncommon situation in a state like Michigan, as you can well imagine, where a significant percentage of the population is employed either by one of the automakers or one of the various supplier companies. But like most Michiganders who grew up in a union household or are currently living in one I know what it's like to see a father or mother come home celebrating a raise or some benefits they had secured in a recently ratified contract. And I also know the pain and stress that goes with layoffs or plant closings, things my state has had all too much experience with in the not too distant past.

Many current union workers and their families have come up to me in the past year and said they were scared about what will happen if we pass PNTR and allow China into the WTO. They fear that the Chinese will not live up to the commitments they have made with respect to eliminating trade barriers or that American companies might choose to move their operations overseas leaving workers here unemployed and without any available jobs or careers into which to move. Those are very real fears. And I take those concerns very seriously and to heart.

China will open its markets in the very near future. The question is: Will U.S. firms be among those competing for these new markets, competing for a portion of the one billion new consumers that are going to be available in China? Or are we going to cede those new opportunities to our competitors in Europe, Asia, and South America? Likewise, the question is not whether U.S. companies will eventually do business in China. The question is whether it will be on our terms or on China's. Will companies be forced to move over to China in order to avoid high tariffs, quotas on U.S. produced goods, or other restrictions which make it difficult for them to do business there? Or will we attempt to eliminate such barriers to market access now through negotiation, so that U.S. companies can continue to operate here in the States, employing U.S. workers and paying U.S. Taxes, and still export goods and services to China in a competitive environment with our trading competitors?

I think when most workers consider the options we face, they will agree that the best course for our nation is to join with the other nations of the world in accepting China into the WTO and attempting to work with the pro-

cedures available there to open their markets further and ensure they live up to the commitments they have already made.

That is the conclusion to which this Senator has come. That is why I voted for permanent normal trade relations for the Peoples' Republic of China. That is why I support China's accession to the WTO.

ARMED FORCES CONCURRENT RETIREMENT AND DISABILITY PROVISION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as the defense authorization conference is meeting, I rise today to urge my colleagues to stand behind the Senate version of the bill with respect to Section 666 of H.R. 4205. This provision permits retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service connected disability to receive military retired pay concurrently with veterans' disability compensation.

Veterans from Nevada and all over the country care about this legislation.

Career military retired veterans are the only group of federal retirees who are required to waive their retirement pay in order to receive VA disability. Simply put, the law discriminates against career military men and women. All other federal employees receive both their civil service retirement and VA disability with no offset.

This inequity is absurd. How do we explain this inequity to these men and women who scarified their own safety to protect this great nation? How do we explain this inequity to Edward Lynk from Virginia who answered the call of duty to defend our nation? Mr. Lynk served for over 30 years in the Marine Corps and participated in three wars, where he was severely injured during combat in two of them.

Or George Blahun from Connecticut who entered the military in 1940 to serve his country because of the impending war. He served over 35 years during World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. He is 100% disabled because of injuries incurred while performing military service. He asks that Congress stop giving veterans the "arbitrary bureaucratic rhetorical nonsense" and truly support this legislation. We must demonstrate to these veterans that we are thankful for their dedicated service. As such, we must fight for the amendment in the Senate version of the national defense authorization bill for FY 2001.

This is an absolute injustice to our career military retired veterans. Federal employees, for example a member of Congress or a staffer here on Capital Hill or an employee from the Department of Engery, are not penalized if they receive disability benefits. While career military men and women that have incurred injuries while in the line of duty are prohibited from doing so because of an archaic, out-dated 109-year-old law.

The amendment in the Senate bill represents an honest attempt to cor-

rect this inequity that has existed for far too long. Allowing disabled veterans to receive military retired pay and veterans disability compensation concurrently will restore fairness to the entire Federal retirement policy.

It is unfair for our veterans not to receive both of these payments concurrently. We must ensure that our veterans who are facing serious disabilities as a result of injuries sustained during their service do not have to choose between retirement pay and losing a portion of their disability benefits.

We have an opportunity to show our gratitude to these remarkable 437,000 disabled military men and women who have scarified so much for this great country of ours.

We are currently losing over one thousand WWII veterans each day. Every day we delay acting on this inequity means that we have denied fundamental fairness to thousands of men and women.

The Senate passed this provision by unanimous consent and the House companion bill, H.R. 303 from Congressman BILIRAKIS has 314 cosponsors. Our veterans have earned this and now it is our chance to honor their service to our nation. Freedom isn't free—and this is a small cost to the Federal government given the immeasurable sacrifices made by these dedicated Americans.

SPACE TRANSPORTATION

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I rise today with two purposes in mind. The first is to compliment the men and women who labor on behalf of the nation at the George C. Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama on the occasion of Marshall's 40th Anniversary. My second purpose is to share some thoughts on the importance of Space Transportation in light of the VA/HUD Appropriations Bill that will come before this body in the not too distant future. These two issues are inextricably linked in that Marshall Space Flight Center is the world leader in space transportation yet ever dependent on the funding that the VA/ HUD appropriators provide. For that reason, I compliment Senator KIT BOND, and his superlative staff in advance of the bill being debated for all they continue to do on behalf of NASA and the nation. Their foresight will ultimately make the difference as we continue to move forward as a nation of explorers.

In September, 1960 President Dwight Eisenhower dedicated the Marshall Space Flight Center which soon began making history under the mentorship and direction of Dr. Wernher von Braun. From the Mercury-Redstone vehicle that placed America's first astronaut, Alan B. Shepard, into sub-orbital space in 1961, to the mammoth Saturn V rocket that launched humans to the moon in 1969, Marshall and its industry partners have successfully engineered