

Mr. Speaker, the final Sequoia Award recipient this year is Electronic Arts, a firm that is recognized for its role as a good corporate citizen. Generous contributions from Electronic Arts have helped strengthen communities in Redwood City and throughout the Bay Area. In just this past year, Electronic Arts provided grants and charitable donations to Redwood City totaling more than \$70,000. Among the organizations benefitting from Electronic Arts' generosity were The Day Top Family Association (a residential therapeutic community for drug-addicted teens), Sequoia YMCA, the Redwood City Drug Abuse Resistance Education, the Redwood Family House, Sandpiper Elementary School and the Heron Court Neighborhood Network in Redwood Shores. Electronic Arts is also a proud sponsor of the Sequoia Hospital Foundation donating both money as well as video and computer games to the Hospital.

The good works of Electronic Arts are supported by the hardworking employees. Several of Electronic Arts' executives serve on volunteer boards for the Sequoia YMCA, Community Gatepath, Mid Peninsula Boys and Girls Club, Day Top Family Association and the Chamber of Commerce, to name a few. Electronic Arts also assists the Special Olympics by providing coaches, timekeepers, and scorers for the various events, and host an annual fund raiser. Over 100 employees of the company and their families donated their time to help build a new fence and paint the Redwood House group home in Redwood City. The charitable acts of Electronic Arts are greatly appreciated throughout the Bay Area.

Mr. Speaker, these two outstanding individuals, and this corporation are recipients of the Sequoia Award because of their continued selfless efforts in our community. I hope that their actions can be a guide for all of us. I urge my colleagues to join me in paying in tribute to Emilia Cerrillo, Vincent Trusculli and Electronic Arts, recipients of Redwood City's 2002 Sequoia Award.

AFGHANISTAN TRIP REPORT—
JANUARY 2002

HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 6, 2002

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I recently returned from a visit to Afghanistan with Congressman FRANK WOLF and Congressman TONY HALL. We were greeted with warm, friendly smiles wherever we went, from meetings with Interim Administration officials to hospitals, schools and orphanages. There is a hope in Afghanistan that the country will be different and new opportunities and life will emerge out of the terrible suffering the Afghan people have endured.

The visit was a highlight, but it was also sobering. The best children's hospital in the nation, the Indira Ghandi Pediatric Hospital, lacked basic medicines to treat the children, two children and their mothers shared each bed, one of three children in the malnutrition ward died each night, there is a lack of basic medical equipment, and no hospital employees have been paid for six months. Yet, the doctors and nurses worked valiantly to save the lives of the children in their care.

We visited a girls school, the Dorkhanai High School, that had re-opened one week earlier after being shut down for over five years. The concrete building was full of bullet holes from the Soviet invasion, one room had no roof, and no rooms had glass in the windows. The girls sat on blankets on the concrete or dirt floor as their were no desks or chairs. Yet, the students were so motivated to learn they raised the money from the meager earnings of their families to buy thick plastic to cover the window holes and pay for kerosene heat to keep out some of the biting cold in the schoolrooms. The girls greeted us with big smiles and chants of "Welcome, welcome." They were delighted to be back in school. Teachers need to be re-hired, 80 percent of the teachers were women, and the government needs assistance with providing basic supplies such as paper, pens, chalk and books.

The Allaiddin Center Orphanage has 900 children in their care—800 boys and 100 girls. The children, many obviously suffering from malnutrition and trauma from the violence of the war and the loss of their loved ones, gave us huge smiles and recited and sang for us. A delegation of firefighters from New York City had visited recently and donated enough food for the children for the next three months, but after that, it will again be a struggle to feed these young children. The firefighters also provided warm blankets for these children who, in the winter due to lack of adequate heating facilities, sleep three to a bed with three rooms of children crowding into one room—this way they can all be in rooms in which there are heat sources.

We also visited a women's bakery with the United Nations World Food Program Women's Bakery Project that has been vital in helping women, particularly widows, support and feed their families. During our visit, we learned that one woman had been a doctor at the hospital, but she left to work at the bakery so that she could earn money to actually support her family.

There is an almost overwhelming humanitarian crisis that continues today. Food, medicine and shelter are lacking for much of the country's population. Yet, there is hope—hope that the American people will cement their friendship with the Afghan people by remaining engaged in their country through various avenues. Government aid to Afghanistan is vital, but people to people diplomacy, sister relationships between schools and hospitals in the U.S. partnering with schools and hospitals in Afghanistan, will be invaluable in helping to rebuild the nation and the historic friendship between our nations.

Our meetings with government officials also gave us hope. The Chairman of the Interim Administration, H.E. Hamid Karzai, is an impressive, capable, straightforward man who has the capacity to lead his country to establish a coalition that will last through the historic transitions the nation is experiencing. The Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) in June will mark a key transition for the people of Afghanistan and Hamid Karzai appears to be the one who can lead the people through that transition.

In response to our visit, there are several key points that must be addressed as our nation, government and people remain engaged with the people of Afghanistan:

1. The United States and the international community must continue to support Chairman

Karzai and the Interim Administration in Kabul as well as the Administration's clarifying to the various regions of Afghanistan that federal authority rests in Kabul. In addition, it is vital that the international community ensure that the Bonn Agreement is fully implemented and culminated in the Loya Jirga to be held on June 22, 2002. The Loya Jirga is the traditionally accepted Afghan method of solving problems and reaching consensus. We must continue our support for the new government, otherwise lack of stability could create the opportunity for another pre-September 11 environment of factional fighting, violence and upheaval, and a central power vacuum that would have severe implications for our national security.

2. Humanitarian Aid must continue. The UN World Food Programme and U.S. and other NGOs serving the people there are doing a great job. But the need remains high. The UN estimated that they would be feeding 8 million people within Afghanistan, not to mention refugees in neighboring countries, in the next three months to help avert an even greater crisis. Food aid is needed, as is medical and educational assistance. People to people diplomacy can be conducted through Chairman Karzai's office in Kabul.

3. U.S. assistance must be deliberate. Security is the primary need, mentioned in every meeting and site visit we had. Unless there is security, no amount of effort will ensure that the new government leaders can implement the very necessary changes in the country. Second, the economy must be developed, primarily through developing the agricultural sector of society.

Prior to the 1997 Soviet invasion, Afghanistan was self-sufficient and even exported agricultural products to neighboring countries. Studies show that before 1979, 80 percent of the society was in farming. The skills are there, but the opportunity needs to be developed. Unfortunately, the four-year drought in the country has drastically affected the output of farms and the ability of animal herders to keep animals alive. Irrigation systems and drought assistance need to be constructed and provided as soon as possible. In addition, development of the agricultural sector with alternative crops is a proactive avenue of fighting against narcotics production.

Third, development of the education system is one of the primary needs. An overwhelming portion of the population has been affected by lack of access to education. As reflected in our visit to the girls' school, the people have a desire to pursue an education as they view this as the primary avenue for bettering their lives. Studies from around the world support this: the development of educational systems changes nations. The Afghan people may lack the basic materials for education, but not the desire to learn.

Mr. Speaker, there are tremendous needs in Afghanistan, but there also is a tremendous amount of hope and an expectation that this time will be different. I look forward to visiting Afghanistan in the future and seeing these hopes and expectations lived out. As Chairman Hamid Karzai said during our meeting together, "Think of the help as help to our children. The families will do well if the children do well." As we look forward to the hopes and expectations of a new Afghanistan, I will be working with the generous people of Pennsylvania and others across this nation to extend a hand of friendship, partnership and care

through practical projects that will help build up the Afghan people.

MOTION TO GO TO CONFERENCE
ON H.R. 2215, THE 21ST CENTURY
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AP-
PROPRIATIONS AUTHORIZATION
ACT

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 6, 2002

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I commend Chairman SENSENBRENNER for defending this committee's jurisdiction and for his bipartisan-ship. Congress has not authorized the Department of Justice in more than 20 years, instead leaving the responsibility to the appropriators to decide what DOJ programs should be authorized and their maximum funding level; this conference will express the views of the authorizing committees about how they should operate.

For example, both the House and Senate bills recognize the importance of helping victims of violence and preserving congressional oversight of prosecutorial activities. They give the Violence Against Women Office more autonomy so that it may better serve female victims of violence. They also require the Department to report to Congress when they wiretap computers, agree to settlements, and make certain decisions about enforcing Federal statutes. These reports will make it easier for Congress to see how the laws we enact are being interpreted and how they should be changed, it at all.

In the end, I hope this conference is a precursor to more active congressional involvement in the running of the Justice Department.

RETIREMENT SECURITY FOR ALL
AMERICANS

HON. DAVID E. BONIOR

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 6, 2002

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, in the past several weeks, we've witnessed how rapidly a company can fall from prosperity into bankruptcy. Due to deceptive accounting and bad investments, Enron's road from being the country's seventh largest company to declaring bankruptcy was one of the fastest in history. In roughly a year, the value of Enron's stock—once considered a sure thing—plummeted from a high of \$90 to just pennies.

The collapse of Enron has reminded us of one thing we already knew: the stock market can be volatile and unpredictable. It should confirm for us another truth: we shouldn't put our retirement security solely in the hands of the market.

The most tragic part of the Enron story is the loss of retirement savings for thousands of

employees and retirees who had invested heavily in their employer's stock. These investors lost billions of dollars in pension plans that were, on average, comprised mostly of Enron stock. Some retirees saw all of their million-dollar life savings disappear in a matter of days—forcing them to sell their homes and other family assets to support themselves in their later years.

The Enron case has proven to us that what looks like a good investment—even what stockbrokers and analysts insist is a “strong buy”—can be a disaster in disguise. Current and former Enron employees had every reason to trust that their investment in their employer's stock was going to pay off. The company reported quarter after quarter of rising profits and just a month before the company reported a \$638 million quarterly loss, its chairman was reassuring investors that Enron's third quarter report was “looking great.” Investors had no way of knowing that their employer's stock was about to begin a rapid decline that would wipe out their life savings.

It is deceptions like this, and illusive accounting practices that shield a company's true value, that remind us of the dangers of privatizing Social Security. In the last few years, there has been a continued push for changes in the Social Security program that would allow people to invest a portion of their Social Security benefits in the stock market. Yet the collapse of promising companies like Enron—whose case proves that getting good investment advice is not always enough—has illustrated the dangers of this proposal.

Furthermore, not every economic downturn comes with warning signs. Events happen, like the attacks of September 11, that rock sectors of our economy overnight. Investing in the stock market is always a gamble—and it's a gamble that we shouldn't make with Social Security. For generations, Social Security has been the foundation of a secure retirement for every American—that's why it's called Social Security. We should not take any actions which will threaten the stability of this foundation.

The fall of Enron has also taught us that we do not have adequate laws on the books to protect the pensions of private employees. When Congress enacted our pension laws in 1974, 401(k) plans did not exist. Today, one-third of the workforce has a 401(k) plan. Often, these plans include a 50 percent employer match of a worker's investment, and some companies, like Enron, offer this match in the form of company stock. But Enron's workers didn't know the true financial health of their company, and many did not act to diversify their stock portfolios when they had the chance. It is partly because the 401(k) plans of Enron employees were invested heavily in Enron stock—and because a change in plan administration prohibited employers from selling this stock during crucial days when the price was falling—that so many workers lost their life savings.

This is more than unfair—it is unconscionable. We cannot sit back and do nothing while corporate executives run off with the life sav-

ings of their loyal employees. This week, I am introducing legislation to promote the diversification of 401(k) plans and help prevent another Enron disaster. My bill will require that companies and 401(k) plan administrators fully and accurately disclose the economic health of 401(k) investments. In addition, it will ensure that workers receive information about their options to diversify their investments. Employees should never be kept in the dark about the financial health of their retirement plans or any measures they could be taking to protect their investments. This is about more than getting a return on investments—it is about the right to retire financially secure.

In the days and months ahead, I will be fighting to ensure that the retirement security of working Americans is protected. If we've learned anything from Enron, it is that we cannot afford to entrust our retirement savings to the whims of the stock market. We know enough about what went wrong to protect Social Security from the dangers of privatization and reform our pension laws. This is not the first time companies have closed up and taken their workers' pension plans with them. This has happened with other corporations—and much smaller businesses.

We save all of our working lives with the expectation that we will be able to retire with peace and dignity. Enron employees—and many others—have been robbed of this promise. We can't let that happen again. We need to take a stand for these workers.

TANF REAUTHORIZATION

HON. MAXINE WATERS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 6, 2002

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, as we move toward reauthorization of TANF, I join my colleagues as a cosponsor of the TANF Reauthorization Act of 2001 (H.R. 3113). This bill recognizes the need to build upon what has worked from the 1996 law in order to further reduce poverty in our country.

We live in the land of opportunity, and those opportunities are founded in education. Higher levels of education mean higher earnings. Unfortunately, the current welfare law closes this door on TANF recipients by limiting their access to education. TANF rules not only limit access to education, but also fail to reward States which develop such innovative programs. Research in my State of California found that while only 12 percent of recipients in Los Angeles participate in education and training activities, these participants enjoyed earnings almost 40 percent higher than those of untrained recipients after 5 years.

Many TANF recipients want to invest in their own futures by pursuing higher education that will lead to higher paying jobs. This bill ensures that when people take the initiative to pursue their education, we will not be a road block to their success.