

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.