

Speaker, I am very pleased and encouraged that the budget resolution the House approved included the funding necessary for this bill. I especially want to thank the Budget Committee Chairman, Mr. NUSSLE, and the Ranking Member, Mr. SPRATT, for their understanding and support of these critical construction needs in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to cosponsor and favorably consider this measure to improve the hospitals and clinics in which veterans receive their health care. We have no greater responsibility than to ensure VA facilities are safe and up-to-date. This bill will aid us in that effort and I am proud to introduce it and urge its early passage.

NATIVE AMERICAN SACRED SITES

HON. NEIL ABERCROMBIE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 18, 2002

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, Native American sacred lands are under attack as never before in this country and we must work together and be willing to put teeth into legislation to protect these lands once and for all.

The Native Hawaiians in my district are very spiritual and instinctively honor that which we receive from nature. Indeed the goddess of fire, "Pele" working through the volcanoes created most of the great State of Hawaii. She is still very active and very honored.

There are specific areas in my state which are sacred to the Native Hawaiians. Although the areas do not have a large steeple or white-washed fence around them, they none-

theless deserve to be respected and protected.

We have begun remediation on the sacred island of Kahoolawe and protected it from further destruction as a military bombing range. But there is so much more to be done.

The problem is that we have a few laws that dance around the idea of protecting native sacred lands which use words like "consultation" or "accommodate" but are inadequate to simply stop potential desecration.

Occasionally, we are able to stop the mining of one sacred site, or the demolition of another. But the time has come for Congress to enact strong legislation to protect Native American sacred lands.

HONORING REVEREND ROBERT R. BLYTHE FOR HIS SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

HON. ERNIE FLETCHER

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 18, 2002

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to honor Reverend Robert R. Blythe for his life-long commitment to the educational and spiritual development of residents in Richmond, Kentucky and the surrounding communities.

Born and raised in Richmond, Reverend Blythe is a shining product of the local public school system. He was educated in the Richmond School System before earning his bachelor's degree in math education at Eastern Kentucky University, where he was elected President of the class of 1971.

Following graduation, he went home to the local school system to begin his distinguished

teaching career. He was named the Jaycees Outstanding Young Educator in 1974, and he received the Jaycees Outstanding Young Man of America Award in both 1978 and in 1985.

In 1981, Reverend Blythe joined the First Baptist Church in Richmond as their Pastor; he was a worthy shepherd to lead the local flock. In 1986, he received his Master of Divinity with Pastoral Emphasis from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Reverend Blythe taught at Madison High School in Richmond and at Madison Southern High School in Berea as a mathematics and French instructor. He continues to educate Kentucky's future as a mathematics instructor at his alma mater, Eastern Kentucky University.

Reverend Blythe has had a significant impact on the Richmond community and its residents. He has served on the Kentucky Human Rights Commission, the Youth Leadership Madison County Advisory Committee and the Governor's Health Care Data Commission. He continues to serve as the President of the Madison County Branch of the NAACP.

Mr. Speaker, Reverend Blythe represents what is right about America. He demonstrates a willingness to sacrifice his own needs to foster and improve the lives of others. I am convinced that the lives of Central Kentucky residents have been and will continue to be blessed by Reverend Blythe's presence. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Reverend Blythe for his twenty years of service at the First Baptist Church and for his life-long service to the residents of Richmond, Kentucky.