

to live in a country that honors its citizens for their spirit, their ideas, their individuality, and their courage.

I am so proud of Staff Sergeant Brian Ivers. Along with a grateful district, state, and nation, I applaud Brian Ivers for his courage and selfless dedication to duty. He has helped protect our democracy and kept our homeland safe by placing his life on the line.

TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY,
AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

SPEECH OF

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2003

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2989) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation and Treasury, and independent agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes:

Mr. KIND. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the Flake/McGovern amendment to lift the United States travel ban to Cuba.

Over the past 40 years, our policy of isolation toward Cuba has been an arguable failure. The removal of the totalitarian regime in Cuba has not occurred—even a decade after the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba's primary financial sponsor. Positive movements toward political change have not occurred in Cuba over the past 40 years—even as an overwhelming number of former communist regimes have collapsed and embraced democratic principles. These factors beg the question of whether our current policy toward Cuba is the best course of action for the people of the United States and the people of Cuba. At the very least, these factors demand that we reexamine our current policy.

With the free exchange of ideas and words profoundly important in American culture, it seems contradictory that our government would deny its people the opportunity to peaceably spread this concept without unnecessary restrictions. If the central mission of American Foreign policy is to protect Americans and our interests abroad, how does restricting the ability of Americans to travel to Cuba, a nation deemed by the U.S. Department of Defense as not posing a "military threat to the U.S. or to any other countries in the region," justifiable?

I am concerned that Cuban civilians suffer under government oppression, and it is time to confront the fact that denying direct American tourism to Cuba has resulted in no beneficial change. The island of Cuba is only 90 miles away from the United States and is surrounded by nations that embrace democracy. Positive steps to bring American ideas and words to Cuba are the right course of action, and I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY,
AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

SPEECH OF

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2003

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2989) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation and Treasury, and independent agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes:

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Chairman, today, as we consider the FY04 appropriations bill for the Departments of Transportation and Treasury, I find myself facing a familiar dilemma. So often during consideration of appropriations bills, I, as I'm sure many of my colleagues do as well, face difficult choices when voting on final passage. Because appropriations bills often include so many provisions, there are always positives and negatives. It is the nature of appropriations bills that we are forced to determine whether or not the good outweighs the bad.

As we prepare to vote on final passage of this bill, a similar assessment has to be made. I am deeply disappointed in many parts of this bill, most notably the less than minimal funding for Amtrak. However, because the bill also has very important funding for New Mexico and the Nation, I will be voting in favor of passage. I cannot let the perfect—which this bill clearly is not—be the enemy of the good—which this bill is.

Before I do cast my vote, I would like to voice my displeasure with both the funding provided for Amtrak, and also for the flawed process. Not surprisingly, the Rules Committee has once again stifled debate by not allowing Mr. OLVER to offer his amendment to increase Amtrak funding by \$500 million. The \$900 million included in the bill is insufficient to ensure the solvency of an essential element of our national transportation network. Should Amtrak be unable to continue its important service, not only would our transportation system be severely weakened, but many communities that heavily rely on Amtrak and its passengers for economic sustainability would be devastated. Many communities in New Mexico are heavily reliant on Amtrak for their economic well-being, and they would badly struggle without it.

However, as I said earlier, there are often many positives along with the negatives in an appropriations bill, and this bill is no exception. Overall, the FY04 Appropriations bill before us provides a 3 percent increase over last years bill, and provides 4 percent more funding than the administration proposed. In addition, the bill provides \$34.6 billion in total highway funding, 7 percent more than current funding and 14 percent more than requested. The bill also provides \$7.2 billion for mass transit programs and \$500 million for election reform activities authorized by the 2002 Federal election standards overhaul law.

I strongly support these provisions and recognize how important the funding provided in this bill is for investment in the Nation's highway, transit and aviation programs, which are all so critical to our safety and homeland secu-

ity efforts, as well as to economic development. Therefore, I support this legislation. However, I will vote in support of this bill with the strong hope that the insufficient Amtrak funding will be addressed in conference.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TAMMY BALDWIN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 10, 2003

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall 456, final passage of H.R. 2861, the FY04 VA—HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations bill, I was recorded as voting "yea." I oppose this bill and intended to vote "nay." This bill significantly underfunds veterans' health care. Our veterans' health care system is in crisis with an average of 200,000 veterans waiting six months or more for an appointment at Veterans Administration hospitals. The funding in this bill is clearly inadequate to meet the needs of our veterans. We must deliver the quality health care that was promised to those who have served to protect American security around the world.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOE KNOLLENBERG

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 10, 2003

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, on September 9, 2003, I was unavoidably absent and missed rollcall vote Nos. 481–488. For the record, had I been present, I would have voted: No. 481, "no"; No. 482, "no"; No. 483, "no"; No. 484, "no"; No. 485, "no"; No. 486, "no"; No. 487, "no"; and No. 488, "no".

CONGRATULATING 137TH SPACE
WARNING SQUADRON

HON. MARILYN N. MUSGRAVE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 10, 2003

Mrs. MUSGRAVE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a truly outstanding part of this nation's defense—the 137th Space Warning Squadron based in Greeley, Colorado. For the second time in three years (an unequaled achievement), that unit has won the Distinguished Mission Support Plaque given by the National Guard Association of the United States.

This national award is given to only five outstanding units throughout all the Guard both Army and Air.

In addition to Colonel William Hudson, I would like to recognize the leadership at the 137th of Major Daniel Salgado and Major David Simmons for their outstanding work, as well as Brigadier General Mike Edwards (at the 140th Wing, Buckley AFB) and Major General Mason Whitney (the Colorado Adjutant General). The award shows the outstanding ability, competence, and potential of our Colorado Guardsmen at the Greeley location.

Additionally, the 137th in 2002 received many accolades for inspections, conversions,

support, and community service. I am so proud that this unit is in the Fourth Congressional District and going above and beyond in its defense of the United States of America. May God bless them for their service.

A TRIBUTE TO FORMER REPRESENTATIVE CHARLES E. BENNETT OF FLORIDA

HON. E. CLAY SHAW, JR.

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 10, 2003

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as Chairman of Florida's Congressional Delegation to honor the extraordinary life of former Congressman Charles E. Bennett. I would be hard pressed, Mr. Speaker, to find a better and more compelling individual dedicated to ethical reforms than Mr. Bennett in his 44 years in the House. Mr. Bennett was a long time proponent of such reforming legislation as the creation of the House Ethics Committee and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Earning the title of "Mr. Clean" for his unwavering determination to financial disclosure, Mr. Bennett set an example for all public servants as early as 1950.

Mr. Bennett attended the University of Florida and graduated in 1934 with both a Bachelor and Law degree. During World War 11, Charlie defended his country with undying patriotism and fearless courage in the South Pacific, earning the Silver and Bronze Stars for his distinguished service. In 1948, Mr. Bennett was elected to the 81st Congress representing the Jacksonville metropolitan area. Forty-four years later, Charlie remains Florida's longest serving member of Congress. Despite contracting polio from his Army days, Congressman Bennett served his country with such fervor and passion rarely seen before or since.

In the early 1990's, Charlie's advocacy for the disabled community translated into his strong support and sponsorship of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Despite the use of crutches, Charlie only missed one legislative vote in 41 years; a remarkable legislative accomplishment. Mr. Bennett was also an accomplished author of seven books, as well as a passionate advocate of the preservation of Florida's natural resources and history. A well-respected member of his community, Mr. Bennett has a Federal building and a school dedicated in his name for his remarkable service to his country.

Mr. Speaker, Charlie and I served side-by-side for 12 years before his retirement in 1993, and the news of his death has greatly saddened our State, our country, and me. I am honored to have called Charles Bennett a friend and colleague during his remarkable life and our prayers go out to his surviving family; his wife Dorothy; his children Bruce, James, and Cindy; and his three grandchildren. Charles Bennett will always have a place in the hearts of everyone he represented and his memory will no doubt live forever in the State of Florida.

TRANSPORTATION AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

SPEECH OF

HON. EARL POMEROY

OF NORTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2003

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2989) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation and Treasury, and independent agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes:

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of full funding for the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). Congress made a commitment to election reform with the passage of this Act last year and should provide the funding required for HAVA-mandated improvements.

An amendment offered by the Honorable ALCEE HASTINGS to H.R. 2989 would have increased HAVA's funding to its authorized level of \$727 million. This was offset by eliminating \$165 million from Internal Revenue Service (IRS) information system funding. While I support efforts to increase HAVA funding, necessary maintenance and improvements to the IRS' information system are critical. For these reasons, I was compelled to vote against H. Amdt. 357.

I look forward to considering further legislation regarding HAVA funding in the future. Election reform is important to democracy in our country and in North Dakota. It is my hope that Congress will find a way to fully fund HAVA without reducing support for the necessary work of the IRS.

LEGISLATION FOR CONSTRUCTION OF VA FACILITY IN EAST-CENTRAL FLORIDA

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 10, 2003

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today I rise as a member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, as a Congresswoman from Florida, to offer legislation that authorizes \$170 million for construction of a much-needed VA facility in East-Central, Florida.

The legislation comes about after VA released, to the Capital Assets Realignment for Enhanced Services Commission, a draft report for VA review. The draft report recommends that Florida's East-Central Market receive a new hospital.

Florida's Central Market has the largest workload gap and the greatest infrastructure investment need of any market in the United States. The CARES draft report states that the logical choice for a new hospital in Florida is Orlando. There is a former 150-bed Naval Hospital in Orlando, originally designed for two additional floors, which can be restructured to take on additional services.

This will mean a big difference in many veterans' lives because currently more than 50 percent of them must travel 60 miles or one

hour to the nearest VA facility. This is a problem that must be addressed now. Veteran population growth within a two-hour radius continues unabated. If a new facility is not available to veterans in East-Central, Florida soon, the hardship of long drives and waiting periods will grow even greater for our veterans.

As the Congresswoman from Florida's third district, I know firsthand of the need for a new VA facility in Orlando. I have been there for our veterans time and time again. I personally escorted former VA Secretary Jesse Brown to the old Naval facility in Orlando and told him what a perfect site it would be for a VA outpatient clinic. The James V. Haley VA Hospital in Orlando, Florida was later opened, and it is proving to be the best location available to provide even greater services to our veterans.

The goal of the CARES commission is to modernize the VA health care system. This is an important first step in making certain that the needs of our veterans are met. They are indeed, the best of the best, and deserve to be treated as such.

I abhor the treatment of America's veterans under this administration. From the shabby effort to provide for full funding of concurrent receipt, to the exclusion of new Priority Eight veterans from the VA health care rolls, this administration has proven that it is a miserable failure at treating our veterans with the honor and gratitude that they have earned.

ANIBAL ACEVEDO-VILÁ, of Puerto Rico, and SHELLEY BERKLEY, of Nevada, join me in sponsoring this measure that additionally provides \$250 million for the construction of a VA hospital in Las Vegas, Nevada, and \$30 million for seismic upgrades at the VA medical center in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

I would like to thank Senators BOB GRAHAM of Florida, and HARRY REID of Nevada for introducing the companion legislation to this bill in the United States Senate.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 10, 2003

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, had I been present for rollcall No. 481, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 482, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 483, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 484, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 485, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 486, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 487, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 488, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 489, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 490, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 491, I would have voted "no."

A TRIBUTE TO BARUCH TENENBAUM

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 10, 2003

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to pay tribute to Baruch Tenenbaum, a truly