

TRIBUTE TO GEORGIA LORETTA
JONES ELAM

HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 25, 2003

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Georgia Loretta Jones Elam, a resident of the Sixth Congressional District, and a longtime friend of mine and my family.

Born and raised in Hartsville, South Carolina, Mrs. Elam finished her elementary education in record time and entered my alma mater, South Carolina State College, now University, at the tender age of 14. After her dreams of becoming a Chemist were thwarted because of gender stereotypes of the 1920's, she entered the field of Home Economics. Upon graduating with her Bachelors degree, Mrs. Elam taught at South Carolina State College where most of her students were older than she. She went on to Columbia University in 1949 where she earned her Master's. Throughout her career, Mrs. Elam taught at seven institutions in the State of South Carolina. Most notably, she taught for 31 years at C.A. Johnson High School in Columbia, South Carolina. She also participated in workshops to further her education at University of Georgia, Winthrop College, and the University of South Carolina.

It was during her tenure at C.A. Johnson High School that Mrs. Elam started the first day care center in a public school in South Carolina. It was her innovative idea to give her Child Care and Development students the opportunity to have them care for real children instead of dolls that led her to start the day care center. Also while at C.A. Johnson, Mrs. Elam served as Head of the Home Economics Department, advisor to the New Homemakers of America—the predecessor of Future Homemakers of America—the cheerleads, the pep squad and the modern dance club.

Always a leader, be it in her professional life or that of her community, Mrs. Elam was given the Teacher of the Year award by the South Carolina Home Economics Association in 1975. She was also honored with a Distinguished Service Award by the Association of Vocational Home Economics Teachers in 1978. And, giving further credence to her merits as a leader, Mrs. Elam was named Boss of the Year in 1979 by the Midlands Chapter of the American Business Women's Association.

While this lively 90-year-old worked in the field of Home Economics for over half a Century, her dedication goes far beyond the parameters of her job requirements. Mrs. Elam has been an ardent community leader and continues to be very active in her church, Bethel A.M.E. She has been involved in numerous political campaigns over the years, and never turns down an opportunity to volunteer with church programs that have anything to do with youth or her congregation. Mrs. Elam has served as Director of Christian Education, which meant leading vacation bible school for many years, and also served as leader of the scouting program, and sponsor of the Young People's Gospel choir which she founded. For many years, she presented "Golgatha," a religious pageant which she wrote and directed.

In 1995, Rev. Ronnie Brailsford made her a Steward at Bethel A.M.E. Her actions of devo-

tion to others, particularly the young people in her community, should be an inspiration to us all.

Mrs. Elam is the widow of Leon M. Elam. She has one daughter, Loretta E. Taylor who is married to John B. Taylor of Wilmington, Delaware; three grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Mrs. Elam also has two siblings, Elise Martin and Gottlieb Harvest, both of Columbia, South Carolina, where Mrs. Elam herself now resides.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and my colleagues join me in honoring Georgia Loretta Jones Elam for her selfless dedication to citizens, particularly young people, across the State of South Carolina. She is a pillar of the community, and I wish her good luck and Godspeed.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 25, 2003

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, November 22, 2003, I was unavoidably detained and unable to cast my vote.

I request that the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD reflect that had I been present and voting, I would have voted as follows:

(1) Rollcall No. 670: "no" (on Table Motion to Reconsider H.R. 1).

VETERANS BENEFITS ACT OF 2003

SPEECH OF

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 20, 2003

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2297, as amended. This bill is a compromise agreement that was carefully negotiated between the House and Senate, and contains a number of important measures to assist this Nation's veterans and their families. I want to take a moment to recognize and thank Chairman CHRIS SMITH, Benefits Subcommittee Chairman HENRY BROWN and Benefits Ranking Democratic Member MICHAEL MICHAUD for working with me to successfully craft this bipartisan, bicameral benefits package. I appreciate your leadership, professionalism and all of your hard work in guiding this legislation through the process and into law.

I also would like to thank the staff members of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs for their work in preparing this legislative package and for their work throughout the year—Patrick Ryan, Darryl Kehrer, Paige McManus, Devon Seibert and Kingston Smith of the majority staff and Jim Holley, Mary Ellen McCarthy, Geoffrey Colver and Leah Booth of my Democratic staff. Likewise, I would like to thank Chairman ARLEN SPECTER and Ranking Member BOB GRAHAM of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, as well as the Senate staff who worked diligently on this conference agreement—Mary Schoelen, Ted Pusey, Jon Towers and Chris McNamee.

Mr. Speaker, last week on November 11th we celebrated and honored the sacrifices and

heroic deeds of our Nation's veterans with speeches and parades. Indeed, it is appropriate, necessary even, that we recognize and honor the many sacrifices of the brave men and women in uniform who have so gallantly served our nation. Mr. Speaker, speeches and parades are nice but they are not enough. Today, however, we match our complimentary words with actual deeds. We celebrate and honor those who have served the country and protected our freedoms by passing this legislative package, which truly honors their service and provides them and their families with important benefits that they most certainly have earned.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud that this legislative package contains a number of measures that I introduced or of which I am an original cosponsor. Additionally, I commend all the Members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee on both sides of the aisle who have worked diligently this session to bring important measures forward. This compromise agreement contains many bills introduced by Committee members. Indeed, crafting and passing this benefits package has truly been a bipartisan effort.

I am pleased the provision to provide the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits to children with spina bifida whose veteran parent was exposed to Agent Orange in Korea is drawn from my bill H.R. 533. During a hearing the Committee received moving testimony from Michael Ruzalski, a young man severely disabled by spina bifida. Michael's father John served in the region of Korea's Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) during the time that the Department of Defense acknowledges Agent Orange was used there. Congress has authorized benefits for children of veterans affected by such exposure in Vietnam. The children of veterans who served in the Korean DMZ are no less deserving. When military service results in harm to the children of our Nation's veterans, our country should assume the responsibility to compensate them for their disabilities.

A provision to remove unnecessary and arbitrary time barriers for certain former prisoners of war to qualify for service-connection of their disabilities on a presumptive basis is drawn from H.R. 1838, which I introduced. I believe that we should consider additional presumptive conditions for former prisoners of war and will continue to support legislation to accomplish that end. Nonetheless, we need to take action now to assure those prisoners of war who were interred in Iraq for less than 30 days, as well as those from earlier conflicts, that no durational requirement will be imposed for certain psychiatric and physical disabilities which may follow a brief period of internment.

The package includes a provision to permanently authorize the VA home loan program for members of the National Guard and Reserve. It also lowers their home loan fees. This provision is drawn from H.R. 1257, which I introduced with the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Benefits, Mr. Michaud. Now more than ever, our Reserve and National Guard forces are an integral component of our national defense policy. Making this program permanent for members of the National Guard and Reserve is the right thing to do, it's also the right thing to do financially—as Reservists have an exemplary record of repayment on VA home loans.

I am also pleased that this package contains provisions that provide long overdue