physical fitness. He does not qualify under the act we passed. Neither does a retiree who cannot work on a family farm because of pain, numbness, and osteoarthritis of both feet due to exposure of cold during noncombatant military service; a veteran who lost an eye when an air hose accidentally detached from an airplane being worked on and who cannot work as an airline pilot. He still pays the tax; as does a female retiree who has weekly panic attacks and chronic sleep disturbances as the result of a sexual assault which occurred while on active duty.

Mr. Speaker, we took the first step towards eliminating the Disabled Veterans Tax, but I would give us a grade of incomplete. We did not do the ''A'' work that our veterans deserve. During the time I have been in Congress, I cannot recall more than one or two other issues where I have received so many letters, e-mails, and phone calls. Our veterans have been telling us that this is an important issue to them. They deserve that we complete our work and do it at an ''A'' level.

I understand there are costs to concurrent receipt, but I also understand that the now disabled veterans did not hesitate when they were called to duty. They have returned home with disabilities they have had to live with ever since. How can we doubt the imperative that we keep our promise and give them what they deserve? They earned their military retired pay. They deserve their VA disability compensation. We should not make them wait any longer for justice to prevail.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DAVIS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GRIJALVA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IN SUPPORT OF ISRAEL'S CONSTRUCTION OF A SECURITY FENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, since 1948 the State of Israel has constantly been under attack from inside and outside her borders, from neighbors on all sides. Innocent Israeli citizens, including women and children and seniors, have become terrorist targets. Israeli shops, streets, and schools have become the battleground. There are always threats in the country and always a cause for alarm.

Today, the threat to Israel's security has never been greater. On the eve of the U.N.'s hearing this week on the West Bank barrier, a Palestinian suicide bomber blew apart a Jerusalem bus, killing himself and eight passengers. This strike, which injured 60 others, was in protest of the security barrier constructed by Israel to foil terrorist attacks such as this.

This terrible and painful bombing in Jerusalem has brought new urgency to the claim of Israeli leaders that a security fence is desperately needed in order to prevent terrorists from entering from the West Bank and proves that Israel is under a new wave of violence, one that the Palestinian leadership is unable and unwilling to stop.

For this reason, I support Israel's construction of a security fence and will support that additional miles be built should Israel so decide to continue this self-defense option. The security fence is a proven way to impede terror, which in turn will help advance the peace process. It is situated to protect the lives of Israelis. The separation barrier has proven itself by preventing 50 percent of the attempted terrorist attacks against Israel, and the fence around Gaza has prevented all Palestinian suicide bombers from entering the country.

There are Palestinians who are working now to disrupt this pursuit towards peace. Monday, the Palestinians presented their case to the United Nations International Court of Justice, the ICJ, standing against the Israeli separation barrier in the West Bank, while Israel appealed to world opinion and moral common sense to ignore the proceedings that are unfair.

Israel only began the construction of this fence after 3 years of near daily terrorist attacks that killed 919 Israelis and left thousands more wounded for life. Now more than 40 nations, including the United States, the European Union, and Australia, have joined Israel in protesting the court's consideration of this matter because it falls outside the court's traditional mandate to serve as a mediator between a willing state and, more importantly, because it undermines Israel's, and for that matter any nation's, right to self-defense.

The Palestinians and their supporters have now manipulated the U.N. General Assembly to request the ICJ to issue a legal advisory on the security of the fence. Though it is not legally binding, this advisory opinion could prompt anti-Israel resolutions at the U.N. later this year and will reinforce efforts to isolate Israel internationally.

Manipulation of the ICJ is only the latest attempt in many attempts by Israeli detractors to use every arm of the U.N. to delegitimize Israel. The U.N. has been a source of anti-Israeli activity, passing more resolutions against Israel than any other subject matter, over 400 since 1964. In contrast, that body has never investigated the Palestinian terror campaign against Israel, nor has it investigated the abuse, torture, and other human rights violations by nondemocratic states in the Arab world. The U.N. is the same body that voted against removing Saddam Hussein and ending his evil regime over his own people.

The international community and Arab states in the region must come together now and strongly discourage further Palestinian terrorism. Nations around the world must support Israel in their right to defend their land and their people. Israel has every right and must have every right and ability to protect their people and their country. Those who say otherwise, that Israel's self-defense is an impediment to progress, they miss the point entirely. The destruction of Palestinian terrorism is not an impediment to progress; rather, it is the definition of progress.

Where the violence stops, the peace process can move forward. And until it does, Israel's efforts to build a security fence on their own borders are a necessary and justified response to the perils that this nation faces. As Israel is a free and democratic, peace-loving nation and our only real ally in a region filled with unrest and American hatred, our Nation must do everything we can to support Israel and not stand in the way of the Israeli leaders doing what they feel is necessary to protect their citizens and their homeland.

AMERICA AT RISK: CLOSING THE SECURITY GAP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TURNER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. TURNER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the distinguished gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN), the vice chairman of the Democratic Caucus.

THE MATTHEW PERRY COURTHOUSE

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I failed last evening to make this statement, which I thought was very important to me during Black History Month, because of a little appointment I had with the dentist. So I