

INTRODUCTION OF THE HERO ACT

HON. JANE HARMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 14, 2005

Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, today, together with my good friend CURT WELDON and a bipartisan group of our colleagues, we are introducing Homeland Emergency Response Operations or HERO Act. The HERO Act would take much-needed broadcast spectrum available for use by America's first responders by no later than January 1, 2007.

Many public safety and state and local governmental associations, as well as first responders and other emergency personnel from across the country, support this legislation.

Interoperability is more than a public safety issue. It's a national security issue, and to our first responders it can be an issue of life or death. In 1997, Congress made a promise to the American people to allocate dedicated radio spectrum to first responders. Yet 8 years later, we still have not made good on our commitment. Why have we broken our promise? Because a handful of broadcasters refuse to compromise on this issue.

Thousands of lives are potentially at stake. We have all heard the tragic stories of firefighters who died in the World Trade Center on 9/11 because NYPD helicopters circling overhead could not radio them that the towers were glowing and beginning to collapse.

At the Pentagon on that same dark day, first responders from surrounding counties who converged on the scene were forced to use runners to convey messages, as their communications equipment was not compatible.

The tragedies of September 11 taught some painful lessons about the need for improved communications among and between first responder groups. In particular, the events of that and subsequent days have underscored the need for more public safety radio spectrum with which first responders can perform their live-saving functions.

The lack of frequency among emergency response agencies and jurisdictions is an everyday problem. Police officers, fire fighters, emergency medical personnel and others are forced to depend on radio systems that operate on incompatible radio frequency bands and lack sufficient capacity. We must as a nation remedy this situation as effective and interoperable public safety communications are more important than ever in the war against terrorism.

Key elements for first responders to begin using this spectrum are in place. The spectrum is allocated, states have already received licenses to use the 700 MHz band and local jurisdictions are engaged in regional planning needed to get a license. However, the investment to use the spectrum by public safety agencies cannot commence unless there is a tangible date when that spectrum can be used. Essentially, the first responders are waiting on Congress to keep our promise, and I think they have waited long enough.

I urge my colleagues to join us in this important effort to safeguard the lives of our public safety workers—and of the communities they serve—by co-sponsoring the HERO Act.

CONGRATULATE OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE ON 40 YEARS OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 14, 2005

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Oakland Community College on their 40 years of educational excellence.

When the voters of Oakland County voted to establish the Oakland Community College District on June 8, 1964, they not only approved the establishment of a valuable opportunity for thousands of students, but also an institution which would eventually become one of the State of Michigan's largest educational facilities. And, with 888 full-time employees, OCC is one of the County's largest employers.

When the college opened, a record 3,860 students enrolled to take classes. Today, annual enrollment reaches 74,000 and some 700,000 students have received a world-class education at OCC since it opened.

As the largest community college in the state of Michigan, and 14th largest in the nation, OCC has attracted students from over 80 countries.

Oakland Community College is certainly a home-town institution with more than 11 percent of Oakland County's high school graduates attending OCC. The college also boasts the largest freshman class in the entire state. And with campuses throughout Oakland County, many of which I have had the pleasure to represent at one time or another, this institution increasingly became accessible to students. I worked very hard years ago with an active group of citizens and Board members to open campuses in South Oakland County. Today, the Southfield and Royal Oak Campuses are among the two largest in the County.

OCC is also home to the CREST Program. The CREST or Combined Regional Emergency Service Training Facility is a 22-acre site which is the only emergency-response training center in the Midwest designed for the combined training of police, fire and emergency medical technicians in "real-life" scenarios.

Mr. Speaker, on May 5th Oakland Community College will celebrate its 40th anniversary at a dinner to raise money for its scholarship endowments. I ask you and my colleagues to join me in saluting a major community asset, Oakland Community College, as it celebrates its past and focuses on the future.

IN HONOR OF THE EARTH DAY—
2005

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 14, 2005

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor and recognition of the Earth Day Coalition of Cleveland, as they celebrate EarthFest 2005—a date that commemorates the 36th Anniversary of Earth Day. The Earth Day Coalition was formed in 1990 to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Earth Day in Ohio. Over the past twenty-five years, a staff of one

has evolved into a staff of six fulltime employees, college interns, and hundreds of volunteers. As the staff has grown, so has the focus, outreach and expansion of the programs and projects created by the Earth Day Coalition.

Beyond the initial focus on environmental education, recycling and energy waste, efficiency, alternatives and conservation, the focus of Earth Day Coalition has expanded into other significant environmental areas of concern that speak directly to the preservation and conservation of the delicate, interdependent threads of our natural world. Many of the programs initiated by the Earth Day Coalition have grown into nationally-recognized programs and models that speak to the critical need of community pollution prevention. EarthFest 2005, to be held on Sunday, April 17th at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, promises once again to be a significant aspect of the world celebration of Earth Day.

Mr. Speaker and Colleagues, please join me in honor and recognition of the staff, volunteers and members of the Earth Day Coalition—as we celebrate EarthFest 2004 on April 17, 2005. This significant day reflects the hope for a healthy community—for us today, and for future generations. The organizing force behind EarthFest—the Earth Day Coalition of Cleveland, offers residents of our community access to a wide range of environmental resources and information, presented by local and national organizations and agencies. Again, Earth Day promises to educate, inspire and motivate all of us to live with the awareness of our fragile connection to all living things.

INTRODUCTION OF MILITARY
FAMILIES LEAVE ACT

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 14, 2005

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Military Families Leave Act, a bill that will take a small step to help ease the burden of military families in this country. I originally introduced this bill at the end of the 108th Congress, and I look forward to working for its passage during the 109th Congress.

Nearly every day we hear stories about the hardships of the families of our nation's soldiers. Family members of deployed soldiers face unique challenges, especially in the first days and weeks after the member has been summoned to duty. The National Military Family Association has testified that it hears from many families about the difficulties of balancing new family and personal requirements with their regular duties when a family member is deployed. As members of Congress, we too hear from constituents who struggle with this balance. I believe there are measures we can take to ease this burden and increase flexibility in the lives of our military family members.

The legislation I am introducing today is one of the steps we can take. The Military Families Leave Act allows spouses, parents, or children of military personnel who are serving on, or are called to active duty, in support of a contingency operation to use their Family and