

breadwinners who have devoted their entire careers to public service. It is also the smart thing to do, from the standpoint of the taxpayer, who has invested in these employees over the years, and who would lose the value of that investment if the employees were to take positions elsewhere. As a former personnel director, I certainly recognize that for any organization, including the Federal government, to maximize its effectiveness, it needs to attract the most talented people it can, invest in those people, and retain them. It makes sense to enable talented employees to transfer their skills to other agencies, if they wish to remain in Federal service and cannot find suitable positions in the Library or CRS.

The legislation which I have introduced would accomplish two things toward that end. First, it would give Library employees who have successfully completed a probationary period in a non-temporary position "competitive status" when seeking vacant positions in Executive departments and agencies for which the employees have the required qualifications. Currently, service in the Library, a Legislative-branch agency, does not confer competitive status, leaving Library employees at a disadvantage when competing for vacancies in Executive agencies requiring competitive status. The provision would become effective immediately, and is designed to assist current CRS employees who may wish to apply for positions throughout the government, as well as other CRS or Library employees seeking positions in the future.

Second, the legislation would render Library employees (including the Congressional Research Service) eligible for a program, administered by the Office of Personnel Management for displaced employees in the Executive branch, which provides "special selection priority" for employees facing a reduction-in-force. Thus, Library employees, including the CRS personnel facing loss of their jobs later this year, would qualify for priority selection to positions across the Executive branch.

Mr. Speaker, in 1990 Congress enacted similar legislation granting competitive status to employees of the Judicial branch. It made sense then for employees of the Federal courts, and it makes sense for the employees of the Library of Congress today.

Mr. Speaker, my legislation has the support of the Librarian of Congress, Dr. James Billington, and Director Mulholland, who have assured me that they will do everything possible to identify suitable positions in the Library for the affected employees. I take them at their word and hope their efforts succeed for every employee who wants to continue contributing to the agency's success.

This Congress could not discharge its responsibilities without the support of the employees of the Congressional Research Service and the Library of Congress, who provide unbiased, non-partisan, timely, reliable information to its Members every day. As Ranking Member of the Committee on House Administration, which oversees the Library and CRS, I am eager to see this precious asset preserved, and I trust that Library management will do everything within its power to avoid a RIF in 2006 or any other year. In the meantime, H.R. 5328 will make it easier for the CRS employees now facing loss of their jobs to transfer their skills and expertise to other Federal agencies and continue their careers in public service. I urge all Members to join in supporting this urgent legislation.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF G.V.
"SONNY" MONTGOMERY

HON. NICK J. RAHALL, II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember the life of a man that I am proud to have called a colleague and a friend, Gillespie V. "Sonny" Montgomery. Sonny had already been serving the people of Mississippi for 10 years by the time I had been elected to Congress, but his drive and tenacity for the men and women of his District and of the armed services: rivaled that of any of my freshman class of 1977.

The epitome of one man making a difference, Sonny helped expand the G.I. Bill to Guardsmen and Reservists and helped make possible the dream of a higher education to countless Americans. His efforts to elevate the Veterans Administration into the 14th Cabinet level department truly ensured, in his words, that "veterans will no longer have to go through the back door to the White House."

Few men leave the kind of lasting legacy that Sonny leaves. When I am back home in West Virginia, I see him in the faces of the West Virginia National Guard. The time before his accomplishments seem to stand in stark contrast to the current realities of serving our great Nation, and it reminds us all of how justice always needs an advocate.

I see how one man can better the lives of so many, and it reminds and reaffirms in me what it means to be a public servant.

This coming Memorial Day, we will remember and pay tribute to those who have served our country, in doing so we also remember and pay tribute to Sonny.

As the Lord welcomes him back home into the Kingdom of Heaven, may we all honor his legacy by picking up the torch that he so skillfully carried.

HONORING G.V. "SONNY"
MONTGOMERY

HON. JIM GIBBONS

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the state of Nevada, I would like to recognize the late Gillespie V. "Sonny" Montgomery for all of his lifetime achievements. Sonny passed away on May 12 of this year. His 30 years in Congress and 13 years as Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee do not even begin to reveal all that he has done for this country.

As a strong Veterans' advocate, he was the man responsible for rallying Congress to pass The Montgomery G.I. Bill, which offered education benefits to National Guard and Reserve personnel for the first time. Mr. Montgomery also served on the House Armed Services Committee, where he made progress in the quality of life for both the National Guard and reserve units. As a veteran himself, he seemed to establish a stubbornness about him that pressed for improved treatment of veterans on Capitol Hill, where he gained the nickname "Mr. Veteran."

After returning home from World War II, he returned to active duty during the Korean War as part of the National Guard. Shortly thereafter, Sonny began his political career in 1956 when he was elected to the Mississippi State Senate, where he served for ten years before joining the United States House of Representatives in 1967. He remained in the National Guard and retired in 1980 with the rank of major general.

In 2005, he received the highest form of civilian honor when President Bush awarded him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Sonny Montgomery was the embodiment of freedom and worked every day of his professional life to strengthen our national defense and to ensure that this nation honors the soldiers who protect our freedom.

Not only has this country lost a dedicated serviceman and former Member of Congress, but we have also lost a great friend.

CONGRATULATING AMTRAK ON
ITS 35TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, known more commonly as Amtrak, and its workers for achieving 35 years of operation as America's passenger rail service provider.

Prior to the creation of Amtrak, passenger rail service had fallen on hard times. Freight railroads had a common carrier obligation to provide passenger train service, but virtually all of them were losing money and wanted to be rid of it. Regrettably, it was the policy of many of the freight railroads to simply allow the service to deteriorate to the point where ridership was so sparse that the Interstate Commerce Commission would grant the carriers permission to discontinue their passenger train operations. Some of the railroads went beyond benign neglect and actively downgraded the service to discourage people from riding the trains.

Indeed, passenger rail service had been in decline since 1920. Americans' preferences shifted to air and auto to meet their intercity transportation needs. In 1920, passenger rail was the dominant mode of intercity transportation; by 1970 passenger rail service had declined to relative insignificance. Many thought that the day of the passenger train was over, and that, outside of a few densely populated corridors, passenger trains were destined to join the stagecoach and the flatboat as relics of America's transportation history.

Fortunately, that was not the case. Congress understood the long-term value of and public need for intercity passenger rail service and passed the Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970 to create Amtrak.

On May 1, 1971, Amtrak assumed responsibility of the nation's passenger trains from the freight railroads and began service when Clocker No. 235 departed New York Penn Station at 12:05 a.m. bound for Philadelphia. It was clear from the outset that Amtrak would have to face a number of challenges. Years of freight railroad neglect of passenger operations meant that stations and terminals were