

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 211, THE  
CALLING FOR 211 ACT OF 2007

**HON. ANNA G. ESHOO**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 4, 2007*

Ms. ESHOO. Madam Speaker, I'm very proud to introduce the Calling for 211 Act of 2007, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Energy and Commerce Committee to move this legislation through Committee and bring it to the House floor. I have cosponsored this bill in previous Congresses with former Rep. Mike Bilirakis, and I'm confident that we now have the momentum to pass this legislation and send it to the President.

Every hour of every day, someone in the United States needs essential services for themselves or someone close to them. These services can range from finding an after-school program for a child, to securing care for an aging parent, to finding drug or alcohol counseling. Faced with a myriad of agencies and help lines, many people end up going without services they need just because they don't know where to begin.

When someone calls 2-1-1, an information and referral specialist assesses the caller's needs and determines which service provider is best equipped to handle their problem or crisis. These specialists are also trained to determine whether a caller may be eligible for other programs. 2-1-1 service providers maintain comprehensive databases of resources, including federal, state, and local government agencies, community-based organizations, and private non-profits.

In 2000, the FCC designated 2-1-1 for community information and referral purposes. Today, 2-1-1 reaches 193 million Americans—about 69 percent of the U.S. population—with call centers operational in 41 states and the District of Columbia. However, inadequate funding prevents universal access to 2-1-1 service in every state. 2-1-1 service is currently available statewide in only 17 states. The goal of the Calling for 211 Act of 2007 is to ensure that all Americans have access to quality community information and referral services through 2-1-1 wherever they live.

The largest barriers for communities seeking to implement 2-1-1 are funding and awareness. In many states, limited resources have slowed the process of connecting communities with this vital service. Current funding where 2-1-1 is operational comes from diverse sources including non-profits, state governments, foundations, and businesses.

The Calling for 211 Act is strongly supported by the United Way and builds on existing efforts to make it easier to connect people with important community services and volunteer opportunities. The legislation provides federal matching grants to enable much-needed changes to the way people connect to community social services, including:

Providing the infrastructure to connect individuals with precise information and social services that address their needs;

Empowering the nation to better respond to large-scale emergencies and homeland security needs by relieving pressure on overwhelmed 9-1-1 call centers. During the Hurricane Katrina disaster, 2-1-1 served as a cru-

cial backup in areas where 9-1-1 centers went down;

Providing aggregated data from 2-1-1 systems nationwide to better assess the needs of our communities.

I believe the 2-1-1 system has great potential; this legislation will establish a federal partnership with states and local communities to give more Americans access to 2-1-1 services. By augmenting existing funding from state and local governments, nonprofits, and the business community, we can ensure that 2-1-1 can finally be a truly national system. A small investment at the national level would pay immediate dividends in terms of faster, more efficient responses to non-emergency but still critical situations.

In a crisis no one has time to flip through their phonebook. When an urgent medical or safety issue arises, we dial 9-1-1 knowing we can get help anywhere and at anytime. We should expect the same when it comes to tracking down important social services as well.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and help to implement this critical safety net for all Americans.

CONGRESSIONAL INTEGRITY AND  
PENSION FORFEITURE ACT, H.R. 14

**HON. MARK STEVEN KIRK**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 4, 2007*

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the Congressional Integrity and Pension Forfeiture Act, H.R. 14, which would deny Members of Congress their pension should they be convicted of a felony. I feel strongly that taxpayers should not be responsible for funding the pension of one of us if we have broken the law, broken the public's trust, and been convicted of a felony.

I introduced the same bill in the 109th Congress and a portion of it was included in the Lobbying Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, H.R. 4975. Unfortunately, this bill was never considered by the Senate. So I am reintroducing it today.

I based my bill almost exclusively after Congressman Randy Tate's bill from the 104th Congress, H.R. 4011. This bill, with 74 cosponsors, passed the House of Representatives on September 26, 1996 by a vote of 391-32 and 1 Present. It was never considered by the Senate.

The very first version of this bill was introduced by my predecessor, Congressman John Edward Porter, in 1990 during the 101st Congress. Congressman Porter had successfully passed a similar bill in the Illinois General Assembly prior to coming to the U.S. Congress. In the mid-1970s, two Members of the Illinois General Assembly were convicted of felonies, resigned, but were still allowed to receive their state pension. State Representative John Porter did not think that was right. Luckily, his bill passed the Illinois General Assembly and reform began.

An elected official should not be permitted to draw a publicly funded pension after violating the very law he or she took an oath to uphold. We should be held to a higher standard than others. We swore to uphold the constitution and if we fail to do that, we should not

receive anything back from the public. A breach of law by a Member of Congress is a very serious offense that should have very serious consequences.

A TRIBUTE TO DALE DEMERS

**HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD**

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 4, 2007*

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dale E. Demers on the occasion of his retirement from the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office at Togus, Maine after more than 30 years of dedicated service. Dale will be greatly missed, and I join his many friends, co-workers and the veterans he served in wishing him the best of luck in the next phase of his life.

Dale's service to our country began in 1968, when he joined the U.S. Air Force. He began his VA career at the Togus Regional office in 1972 as a GS-1 Clerk. Dale has held several positions at Togus including Adjudicator, Supervisory Adjudicator, Assistant Service Center Manager, Service Center Manager, Assistant Center Director for Regional Office Activities, and most recently as the Director for the Regional Office.

While working full time at Togus, Dale went back to school and in 1977 received a bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Maine.

During Dale's career, he has been involved in many VBA initiatives. He was instrumental in Togus being chosen as a resource center site. The Togus Resource Center has been a huge success and has exceeded its goal every month since its inception. Dale was also extremely involved in the development of the current Claims Processing Improvement (CPI) Initiative, which has assisted VBA national in reducing both the duration of the response and backlog of claims processing.

Dale will be missed for his dedication and for his compassion by the veterans of Maine. I am pleased to join his colleagues, his family, and his friends in congratulating Dale on this milestone. I wish him a rewarding and enjoyable retirement.

REINTRODUCTION OF  
LEGISLATION

**HON. CLIFF STEARNS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 4, 2007*

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, I am pleased on this first day of the 110th Congress to introduce several pieces of legislation that I have been pursuing over the years, and for which I will continue to advocate these next 2 years.

Ultrasound technology provides us with a fascinating "womb with a view," allowing doctors to better treat their pregnant patients. But many underprivileged pregnant women cannot afford this important option. These women desperately need access to these free services to safeguard their health and prenatal well-being. That's why I am reintroducing the "Informed Choice Act," which authorizes the Secretary of Health and Human Services to