

dedicated their lives to the military service of our country.

I am extremely proud of the overwhelming bipartisan support of H.R. 3573, the Promises Act, that I had the honor of introducing with my friend from the other side of the aisle, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS). I am confident that we will soon have over 300 cosponsors, because most of my colleagues realize that this is the right thing to do.

However, Mr. Speaker, one thing that disturbs me greatly is the red herring that opponents of this bill keep throwing up with costs. How much will it cost? Where will the money come from? Will it break the caps? Well, that is not the point. The point is that we made a promise to these men and women and we have a moral obligation to keep that promise.

We have our priorities backwards in this country sometimes. We should not be scrounging leftovers to find the money to fund health care for the men and women who dedicated their lives in the defense of this country. We should fund that first, then decide what to do with whatever is left over. That is the right and the honorable thing to do.

That is what we should be doing as a Congress. However, Mr. Speaker, if my colleagues want offsets, I will give them offsets. Our own Committee on the Budget released a report saying that we waste \$19 billion annually on major government programs. Mr. Speaker, cut that in half and we could pay for all the health care we need for our military retirees, and then some.

Furthermore, the projected surplus over the next 10 years may be \$10 trillion. This bill would cost less than 5 percent of that amount. Mr. Speaker, the money is out there; we just have to make a commitment to make it happen. Do not tell me it cannot be done. Of course it can be done. These men and women are dying at the rate of 1,000 per day, and it must be done and done soon.

I urge the House and Senate leadership, the Committee on the Budget, the Committee on Ways and Means, Committee on Appropriations, Committee on Government Reform, and the Armed Services Committee to put their heads together and pass this bill this year.

Mr. Speaker, during World War II the famous Big Red One had a motto: "The difficult we do immediately, the impossible takes just a little longer."

We need some of that can-do attitude here and now in this Congress. We need to buckle down and do the right thing and keep our promises to the patriots of this country. We ask a lot from our veterans and our retirees. The least we can do is do for them what we told them we would do.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor of the House this evening to salute the women of this country on the first day of National Women's History Month. This year is particularly special because it marks the 20th anniversary of the National Women's History Project.

In my heart and in my mind this occasion is unique because Sonoma County, in my district, is the birthplace of the National Women's History Project, the organization responsible for the establishment of Women's History Month. This year's theme is "An Extraordinary Century for Women—Now Imagine the Future."

The Project, as it is known, is a non-profit educational organization founded in 1980 and committed to providing education and resources to recognize and celebrate women's diverse lives and historic contributions to society.

The Project is repeatedly cited by educators, publishers, and journalists as the national resource for information on United States women's history. Thanks to the Project's efforts, every March, boys and girls across the country recognize and learn about women's struggles and contributions in science, in literature, business, politics, and in every other endeavor.

As recently as the 1970s, however, Mr. Speaker, women's history was virtually unknown, left out of school books, left out of classroom curriculum.

In 1978, I was the Chair of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women. At that time all of us involved in the commission were astounded by the lack of focus on women. Because of that, we worked together with local women to push for awareness. Under the leadership of the chair of the commission that followed right after me, Mary Ruthsdotter, a group of hard-working women in Sonoma County put together a celebration of International Women's Day. That has since expanded through the Congress to National Women's History Week and now National Women's History Month.

Together, the women in my district and the Project succeeded in nationalizing awareness of women's history. As word of the celebration's success spread across the country, State Departments of Education honored women's history week, and within a few years, thousands of schools and communities nationwide celebrated National Women's History Week during the month of March.

In 1987, the Project first petitioned Congress to expand the national celebration to the entire month of March. Due to their efforts, Congress issued a resolution declaring the month of March to be Women's History Month. Today is the first day of March, the first day of the Women's History Month for the year 2000.

Each year since, nationwide programs and activities in schools, workplaces, and communities have been developed to commemorate women's his-

tory in the national and international arena.

In honor of Women's History Month, I want to praise Mary Ruthsdotter, Molly MacGregor, and Bonnie Eisenberg who are the birth mothers for this very notion. And I want to acknowledge Cindy Burnham, Donna Kuhn, Sunny Bristol, Denise Dawe, Lisa McLean, Molly Henrikson and Kathryn Rankin, the women now at the Women's History Project Office. All of these women serve as leaders to educate Americans of all ages about the contributions of women in our society.

Mr. Speaker, to pay tribute to these women's achievements, I have reserved Statuary Hall on Wednesday, March 22. Proud mothers and daughters, educators, activists, historians, and other women across the country are invited to come to the Capitol to celebrate the 20th anniversary of women's history.

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Further, the project has been recognized for outstanding contributions to women's and girls' education by the National Education Association for Diversity and Education, by the National Association for Multicultural Education, and for scholarship service and advocacy by the Center for Women's Policy Studies.

I am truly grateful to all the devoted women at the Women's History Project for their continued commitment and for making an indelible mark on our country. However, Mr. Speaker, we still have a long way to go on women's issues. Sadly, America is also poised to cede its position as a world leader in the international fight against discrimination against women. We need to pass CEDAW, the Convention to End Discrimination Against All Women.

DRUG SMUGGLING ALONG THE BORDER

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

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of Alfredo De La Torre. Alfredo has served as the police chief of Tijuana-Baja California for the last few years. But this Sunday, after leaving church services with his family, Alfredo decided to do what he always does, to drive down to the police station to see how the operation was working. On the way to the police station, Mr. Speaker, Alfredo was attacked and was killed by professional hit people that fired almost 100 rounds into his car and inflicted 57 bullet wounds into his body.

Now, Alfredo is just one of many in Tijuana that have died over the last few years. This brutal murder, which occurred just a few miles from where I live in South San Diego in the Pearl Beach area is a reminder to all Americans of the sacrifices that are going on right now in the drug war.

In January, there was an attorney named Mr. Hernandez who was not as lucky as the police chief. This attorney, Mr. Hernandez, who was a former judge, had the misfortune of having his wife and his son with him when they were sprayed with gunfire by the same drug and alien-smuggling cartel that killed the police chief.

On April 28 of 1994, another police chief in Tijuana was assassinated after the cartel publicized that he had turned down a bribe from them. This is just how blatant it is getting in northern Mexico.

Not to think, Mr. Speaker, that we are insulated from the realities of this violence, in 1996, a few miles north of where my family lives, a man in my district was gunned down while he was driving up a road called Silver Strand by two hitmen who had the gall to stop and finish him off at point-blank range and then throw the gun into the car and proceed to turn around and drive back into Mexico.

This is a drug war that Americans have to wake up to. This month the President will consider about certifying Mexico and seeing if Mexico is doing enough. Mexico, Mr. Speaker, has sent troops to the border. They have armed military personnel at the border to fight the drug lords. They have disbanded their old police force and replaced them with a whole new system, because they are serious about drug interdiction. Mexico is intercepting guns and drugs every 50 to 100 miles in Mexico.

What are we doing? The administration has only hired half of the authorized border patrol agents that this Congress has asked them to hire. The administration refuses to talk about doing on the American side what Mexico has done on their side, and that is to bring the troops into the works. We who have talked so much that we are serious about the drug traffic have not done as much as Mexico.

Mr. Speaker, today there are 10,000 troops, American troops, in Kosovo and Bosnia for peacekeeping. What my family would like to know and my neighbors would like to know is when are we going to get some peacekeeping troops? When is our neighborhood going to be given the priority to fight the drug lords and the alien smugglers?

It is time that we need to emphasize that American resources have the first obligation to defend Americans on American soil and also to protect them from, not only the violence of the drug smugglers, but also the drugs themselves. This is a war that we cannot stand alone on, and we cannot point fingers south of the border.

I hope that the President certifies Mexico, not because they are doing as good as they should. They should do more. But I think we should certify it at the same time we point to ourselves that we need to do more. I hope the President joins with us.

The gentleman from Florida (Chairman MICA) is going to have a hearing

in San Diego, California, on March 7. I hope that a lot of my colleagues will consider coming to that hearing so they get firsthand experience of what is really happening on the frontline of the drug war.

The gentleman from New York (Chairman GILMAN) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MCCOLLUM) have been very, very supportive on this. But, Mr. Speaker, let us remember Alfredo; and let us remember the people who are dying on both sides of the border, and let us not talk about we are willing to fight the drug war, but we are not willing to do half as much as our colleagues in the south.

I ask us to make the commitment of using our military, using our resources, using whatever it takes to win this war so nobody else will have to be killed, no one else will be slaughtered, and America can look up and look at our neighbors to the south and to the north and say we are doing everything we humanly can to stop this problem.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say sincerely my condolences to the De La Torre family. There is nothing that can cover up the pain and the suffering that they are seeing on their streets. Hopefully, we can keep it off our streets.

REFORM OF OUR NATION'S SCHOOLS

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Congress and past member of the Maryland State legislature, I have witnessed and been engaged in numerous debates on how to reform our Nation's classrooms. I certainly believe we do everything we can to ensure that we provide adequate funding and employ effective teaching techniques that will raise the academic output of our students.

However, even the most funding and the best teachers will not produce successful students if there are significant discipline problems that distract students from their studies.

So I come to the floor of this House to pay special tribute to a group of men and women that play a crucial role in keeping students in my district on track, the Baltimore City Police School Force.

Under the leadership of Chief Leonard Hamm, this public school police force is charged with providing protection and safety services to 108,000 students, 12,500 personnel, 187 schools, and 1,300 acres of land around Baltimore City, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. As a result of their efforts, there has been a dramatic drop in the amount of assaults and arrests in the Baltimore City school system.

During Chief Hamm's first year on the force in 1997, the number of arrests in Baltimore City schools dropped 45

percent from the first half to the second half of the school year. Assaults are down 34 percent and arrests are down a remarkable 57 percent.

During the last 2 school years, there have only been six incidents involving a gun. This is a remarkable turnaround from 1994 when there were 77 incidents involving firearms. Looking at individual schools, the change is even more dramatic. We have seen the number of disruptive incidents and violence drop by as much as 70 percent in some of the City's most troubled schools.

As we look back on the past year, filled with school violence, this turnaround gives me hope that our Nation's schools can be safe havens and productive learning environments that our parents expect.

Moreover, our youth should be stimulated by more than just reading, writing, and arithmetic. I cannot imagine any school experience without various afterschool activities, clubs and special events. Sadly, our school halls have become increasingly void of such activities, but an amazing thing has happened in Baltimore as a result in the drop in crime and fear of crime: school social activities have made a comeback.

School pep rallies and dances have been banned for several years because of safety concerns. But this past November, Southern High School had its first pep rally and dance in 6 years.

Dances, pep rallies, and sporting events foster pride in the school. If students have a sense of pride in their school, they will be less likely to want to disrupt it. These activities also enrich our students' overall experience.

So what is the secret to Chief Hamm's success? You might think success has something to do with high-tech surveillance cameras and metal detectors, but you will not find any metal detectors or cameras in Baltimore City public schools. Instead, Chief Hamm has installed a policy fostering mutual respect between police, students, and faculty.

He believes that when police earn the respect of students, students will respect the police and the school. Chief Hamm has also made it his mission to nurture a sense of ownership of the school by students. He believes that crime in school can be reduced when students respect their school in the same way they respect their own home. This strategy has led to the safest school environment in Baltimore City schools in many years.

In light of these successful efforts and hard work, I will be presenting the Baltimore City School Police Department with an Elijah E. Cummings U-TURN award. This acronym, U-TURN, has the obvious meaning of changing direction. However, each letter in this award describes what has taken place on the police force; U, unique; T, techniques; U, used; R, restore; and N, non-violence.

The Baltimore City School Police have certainly responded to a problem