

based services, not just for confining medical institutions. I believe this will strengthen the existing infrastructure set forth by the ADA and the Developmental Disabilities Act.

Mr. Speaker, we are not yet where we want to be, but thank God we are not where we were 10 years ago. We still have much progress to make. However, I am pleased to be here today to offer my unwavering support for our people who live and work daily with disabilities. I am proud that as a result of the ADA, many people with disabilities are now thriving, productive members of society, and looking forward to the future with glee and anticipation.

HONORING LIEUTENANT COLONEL KAREN DIXON

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute and congratulate a real American heroine, Lieutenant Colonel Karen Dixon, who hails from the Seventh Congressional District of Maryland. I was honored to attend a pinning and promotion ceremony for Lieutenant Colonel Dixon last Friday at the Women's Military Service Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington Virginia. During this ceremony, Lieutenant Colonel Dixon was promoted from the rank of Major to Lieutenant Colonel.

Lieutenant Colonel Dixon is the ninth child of 11 children born to Alice and James Dixon. Of those 11 children, four have served in the military. She is an honors graduate of Catonsville High School and received several awards and served as a member of the All-State cross country team. She received a bachelor of arts degree in social work from Bennett College, where she was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Army Signal Corps upon selection as a distinguished military graduate. In 1995, she received a master's of arts degree in management from Webster University.

Mr. Speaker, during her tenure in the Army, she has served in many capacities. She currently is assigned as a Department of the Army Systems Acquisition Management Coordinator, assigned to the Secretary of the Army's staff. Her next assignment is Chief of the Headquarters Branch, Joint Headquarters Regional Subcommand, NATO in Greece.

Lieutenant Colonel Dixon is an American soldier, a person of capability and ideals. She has dedicated her life to an American Army that always must remain true to its principles, an Army that must always conduct itself with fairness. She understands that our commitment to fairness and merit is our strength. She has served this Nation well. And in the process, she has learned that no one gives us our freedom; it must be earned. No one guarantees fairness that we ourselves are not

willing to affirm, even if that requires some personal risk on our part.

Lieutenant Colonel Dixon understands that life is a struggle, but she is an American. She believes that when we persevere, fairness will ultimately prevail. The United States military is remarkable among the great fighting forces of the modern world.

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More often than not, the young people who have defended us and, all too often, have made the ultimate sacrifice have done so as volunteers.

Last March, President Clinton applauded the service and achievements of all the women who have put on the uniform of the United States and fought for their country. As the President also recognized, however, obstacles to hard-earned recognition all too often remain, in the military and in civilian life.

Mr. Speaker, we must continue to build a military which is as diverse as this wonderful Nation. Never again should gender predetermine a person's opportunity to serve.

The ideals of American women and men, our commitment to freedom, to equality and fairness, have made this country the strongest in the world. We must never forget that. Fairness is the foundation of our freedom.

Today, we acknowledge Lieutenant Colonel Karen Dixon for her competence and her commitment to American ideals and for her tremendous service.

Lieutenant Colonel Dixon has demonstrated that merit will be recognized and fairness will prevail if we persevere. By her actions, she has shown that a commitment to fairness remains the foundation of America's strength. That is why I am so honored to represent Lieutenant Colonel Dixon in the Congress of the United States of America.

APPLAUDING LEADERSHIP IN ADVOCACY OF RIGHTS OF DISABLED PERSONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUYKENDALL). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to join my congratulations and recognize the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities and the American Association of People With Disabilities.

I rise today to applaud the leadership that has been shown in the advocacy for the rights of the disabled, the mentally and physically challenged.

I am delighted to be able to salute the spirit of the ADA torch relay which evidences that we all are created equal. I join my colleagues who have come to this floor to acknowledge that when this country speaks of equality and in its Declaration of Independence, when

it offers to the American people the opportunity for equality and a good quality of life, they speak of everyone no matter what one's position in life and what one's ability.

The people who are physically challenged and mentally challenged have shown us that it is not limiting in their spirit or their ability to achieve. I am very gratified that they continue to press their point of equality and justice.

I believe it is important that we in the United States Congress support the Americans with Disabilities Act in its reauthorization and its implementation. It is important that the businesses of America recognize that they are advantaged by hiring individuals with disabilities.

I recall making a speech some few weeks ago, and I spoke about America's greatness and its diversity. I remember being reminded by someone who came to me in a wheelchair never to forget that diversity is also reflected in Americans with disabilities. Just a few weeks ago, that very same person came to the United States Congress along with 20 other representatives from the community of individuals who are disabled.

Unfortunately, this own Capitol, our own Capitol was very hard for them to access, but, nevertheless, they were not frustrated, they did not yield, and they persisted in getting into the United States Capitol that belongs to all of the American people.

I think it is important that we allow people with disabilities to be independent, and that is why I supported legislation that would not diminish their benefits if they worked, for we all deserve that affirmation that we are able to support ourselves and to stand for ourselves.

I would hope that we, as the United States Congress and the American people, will continue to promote and enhance those who are physically challenged and who may be mentally challenged. People with disabilities are our friends, our brothers, our family members, our sisters, mothers and fathers and our children. They deserve our affirmation.

So today, Mr. Speaker, I rise and affirm them and congratulate them for persisting on the grounds of their own equality, and I seek to have this United States Congress and our legislative initiatives continue to affirm opportunities for them to work and as well making sure that the resources that they earn still allow them to have good health care, good educational resources, good housing.

Again, I implore American businesses to find the talented among Americans with disabilities and for all of us to make sure that everywhere is accessible to all Americans.

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

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extension of Remarks.)

H.R. 4921 AMENDING TITLE 38 TO ENSURE THAT ALL VETERANS EXPOSED TO IONIZING RADIATION ARE CONSIDERED IN FULL FOR THEIR DISABILITY CLAIMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I am introducing a bill to enable veterans exposed to radiation to be considered for medical assistance without regard to their particular level of exposure. The bill, also, expands the definition of radiation-risk activity to include veterans exposed to residual contamination.

The destroyer U.S.S. Brush entered the waters of the Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands, an area contaminated with radiation from a large number of ships that had served as targets during two atmospheric nuclear tests. Crew members of the U.S.S. Brush ate fish and drank water distilled from the bay and crew members made trips to the target vessels to retrieve souvenirs. There was no dosimetry data collected on the U.S.S. Brush or at the Kwajalein Atoll to determine levels of exposure. No safety precautions were taken to prevent exposure and the crew was unaware of the dangers of ionizing radiation.

Veterans who served on the U.S.S. Brush now suffer from a number of diseases that can be linked to radiation exposure. However, their disability claims have repeatedly been denied because they were not onsite participants in an atmospheric nuclear test and they were exposed to low levels of ionizing radiation.

Congress has assisted veterans exposed to radiation in the past. In 1988 Congress passed the Radiation-Exposed Veterans Compensation Act (PL 100-321). This law covered veterans which participated in a radiation risk activity. The law has three definitions of radiation risk activity. They include: onsite participation in a nuclear detonation, occupation of Hiroshima or Nagasaki, Japan, by United States forces during the period beginning on August 6, 1945 and ending on July 1, 1946, and internment as a prisoner of war in Japan during WWII which resulted in the opportunity for exposure to ionizing radiation comparable to that of veterans occupying Hiroshima or Nagasaki. Clearly, this language does not cover those veterans exposed to radiation while in the service of their country.

VA claims that lab tests on these veterans show that levels of residual radiation are not sufficient to sustain their claims for disability. However, these dose levels were based on lab tests, not data collected on sight at the Kwajalein Atoll. This is important because Congress has previously concluded that determining the level of exposure, unless collected onsite, is a futile exercise. Disability claims must be considered without regard to whether any particular level of radiation was measured for that individual especially when exposure is not denied.

Congress must act to ensure that veterans exposed to ionizing radiation either on site or residually be considered for benefits. Without this legislation radiation exposed veterans do

not have a realistic chance of proving their disability claim. I urge my colleagues to support our veterans by co-sponsoring this bill.

NIGHTSIDE CHAT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to go basically over what the comments that I am going to make this evening, but I guess it would be appropriate to make a couple comments about this weekend back in Colorado.

First of all, I would like to express deep appreciation for all the firemen and the firefighters that are so courageously fighting the forest fires that we have out there in Colorado.

As many of my colleagues know, my district is the Third Congressional District of the State of Colorado. That district geographically is larger than the State of Florida. It is essentially all the mountains of the State of Colorado. As one can guess, it is the highest district in the United States. So we have a lot of lightning strikes and so on.

We do have a major fire down at Mesa Verde National Park down at the Four Corners of Colorado. Right now it has consumed about 17,000 acres. The conditions are very tough to fight the fire. But we have got a lot of volunteer firefighters. We have a got a lot of volunteers from the community. We, of course, have our own fire fighting teams. We have got the bombers in there. We have got the helicopter pilots. We just have a lot of cooperation out there in Colorado. So I thank my colleagues for their expressions of support, and I do want to express my deep appreciation for all of the people out there in Colorado who are helping get an upper hand on the fires right there in their Third Congressional District.

Second thing I would like to mention to my colleagues before I go into my comments, and that is I had the privilege Friday of speaking at a service for a Colorado State patrolman, Captain Fred Bitterman. Captain Bitterman was a well-respected officer of the Colorado State Patrol.

I used to be a police officer. I used to know the captain. Of course, I was not on the State Patrol. I was a city police officer.

The service was a very moving service. He has a wonderful family. His commitment to the State of Colorado, his commitment to the Colorado State Patrol, his commitment to his friends, his commitment to the communities was all well represented at that service.

We are going to miss him. The captain did a good job. He was a very, very good man. I have entered into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a congressional tribute in honor of the service that he gave to us. He will be sorely missed.

Mr. Speaker, this evening I would like to address three fundamental subjects, and they are fundamental especially for the younger generations of this country. For the people that are, say, below 45, 45 and under. We hear a lot of discussions going on, but what is the real focus for the future?

There are three items that I would like to talk about that I think focus on the future that our young people that are under 45 years of age should take special interest in, because I think our generation over 45 years of age owes something to this generation, not owes in the way of a giveaway, but owes in the way that we have a responsibility to move this country forward in such a fashion that these three elements have some sense of protection or some sense of right direction for the generation that follows us.

The first topic that I am going to visit with tonight is this death tax. Then I am going to move from the death tax into the marriage penalty. Then from the marriage penalty, I would like to talk about Social Security. In all three of these areas, there is a distinct difference between what the administration, President Clinton and AL GORE, are advocating and what is being advocated by the Bush team. I think it is fair to reflect on those this evening when I have these discussions with my colleagues.

Let me first of all begin on the death tax. As my colleagues know, I have spoken several times on this House floor in regards to what that death tax does and how devastating it is in this community. What has been of interest is the people opposed to this, including the Clinton administration, and, by the way, I refer specifically to the administration's policies, because I want my colleagues to know here in the House of Representatives we actually had 65 Democrats who voted to eliminate the death tax. So here in the House we have had a bipartisan effort, both Democrats and Republicans, going out there and recognizing just how punitive, how punishing the death tax is.

Well, since the debate started taking place on this several weeks ago, I have noted a number of different comments in our national press. One thing that is of special interest, I think, or a counterpoint I guess one would make, my point being that the death tax is devastating for a community as a whole; and the counterpoint that is being put out there by some of the liberal media writers I guess one would say is, wait a minute, all this does is favors the wealthy in this country.

Well, I want to talk about what I call the trickle-down impact of what that death tax does, not only just in a community, but what it does to family farms and family ranches.

For example, right here, we will have a family ranch. Now, I can tell my colleagues that most working ranches, at least the ones I am familiar with, and I have been on a lot of ranches in my career, but most of the family ranches