

AIR FORCE PILOT RETENTION
ISSUE

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

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk a little bit tonight about the state of our military. I was with my good friend, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. JIMMY SEXTON) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SAXBY CHAMBLISS), two great members of the Committee on National Security this morning, observing a very interesting and unusual exercise from our takeoff point at Andrews Air Force Base. That was the refueling of a C-5 aircraft somewhere over Pennsylvania. We went up and married up with an aircraft and refueled her out of Dover, out of Delaware, undertook a refueling.

We had an opportunity to talk to our folks, our military folks, while we were doing that, briefly, before the flight and during the flight. Mr. Speaker, I harken back to the days when I came into Congress in 1980. In those days one of our biggest problems was what we called the people problem.

Coming from a Navy town, San Diego, I saw that problem manifested in the thousands of chief petty officers who were getting out of the Navy. Those were the people that really knew how to make the ships sail. It was a tremendous loss. We had a thousand petty officers a month leaving the Navy, and we could not replace them.

As I was briefed by these fine young men and women in the Air Force this morning, I could see that we are revisiting that people problem. It is probably across the board, but what we focused on today was the United States Air Force.

I want to quote General Ryan, Chief of Staff of the Air Force. He said that last year more than 800 pilots refused bonuses of \$60,000 to extend their time in service 5 years beyond the 9 they signed up for. Only 36 percent of the pilots at the 9-year mark agreed to stay on, while the Air Force goal was 50 percent, to avoid shortages.

Mr. Speaker, that means that we are going to probably have a shortage of about 835 pilots this year. The taxpayers pay about \$6 million, on the average, to train a pilot. When we lose a pilot from the United States Air Force and he goes out ahead of his retirement time to work for an airline company or to gain employment in another civilian field, we lose a great asset.

□ 2000

We not only lose the \$6 million of training time because when we find another pilot to take his place, we have to expend that \$6- to \$8 million to train that pilot up, but we also lose the great experience. And, of course, there is a time lapse between losing those experienced pilots and bringing on the newly trained pilots. So we are losing this resource.

We have been asking people why they are leaving. They are not leaving be-

cause of money. A few of them are citing dollars or pay as a reason for leaving, but a lot of them are citing, most of them are citing what they call quality of life. And a lot of that has to do with what we were told about this morning as being the extreme OPTEMPO of our operations. We have a much smaller Air Force now, for example. We are down from 24 fighter airwings during Desert Storm to only about 13 today. Of course that reduction is reflected across the array of U.S. Air Force aircraft. What that means, if you are a pilot or a crewman on one of those aircraft or a ground crew, is that you are going to be working longer hours. You are going to be called up when you do not expect to be called up and when you have some pressing business to do with your own family. That means a lot of our folks are not there to see their son's graduation or their daughter's wedding or any of the other things that we do on the civilian side, on the family side that makes life bearable.

Because of that, a lot of folks are saying, we are not in a war, this is not an emergency; I am going to get a job in an area where I can spend a lot more down time with my family. So this is a family decision that people are making sitting around the kitchen table and unfortunately they are making it, they are coming down on the side of leaving the Air Force.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of these folks that are leaving are the senior people who are qualified in very important fields. A lot of them are instructor pilots. A lot of them are examiner pilots. Aerial refueling-qualified pilots, that is very important because the United States has the bulk and the backbone of the free world's refueling capability. A lot of them are airdrop-qualified pilots and special operation pilots. And so, Mr. Speaker, we are facing this time when, even though we are paying \$22,000 additional bonuses now to try to keep these pilots in, we are seeing this continued retreat and exodus from the Air Force of some of our most valuable and qualified people.

We are going to have to do something about that. It is probably going to be, part of that answer to this problem is going to be raising the top line because we are going to need to have more planes and more pilots if we are going to do this job that we have been asked to do over the last several years which has extended our OPTEMPO. I will be talking tomorrow about some other problems.

ON CHILD CARE

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

Mr. SNYDER. I could not help but think, when the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) was speaking, I have Little Rock Air Force base in my

district and one of the places I like to visit on the base is the child care center there. It is a top flight, very high-quality child care at the center, but it is one of those issues that most Americans do not think about, that so many of our military dependents now have children and they have to be cared for or their parents will decide to get out of the Air Force.

What I wanted to discuss briefly with my colleague, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) is this issue of quality child care. I am from Arkansas. We have a lot of working families there that have two folks working or single-parent families and the parent needs to work. How do you find quality child care during the day or the evening when your kids are home alone?

I am also a family doctor. We have seen a lot of research come out in the last couple years about how important brain development is in the early years of a child's life and that again points to the need for quality child care.

A lot of my district, Mr. Speaker, is rural. As I have traveled around the district, a lot of the parents do not have the option in the rural areas for quality child care that some of the other areas of my district and of the country do. Based on that basis of information and experience, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) and myself worked on a bill that would provide a source of funding that would give school districts in America the option of beginning a quality child care program for their parents if they should choose to in their school districts.

I yield to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) to discuss the topic further.

Mr. ALLEN. I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) and I have been working on this legislation for some time. It is called the Education Child Care Partnership Act. This has been something we and our staffs have really put some time and energy into. It is a bill that, if passed, would really expand working families' options for quality care for their young children.

In Maine, when I ran for this office, I called for a new national initiative on child care, and I did that because as I traveled around my district in Maine, what I heard from young parents consistently, day in and day out, was that they were finding that child care was, number one, not readily available and, number two, often more expensive than they could afford. Every day all across this country many parents simply have to go to work and now trust the most precious, the most important people in their lives, their children, to someone else.

We have in this country 13 million kids under the age of 6 in child care during the day. And too much of that child care is of mediocre quality but still not affordable to most working families. The Education Child Care

Partnership Act, which the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) and I have been working on, would provide families with an affordable, accessible, and quality option for child care for our youngest children.

The bill really focuses on children between the ages of zero and six. It earmarks funds within the child care and development block grant for States to fund local education agencies which choose to provide full-day, year-round, school-based child care for children age zero to six. What we are looking for is a seamless system of childhood, early childhood education, because what we have found is that sometimes we have a child care system over here with some child care centers and lots of in-home care, and then over here we have an education institution which really does not begin until the ages of 5 or 6.

What we need to do is create, for those States that want it, complete flexibility, complete choice, the option of funding some child care in a school-based setting for a wide variety of reasons. It can be cheaper because the facilities are already provided. It can be quality, because the playground is already there and more resources can go into the care givers.

So that is why we did this work, that is why we put this bill together.

I thank the gentleman from Arkansas for all his work on this bill.

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, I want to describe a situation in one town when I first started thinking about this idea, in Pangburn, Arkansas in White County. White County is where Harding University is, if you are familiar with that college. About 12 years ago the superintendent of the school board there decided that they had a need for child care. They had an industry there. There was no profit or nonprofit groups that had come in with child care and so they took an old building on the campus and converted it into quality child care that begins at 6 weeks. It is now a model for what can be done in a State if a school district chooses to.

I wanted to say a couple things. First of all, one of the things I like about this plan is it is completely local control. It is an elected school board that can decide to participate or not to participate in applying for these grants. Also the way we have crafted the bill, it does provide some money there that the money could be used to help build the facility, a quality child care facility.

MORE ON CHILD CARE

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

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue this dialogue just a little bit longer and start with a few remarks, and then I will yield back to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) again.

One of the things I found is that for families with more than one child, transportation issues can really be a

headache because they have got one child in school, another child going to child care somewhere else in the city or town. And if they can drop their children off at one place, life is simpler. And some school-based programs extend the use of school bus services to children participating in child care programs.

I think this is a new direction for child care and education in this country. It is not going on everywhere, but it is going on in my district in Maine. It is going on in Arkansas. It is going on in a number of places around the country. Some families, some parents tell me that when a school vacation comes or summer vacation comes, it is really hard to find a place for our kids to go. We do not want to leave them at home watching television all the time. We want someplace where they will be motivated, interested, and have some programs that are helpful to them. The programs that would be eligible under this bill are full-day, year-round programs. So they would be targeted at schools that will stay open during school vacations for the purposes of providing child care, and they will stay open during the summers for the purposes of providing child care.

Quality school-based care programs utilize existing resources in that school, such as arts supplies, sports equipment, playgrounds and so on. And it really gives school employees and social service agencies a way to enhance the quality of the programs that they provide.

I believe that school-based care makes logical sense for both school-aged children as well as preschool children. I believe firmly that if we do not deal with the issues that kids have between zero and six, if we do not pay attention to that age group, we are missing a chance to help kids get off on the right foot. What we need is the national will to leave no child behind and the resources to make that happen. I believe that a country that can support the salaries of players in the NBA and the NFL and major league baseball can take better care of its kids.

So I rise today to challenge my colleagues to commit to policies and practices that reflect the importance of those early years in a child's life. Our mission is simple: Leave no child behind.

I want to thank the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) because the Education Child Care Partnership Act has been a partnership between our offices, and we now can look forward to having other Members of this body support it.

I yield to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) for concluding comments.

Mr. SNYDER. First of all, anyone involved in child care recognizes there has been tremendous work done by other entities. We do not see this as being a competition. We actually would only see school boards stepping in if there was not quality child care going on in their communities. So there is always going to be a place for

the profit-making ventures, the non-profit churches that have child care for Head Start. This is not intended at all to be competing with those. But when you have communities, particularly in rural areas, that do not have any of those options available or the options there are not meeting the need, I think this gives a community another option through their local officials with completely local control. Also just the quality aspect of it. I was visiting one school one day that had an early childhood program connected to a school building. The kids were taken down to the science lab when there was a teachers' break from other classes and these little kids, little toddlers, were getting little science demonstrations there in the high school science lab. So there are tremendous opportunities for a community to put together a program. We are intending this grant money to be start-up money to help the schools meet the needs in their communities for quality child care.

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

(Mr. WISE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

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

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, Members in the Congress recently released a report, "Making Work Pay," by the Economic Policy Institute which examined the impact of the increase in the minimum wage in the 104th Congress to \$5.15.

This report was most encouraging, concluding that increasing the income of the working poor was good for them and good for the Nation's economy. These report findings give strong support for a further increase in the minimum wage. As some are aware, there is legislation to increase the minimum wage to \$6.15 an hour by the year 2000. We should consider this legislation this year.

The last increase was during the 104th Congress by 90 cents over 2 years, from \$4.25 to \$5.15. The last time the wage was increased by Congress before the 104th Congress was 1991.

Since 1991, the minimum wage remained constant while the cost of living rose 11 percent. That is the cost for food, the cost for transportation, cost for shelter and energy to heat our homes.

A single mother supporting two kids at a minimum wage makes \$10.70, \$2,600 below the poverty line. The report demonstrates that raising the minimum wage benefits primarily adult workers. The report indicates that almost three-fourths, that is 71 percent