end of the bargain. They are now realizing that these were nothing more than empty promises.

Those who served in the military did not let their country down in its time of need and we should not let military retirees down in theirs. It's time military retirees get what was promised to them and that's why I am introducing this legislation.

THE FILIPINO VETERANS SSI EXTENSION ACT, H.R. 26

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce H.R. 26, the Filipino Veterans SSI Extension Act.

For the last several Congresses, I have introduced the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, a bill which would provide full veterans benefits to those veterans of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines.

Although hearings were held on this bill last year, the prospect of legislative action on a comprehensive benefit package for Filipino veterans appears unlikely. Therefore, I am offering this measure in part to provide some relief for those Filipino veterans residing in the United States who currently receive supplemental security income benefits.

Under current law, individuals who receive SSI benefits must relinquish those benefits if they choose to leave the country. This bill would permit those who were members of the Filipino Commonwealth Army and recognized guerilla units during World War II to continue to receive SSI benefits if they elect to return to the Philippines.

These benefits would be reduced by 50 percent if the individual veteran returned to the Philippines, to reflect the lower cost of living and per capita income of that nation.

It is estimated that several thousand veterans would be affected, many of whom are financially unable to petition their families to immigrate to the United States. Should this bill be adopted, these veterans would be able to return to their families in the Philippines while bringing a decent income with them.

Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this worthwhile measure.

H.R. 26

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. PROVISION OF REDUCED SSI BENEFIT TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS WHO PROVIDED SERVICE TO THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE PHILIPPINES DURING WORLD WAR II AFTER THEY MOVE BACK TO THE PHILIPPINES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding sections 1611(b), 1611(f)(1), and 1614(a)(1)(B)(i) of the Social Security Act—

(1) the eligibility of a qualified individual for benefits under the supplemental security income program under title XVI of such Act shall not terminate by reason of a change in the place of residence of the individual to the Philippines; and

(2) the benefits payable to the individual under such program shall be reduced by 50 percent for so long as the place of residence of the individual is in the Philippines.

(b) QUALIFIED INDIVIDUAL DEFINED.—In subsection (a), the term ''qualified individual'' means an individual who—

(1) as of January 1, 1990, was eligible for benefits under the supplemental security income program under title XVI of the Social Security Act; and

(2) before August 15, 1945, served in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines while such forces were in the service of the Armed Forces of the United States pursuant to the military order of the President dated July 26, 1941, including among such military forces organized guerrilla forces under commanders appointed, designated, or subsequently recognized by the Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, or other competent military authority in the Army of the United States.

HONORING MY FRIEND, BASEBALL LEGEND NOLAN RYAN, ON HIS ELECTION TO THE HALL OF FAME

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay honor to my long-time friend, Nolan Ryan, on the announcement of his election to the Baseball Hall of Fame. I've known Nolan for many years, and I knew him as a kind, generous man who seeks to do what is right and just. It seems there are so few heroes for kids today, especially in athletics, but I can sincerely commend Nolan Ryan as a true hero of our times, a role-model for our youth, and a man worthy of honor and respect.

Nolan was born in Refugio, Texas, a historic town in my congressional district, but he was destined for the national stage. His successful career spanned 27 years, taking him from rural Texas to the dug-outs of the New York Mets, the California Angels, the Houston Astros and the Texas Rangers. He pitched a record seven no-hitter games, but his real fame comes from having pitched 5,714 strikeouts.

Nolan told newspaper reporters yesterday that he never viewed himself as a ''hall of famer.'' For once, I have to disagree with my friend. He is Hall of Fame material not only for his prowess on the field, but for his strong character and unwavering dedication to his family, his friends, his beliefs, and his God.

I trust all my colleagues join me in congratulating Nolan Ryan.

GOOD ADVICE ON THE STATE OF THE UNION CEREMONIES

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member strongly commends to the attention of his colleagues an editorial found in the January 5, 1999, edition of the Omaha World Herald entitled, ''Discreet State of Union Would Do.'' The editorial appropriately points out that during recent years during a president's State of the Union address ''supporters bounce up and down giving standing ovations in response to choreographed rhetorical flourishes. His opponents, also playing to the cameras, signify displeasure with stony silence. Or they disproportionately applaud such presidential lines as, ''We must do better,'' when ''better'' refers to a policy that the opponents support.''

Indeed, it should be obvious to Members of Congress and to much of the American public that the atmosphere now attending the delivery of a State of the Union address has become high political theater which does not serve the reputation of the Congress well; nor does it reassure the American public that the Congress or the President are seriously attempting to work together to address the problems and opportunities facing our nation. It has degenerated into the kind of exaggerated conduct that one would expect to find in an old-fashioned melodrama. It is time for a change, and the editorial makes some relevant points and suggestions about directions for such changes. This Member urges his colleagues and especially leaders of the Congress to work with the President and his successor to make appropriate modifications in the manner in which the State of the Union is presented to the Congress.

DISCREET STATE OF UNION WOULD DO

Some U.S. senators, including Democrats Robert Torricelli of New Jersey and Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, say it would be inappropriate for President Clinton to appear before a joint session of Congress to report on the State of the Union while his impeachment trial is pending. It would not be a national tragedy if Clinton listened to them.

Nothing in the Constitution says a president must deliver a prime-time, televised speech from the House of Representatives every year. It says only that the president ''shall from time to time give to the Congress information of the state of the union, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.'' George Washington and John Adams addressed joint sessions of Congress in person. Thomas Jefferson discontinued the practice. He said a personal appearance was too monarchical a ceremony for the leader of a democratic republic.

Written State of the Union addresses—often not much more than a collection of bureaucratic reports from the departments of the executive branch—were delivered to Congress until 1913, when Woodrow Wilson resurrected the tradition of a presidential speech. Wilson said he wanted to show ''that the president of the United States is a person, not a mere department of the government hailing Congress from some isolated island of jealous power, sending messages, not speaking naturally with his own voice—that he is a human being trying to cooperate with other human beings in a common service.''

It's hard to quibble with that proposition. But the development of television since Wilson's time has put the State of the Union address in a different light. The president is now one of the most visible persons in the world. And the event Wilson described as a chance for the president to speak naturally with his own voice about common service to the people has devolved into a glitzy production heavy on style and light on substance.

In the modern television age, the formula is the same regardless of which party holds the White House. As senators and representatives look on in the House chamber, the president's entrance is preceded by processions of Cabinet members and Supreme Court justices. Members of the president's

party send up a raucous cheer when the chief executive enters the chamber. Even people who despise the president jostle to be captured on camera smiling, clapping and cheering for him.

Throughout the address, the president's supporters bounce up and down giving standing ovations in response to choreographed rhetorical flourishes. His opponents, also playing to the cameras, signify displeasure with stony silence. Or they disproportionately applaud such presidential lines as ''We must do better,'' when ''better'' refers to a policy that the opponents support.

The president tosses rhetorical bouquets to people seated in the House gallery—his family, disabled veterans, civilian heroes.

The State of the Union address has become a long, shallow and predictable bit of political theater. A reversion to Jeffersonian discretion, considering the current circumstances, wouldn't be a bad thing.

COMMENTS ON 1ST SWEARING IN—THE 106TH CONGRESS

HON. JOHN E. SWEENEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, my newly confirmed colleagues of the 106th Congress. I am truly honored to be here today joining this distinguished group of Americans from across our great nation. Standing shoulder-to-shoulder in the U.S. Capitol today with these Members of the 106th Congress is an honor exceeded only by that of representing the wonderful people of the 22nd District of New York.

Mr. Speaker, I am truly humbled by the awesome responsibility and I am invigorated by the challenge before me—to carry on the tradition of my esteemed predecessor, Jerry Solomon, and to advance policies beneficial to the 600,000 people I now represent.

Today is a day dominated by idealistic visions and profound rhetoric. While I bring with me today the ideals of freedom and opportunity, I am riveted in the reality that these notions must be translated into concrete results in people's everyday life. Bringing tax relief to hard working families, promoting economic development to create new job opportunities, taking significant steps to ensure a safe and drug-free environment in our schools—All these examples make a difference in the homes of the people of the Hudson Valley and Adirondack Mountains of New York and all will be my priorities as I take the oath of office today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my family, those that are here today and those that could not make the trip, for all their love and support as we begin this new endeavor. I would like to thank Congressman Solomon a truly great American, for his two decades of dedicated and tireless service to the citizens of the 22nd District of New York. And thank you to those same citizens that have entrusted me to advance their views here in the U.S. Capitol.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESCRIBED BURNS IN AREA NATIONAL FORESTS

HON. JAMES E. ROGAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, recent figures from the Department of the Interior indicate that the cost of fighting severe wildfires has risen from $100 million per year just two decades ago, to well over $1 billion today. In addition, wildfires every year destroy hundreds of acres of forest lands, threatening lives, home and air quality.

In many remote regions of the country, forestry officials use small, controlled fires known as ''prescribed burns'' to remove excess underbrush that fuels severe wildfires. In so doing, they eliminate a major source of fuel of wildfires, while also promoting healthier forest growth.

In metropolitan ares like Los Angeles, however, officials are prevented from expanding this procedure due to air quality regulations that limit emissions from all sources—wildfires, burns, smog, and the like. Last year alone, these officials wanted to burn more than 20,000 acres to protect local residents from out-of-control wildfires. Bureaucratic regulations, however, permitted the burning of only 2,000 acres—well below safety expert's recommendations.

Working with Representatives DREIER, MCKEON and local forestry and air quality officials, I have introduced the Forest Protection Act. This measure will ease current restrictions for ten years to allow officials to conduct an expanded prescribed burn program. Over the time-year period, local officials will monitor forest health and air quality to ensure that both improve over time.

Local forestry officials are not the only experts to recognize the importance of this procedure. Both Interior Secretary Babbit and Environmental Protection Agency chief Carol Browner have publicly supported prescribed burns as a means to promote forest health and prevent severe wildfires.

The Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act will give forestry officials the ability to use this time-tested technique to protect area residents and air quality while supporting the delicate ecological balance in our forests.

NOTCH BABY ACT OF 1999

HON. JO ANN EMERSON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mrs. EMERSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Notch Baby Act of 1999 which would create a new alternative transition computation formula for Social Security benefits for those seniors born between 1917 and 1921. These seniors, who are generally referred to as ''Notch Babies,'' have been receiving lower monthly Social Security benefits than seniors born in the years just prior to or after this five year period.

There are those who dispute the existence of a Notch problem. However, take into consideration the following example presented in a 1994 report by the Commission on Social Security Notch Issue. There are two workers who retired at the same age with the same average career earnings. One was born on December 31, 1916 and the other was born on January 2, 1917. Both retired in 1982 at the age of 65. The retiree born in 1917 receives $110 a month less in Social Security benefits than did the retiree born just two days before in 1996. Also take into consideration that there are currently more than 6 million seniors in our Nation who are faced with this painfully obvious inequity in the Social Security benefit computation formula.

By phasing in an improved benefit formula over five years, the Notch Baby Act of 1999 will restore fairness and equality in the Social Security benefit computation formula for the Notch Babies. For once and for all this legislation would put to rest the Notch issue, and it would put an end to the constant barrage of mailings and fundraising attempts which target our Nation's seniors in the name of Notch reform. Our seniors deserve fairness and equality in the Social Security system. They deserve an end to the repeated congressional stalling on this issue. I urge my colleagues in the House to discuss this issue with the seniors in their districts, and to join me in ensuring that the Notch issue is addressed in the 106th Congress.

INTRODUCING H.R. 218, THE COMMUNITY PROTECTION ACT

HON. RANDY ''DUKE'' CUNNINGHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, today I am reintroducing my legislation to permit qualified current and former law enforcement officers to carry a concealed firearm in any jurisdiction. This measure is called the Community Protection Act, and I have requested that it be assigned the same bill number as in previous Congresses—H.R. 218.

The Community Protection Act provides three benefits to our police and to our country.

First, it effectively provides thousands more trained cops on the beat—at zero taxpayer cost.

Second, it enables current and former law enforcement officers to protect themselves and their families from criminals. When a criminal completes his or her sentence, that criminal can find where their arresting officer lives, where their corrections officer travels, and other information about our brave law enforcement personnel and their families.

And, third, it helps keep our communities safer from criminals.

This measure is very similar to the H.R. 218 reported by the Judiciary Committee in the 105th Congress, with one exception: this version for the 106th Congress does not address the matter of interstate reciprocity for holders of civilian concealed carry licenses. This measure affects police only.

In the interest of providing Members and the public additional background information on the Community Protection Act, I have attached below some excerpts from the Committee report accompanying H.R. 218 from the 105th Congress (H. Rept. 105–819), and my testimony before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, the details of which remain applicable to the legislation I introduce today: