

Abdullah and other Arab leaders to help reform the Palestinian leadership, as outlined by President Bush on June 24, 2002, from one based on corruption, incitement, terror and suicide bombings to one based on democracy, peace and constructive dialogue. This will be the major thrust of my conversations with the Crown Prince this Sunday in Jeddah. It is important to note that Crown Prince Abdullah and other Saudi officials have already played a constructive role in the reform effort by assisting the Palestinians in writing a new constitution. Without concerted international pressure, there will be no genuine reform of the Palestinian leadership and, I fear, no end to suicide bombings. These terrorist acts must end if we are to reach a comprehensive and lasting regional peace based on security, recognition for Israel, and statehood for the Palestinians. Indeed, the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to have a nation of their own will be destroyed unless there is a change of attitude among those in the Arab and Muslim worlds who encourage and provide moral, financial and material support to so-called martyrs who commit these heinous, inhuman and immoral terrorist acts.

As a strong supporter of an unbreakable bond between the United States and Israel, I care deeply about the future security and prosperity of the Jewish homeland. In meetings with Saudi leaders, I will remind them of the unprecedented terrorism the Israeli people have faced over the past 20 months and the tragic toll that suicide bombers have inflicted on innocent Israelis. It is also imperative they understand that like America, Israel has the right to defend herself against these barbaric attacks and that the United States will stand in solidarity with Israel during this difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to avert another tragedy like September 11 and defeat the scourge of terrorism, America needs allies—we cannot do it alone. I am going to Saudi Arabia because more effective cooperation and understanding between our two countries is fundamental to winning the international war on terrorism, and members of Congress must play more than just a consenting role in that effort.

PUBLIC SAFETY TAX CUT ACT

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2002

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Public Safety Tax Cut Act. This legislation will achieve two important public policy goals.

First, it will effectively overturn a ruling of the Internal Revenue Service which has declared as taxable income the waiving of fees by local governments who provide service for public safety volunteers.

Many local governments use volunteer firefighters and auxiliary police either in place of, or as a supplement to, their public safety professionals. Often as an incentive to would-be volunteers, the local entities might waive all or a portion of the fees typically charged for city services such as the provision of drinking water, sewerage charges, or debris pick up. Local entities make these decisions for the purpose of encouraging folks to volunteer, and seldom do these benefits come anywhere

near the level of a true compensation for the many hours of training and service required of the volunteers. This, of course, not even to mention the fact that these volunteers could very possibly be called into a situation where they may have to put their lives on the line.

Rather than encouraging this type of volunteerism, which is so crucial, particularly to America's rural communities, the IRS has decided that the provision of the benefits described above amount to taxable income. Not only does this adversely affect the financial position of the volunteer by foisting new taxes about him or her, it has in fact led local entities to stop providing these benefits, thus taking away a key tool they have used to recruit volunteers. That is why the IRS ruling in this instance has a substantial deleterious impact on the spirit of American volunteerism. How far could this go? For example, would consistent application mean that a local Salvation Army volunteer be taxed for the value of a complimentary ticket to that organization's annual county dinner? This is obviously bad policy.

This legislation would rectify this situation by specifically exempting these types of benefits from federal taxation.

Next, this legislation would also provide paid professional police and fire officers with a \$1,000 per year tax credit. These professional public safety officers put their lives on the line each and every day, and I think we all agree that there is no way to properly compensate them for the fabulous services they provide. In America we have a tradition of local law enforcement and public safety provision. So, while it is not the role of our federal government to increase the salaries of these, it certainly is within our authority to increase their take-home pay by reducing the amount of money that we take from their pockets via federal taxation, and that is something this bill specifically does as well.

President George Bush has called on Americans to volunteer their time and energy to enhancing public safety. Shouldn't Congress do its part by reducing taxes that discourage public safety volunteerism? Shouldn't Congress also show its appreciation to police officers and fire fighters by reducing their taxes? I believe the answer to both of these questions is a resounding "Yes" and therefore I am proud to introduce the Public Safety Tax Cut Act. I request that my fellow Members join in support of this key legislation.

IN HONOR OF HEROES WHO HAVE FOUGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY

HON. ALBERT RUSSELL WYNN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2002

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Speaker, as we approach Independence Day, I submit for the RECORD a speech given in my Congressional District on Memorial Day, by James E. Merna of 7503 Dover Lane, Lanham, Maryland, honoring the heroism of veterans from Prince George's County, Maryland, that have fought to protect our freedoms.

HONORING FIVE SONS OF PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY, MARYLAND, THAT HAVE FOUGHT TO PROTECT OUR FREEDOMS

(By James E. Merna, Former Maryland State Commandant, Marine Corps League)

Thank you Mayor Harrington, Councilwoman Marion Hoffman, Bill Hickey, other Town of Bladensburg elected and appointed officials, members of American Legion Post 131, leaders of other veterans organizations, and fellow veterans. Thank you for inviting me. I am pleased to be here.

The town and citizens of Bladensburg should take great pride for the many years you have conducted ceremonies such as this. Bladensburg is not only a historic town—a famous port town—it is also a very patriotic town. Thanks also to Colmar Manor American Legion Post 131 for helping to make these events happen.

Memorial Day, as it is now observed, is a special day set aside to remember the service and sacrifice made by Americans who answered their country's call to duty in all wars—those who gave their lives, those who served and returned, those who were injured or disabled as a result of their service those who remain missing in action, and those who serve today in Afghanistan and around the world to defend freedom and to fight terrorism.

In my remarks today, I want to talk about five brave Sons of Prince George's County, who answered their nation's call, and of their courage, devotion to duty, and personal sacrifice. I believe it is a message for all, but especially for our young people. Better role model other than their parents or close relatives, they could not have.

I stress younger people in light of an announcement from the U.S. Department of Education this month that said "More than half of America's high school seniors do not have even the most basic grasp of U.S. history, showing no improvement in a nationwide test since 1994."

The Education Department issued a national history "report card" which measured the performance last year of fourth, eighth and 12th graders in history. Students did not know, for instance, that America's fundamental belief in individual liberty was expressed in the Declaration of Independence, or that the image of UNCLE SAM was used to appeal to patriotism during wartime.

Educators said the results were "truly abysmal," pointing out that the higher the grade and closer a student was to voting age, the lower the understanding of U.S. history.

In grade 12, only 43 percent of students had a basic or proficient knowledge of history. More than a third of fourth graders and nearly 40 percent of eighth graders also did not have a basic understanding of the subject. The Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, stressed that "basic" is the bottom of the achievement ladder. And, he said, they didn't even reach that—"the lowest rung."

In this complex day and age, this is troublesome. History is a key component of our nation's school curriculum, and it is through history that we understand our past and contemplate our future. Especially following the September 11 attacks that targeted U.S. democracy. It is appalling that some of the questions that stumped students involved the most fundamental concepts of America's democracy. Our work is cut out for us—we need more enlightened students—and better trained history teachers.

The first notable Son of Prince George's County that I want to mention, is one of your very own, a life-long resident of Bladensburg. When I think of him, I'm reminded of the many great songs that were popular during World War II. And I'm referring to records, not CD's, tapes, or DVD's.

Among the best in my opinion, were three: (1) There'll be Bluebirds Over, the White Cliffs of Dover," sung by Vera Lynn (2) "Long Ago and Far Away," made famous by Jo Stafford, and (3) "When the Lights Go On Again, All Over the World," sung by Vaughn Monroe.

This individual, I am about to name, and many others of his generation exemplified the very ideals inscribed at the base of this Peace Cross Memorial: endurance, courage, devotion, and valor. Because of their wartime service and sacrifice, they made it possible for the bluebirds once again to fly over the White Cliffs of Dover, for the lights to come on again all over the world, in a global struggle long ago and far away.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you to join with me in applause for one of your finest citizens, a World War II Navy veteran of many battles in the Pacific, a venerable gentleman who will celebrate his 88th birthday in August, the Chairman-Emeritus of Bladensburg's Promotions Committee—Mr. Bill Hickey.

Let us never forget that we have yet to erect a Memorial on the Mall in Washington for our World War II veterans, and we're losing these veterans at an astounding rate of 1500 a day. Like all of you, I want to see that overdue Memorial built—and soon, as a tribute to the Bill Hickey's and all our World War II veterans. I have a personal interest in this Memorial as well. My oldest brother George was killed in action in World War II. He went down with his ship, LST 577, sunk by a torpedo from a Japanese submarine in the Philippines, on February 11, 1945. He was 19 years old.

Let me mention another truly outstanding Son of Prince George's County—one who epitomized the motto of those long ago great Notre Dame football teams coached by the legendary Knute Rockne. Coach Rockne once said the motto of his teams was: Don't Let Your Buddy Down—a motto which he admitted he borrowed from our Marine Corps on the battlefields of World War I.

Captain Jim Graham grew up in Prince George's County, in Accokeek, finished high school in Brandywine, and graduated from Frostburg State College in 1963. His family later lived in Forestville. He was a career Marine officer serving in Vietnam in 1967. Listen to this stirring account of Captain Graham's heroic actions as described by General Lewis W. Walt, former Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps: "Captain Jim Graham was a young company commander serving with our 5th Marine Regiment in Vietnam. His company, while in the attack, came under heavy fire from mortars and small arms which immediately inflicted large numbers of casualties in his Second Platoon. Graham, upon seeing this, organized and boldly led a fierce assault through the Second Platoon's position, forcing the enemy to abandon the machine gun position, thereby relieving some of the pressure on the platoon and enabling evacuation of the wounded to a more secure area. During the afternoon and early evening, Graham's small force stood steadfast in its hard-won enclave. He was wounded twice while personally accounting for 15 enemies killed. His battalion commander ordered him to withdraw to friendly lines. Graham reacted by sending all of his men back except one man who could not be moved due to the seriousness of his wounds. He apologized to his battalion commander for not completely carrying out the order to withdraw, but said 'I just can't leave this young Marine, keep the firing coming through Colonel, we are hurting them.' About 20 minutes later, Captain Graham radioed: 'This is my last transmission. I am being assaulted by at least 25 of them. It's been a pleasure soldiering with

you.' Captain Jim Graham was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic deeds that day."

A year later, I had the privilege to attend a ceremony at 8th and I, Marine Barracks, Washington, DC when Captain Graham's widow, Janice, accepted the Nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor, in her husband's name. It was the first Medal of Honor to be awarded to a Marylander in the Vietnam War.

Another Prince George's great, the late Maryland State Senator Ed Conroy, was a highly decorated army Korean War hero who led the defense of Heartbreak Ridge. He was severely wounded twice, lost an arm and sustained burns over 90 percent of his body. Among his decorations were the Silver Star, and two Purple Hearts. Ed had a miraculous recovery and went on to earn a law degree from Georgetown University. He never forgot his fellow veterans and was known in the Maryland Senate as the champion legislator for all veterans legislation. I had the pleasure to organize a testimonial dinner for Ed when he was elected as National Commander of the Disabled American Veterans. On many occasions when I would introduce him, he would have me say with pride that he was "the closest to a Marine without being a Marine." We miss Ed and his tireless energy. A great patriot. Many of you, I'm sure, know Ed's widow, Mary Conroy. She serves Prince George's County today with much distinction, as a Member of the House of Delegates in Annapolis.

Moving along, I want to mention two other notable Sons of Prince George's County who served their nation with honor in Vietnam: Charles E. "Butch" Joeckel, Jr., and John Clements, both distinguished combat Marines.

Butch Joeckel was raised in Colmar Manor, within walking distance of this monument. He graduated from Bladensburg High School in 1965, joined the Marines in 1966, and went to Vietnam in 1967. He was a 20-year-old squad leader and only in Vietnam three months when his river boat was ambushed during the Tet Offensive in January 1968. While searching out a suspected enemy position ashore, one of his men inadvertently stepped on a land mine, triggering an explosion which blew off both of Butch's legs above the knee. Seven other Marines were wounded by the blast. Despite his severe injuries, Butch maintained exceptional presence of mind and called for a medical evacuation and directed the clearing of a helicopter landing zone.

As is the case with all seriously wounded servicemen and those killed in action, a military officer is usually assigned to make personal contact with the family. The casualty notification officers, as they are called, was in Butch's case, a Marine Lieutenant just back from Vietnam. It was my brother, Jerry Merna. When Jerry got back home that night, in Alexandria, Va., he called to let me know he had just been in Colmar Manor, visiting with Butch's parents. He let me know of the severity of Butch's wounds.

For me, that was the beginning of a 34-year friendship, to this day, with Butch. I soon rounded up a few other former Marines and we visited Butch at the Philadelphia Naval Hospital. In fact, we brought him home once he was discharged, back to his boyhood home—at 3605 40th Place, in Colmar Manor, where his dad, a World War II veteran, still lives. On the way home, we made a detour, to Peter Connell's Restaurant on Annapolis Road, now called The Italian Inn, for "refreshments."

I was with Butch at a ceremony at Headquarters Marine Corps when he was awarded the Silver Star, the nation's third highest

award for bravery in combat. It was presented to him by four-star General Lewis W. Walt, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. Earlier, in the Korean War, General Walt was my Commanding Officer, when he commanded the 5th Marine Regiment, First Marine Division. When pinning the medal on Butch, General Walt said, "This is one of the proudest moments of my military career, for I am more proud of Butch than of any Marine I know." That was quite a compliment coming from someone like General Walt, who during his military career, won two Navy Crosses and the Silver Star in World War II, the Legion of Merit, and the Bronze Star in Korea, and the Distinguished Service Medal as the Commander of Marines in Vietnam.

This was not the first meeting Butch had with General Walt. Back on July 6, 1968, thirty-four years ago, I had the pleasure of organizing a Welcome Home Parade for Butch. The parade commenced right here at this very site, the Peace Cross, and marched all the way down Bladensburg Road to the DC line. My Prince George's County Detachment of the Marine Corps League and the American Legion Post 131 in Colmar Manor, co-chaired the event. We had the county proclaim that day, July 6, 1968, as Butch Joeckel Day. Youth groups, veterans groups, community service organizations, high school marching bands, the Marine Corps Band, and troops from each of the military services marched proudly in Butch's honor that day. The grand marshal of the parade was General Walt, just back from Vietnam himself. Admittedly, and unfortunately, there weren't many parades for returning Vietnam Veterans in those days, but we had one, right here in Prince George's County. It was a huge success, and was nationally televised by ABC-TV.

One last word about Butch. He went on to a very distinguished career. He earned his college degree, then decided he wanted to help his fellow veterans. He took a low-level position in the Washington office of the Disabled American Veterans, and then went on to head up not only the Washington office, but the entire national organization itself, with more than one million members strong. He lives in Annapolis now, is married with two grown children, and is a grandfather. He's currently serving on a presidential disability commission. But he's never forgotten his roots. In an interview with the Capital newspaper in Annapolis not too long ago, he said, "I've been working in veterans affairs since I came back in 1968. It's in my heart. I felt like I had to give back to my community because they were great to me. I got a welcome home parade in my hometown. Not many did."

Finally, a word about John Clements. John was raised in Cheverly, and graduated from DeMatha High School. John was a contemporary of Butch's, and like Butch, joined the Marines right out of high school. He went off to Vietnam where he won three Purple Hearts. He was seriously wounded and spent a long time hospitalized. I visited John at Bethesda Naval Hospital a number of times. The doctors wanted to amputate one of John's legs, but through perseverance and much prayer, he was able to convince them otherwise. John has gotten by since then with the use of a cane. Like Butch, John too wanted to help his fellow veterans, and went on to a successful career with the Veterans Administration designing prosthetic equipment for disabled veterans.

In closing, as we leave here today, let us affirm to remember Memorial Day for what it was intended to be—a day of recognition, honor, and respect, and not just a three-day holiday.

Let us remember our fallen comrades—those who fought and died for freedom, and

the children, spouses and parents they left behind. Let us never forget those who returned, many disabled. If we can remember these worthy veterans on Memorial Day, we ought to honor them on Election Day. Let's do all in our power to put more upcoming Ed Conroy's in City Hall, on the County Council, in our State House, and in the Congress. We have the opportunity to do so with elections coming up in the Fall. They served us so well in war—and they would do as well in preserving the peace.

Our very own heroes—Bill Hickey in World War II, Ed Conroy in Korea, and Captain Jim Graham, Butch Joeckel, and John Clements in Vietnam—they represent the best that America has to offer. They are object lessons themselves. They made history. Hopefully, our young people will be inspired by their example.

If America is to remain great, it may indeed depend on how well we continue to inspire our youth to excel. Our noted Sons of Prince George's County have shown the way.

Thank you—and God Bless America.

IN RESPONSE TO THE NINTH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS' RULING ON THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2002

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I am fortunate to have many veterans residing in my district. When I heard of the appalling actions of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals—ruling that the Pledge of Allegiance was unconstitutional—my thoughts turned to them. We are a nation standing strong today because those heroes pledged their allegiance to America with their lives, their tears and their sacred honor. What must our troops in the field today think?

Our Country came into being through a Declaration of Independence that acknowledged that we are endowed by our Creator with the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This is clearly an acknowledgement in the very founding document of this Nation that we are indeed "one Nation under God."

When I conclude a constituent letter with "God bless America" is my action unconstitutional? Should that be banned, too? I stand with the tradition that allows the President to put his hand on the Bible, pledge to protect and defend the Constitution and conclude his oath with the words of George Washington, "So help me God."

It is sad that at a time when our country is at war and Americans have a renewed sense of patriotism—and what allegiance to America costs—this court is driving a wedge between us with their absurd ruling. It is my fervent hope that a common sense reading of the Constitution will eventually prevail and that liberal judges will end their war on religion in America.

As countless American leaders of all political stripes have said before me, God Bless America.

NINTH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS' RULING

HON. CHARLES W. "CHIP" PICKERING

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2002

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Speaker, today the latest in a string of absurd court decisions was handed down from a Federal Appeals Court in San Francisco. This court decided that the Pledge of Allegiance was unconstitutional and cannot be recited in schools.

This is an unfortunate assault on America's tradition of recognizing the role of God in our country's life and as a foundation of our liberties.

This most outrageous decision cannot and will not stand. Our forefathers authored the 1st Amendment to protect Americans from a "national church or national doctrine" not from the Pledge of Allegiance. For far too often the most liberal Members of our courts have abused the 1st Amendment to remove any acknowledgment of God or a higher being from the Federal Government and our daily life.

I would simply remind my colleagues that we sit in a chamber that has the words "In God We Trust" engraved on the wall. From the beginning of our Republic a higher being has been acknowledged by this government and the Pledge of Allegiance simply is consistent with that history and tradition.

It is hardly comparable to note that the Pledge of Allegiance is relative to the establishment of a national religion, church or doctrine.

The court in San Francisco is the most overturned appeals court in the Nation. I am confident that this decision will also be overturned, but to ensure that the Pledge of Allegiance continues to be observed I am introducing legislation to amend the Constitution to ensure the Pledge of Allegiance is constitutionally protected speech.

A RISING NATION, UNDER GOD THIS FOURTH OF JULY

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2002

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, listen again to the words we will hear this Fourth of July: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Given the recent Federal Court ruling about the constitutionality of our pledge of allegiance, will the day come when a Federal Court of these United States will not allow our Declaration of Independence to be read or posted on the walls of our schoolrooms across this land? I pray not.

We must always be mindful that the moral fiber of this Nation was built not upon the law of man, but rather upon the law of God.

"The longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth," said Benjamin Franklin, "that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice—is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?"

Throughout our Nation's history we have faced many challenges, fought many battles. But from troubled times, we've gained greater victories. To the American, trouble but fuels our soul. Ignites our spirit. Trouble forges our future's strength. September 11th's legacy will be no different.

This Fourth of July, let us pause to give thanks to the almighty—to remember, reclaim, and rejoice in our national spirit born of revolution, our national quest.

In President Jefferson's first inaugural address, he called us "A rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry . . . advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye."

Mountaineers are always free. We live Jefferson's words. The spirits of Flood ravaged West Virginians fan the flames of future's hope.

"The God who gave us reason," Jefferson said, "did not ask us to forego its use." And truly America has taken his words to heart. We pursue life, liberty and happiness in this great Nation with great passion.

And so it should be.

Next January, our Nation will celebrate the 200th Anniversary of Jefferson's legacy, the Lewis and Clark Expedition, a national quest that has inspired us ever since. Freedom paves the path of our national quest.

As we face new economic realities in West Virginia, we seek not only new industries, but also new economies. From new infrastructure to new technologies, we are working to build a new and brighter West Virginia.

As we face the war on terrorism, we grieve for the terrible toll it has already taken, the lives of West Virginia's precious sons and daughters. Let us remember that their sacrifice was for our quest not to falter or to fail, but rather to set sail and soar.

The rights for which our founding fathers and mothers so valiantly pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honors—and might I add they did so, and I quote, "with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence,"—require the same from us in times of peace—and in times of war.

Jefferson's last letter, which was read on July 4th 1826 in Washington, DC, the day he would pass from this earth—concluded, "For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights and an undiminished devotion to them."

Our national quest shall endure. We remain a rising nation. The Fourth of July is our constant reminder, and the good Lord, our constant strength, despite what any court, judge, or jurisdiction of this government says to the contrary.

IN HONOR OF VINCENT J. BILARDO, JR.

HON. KAREN MCCARTHY

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2002

Ms. MCCARTHY of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding individual and dedicated public servant from the State of Missouri. On July 26th, Vincent J. Bilardo, Jr. will be ending his current assignment from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers