

- In 1992 Millender-McDonald decided to take her political career to the state level. After defeating two Democratic incumbents in the primary, she became the first woman to represent the 55th Assembly District in the California State Legislature. In Sacramento, she continued to be attracted to education and transportation issues. Here are some speeches from her career where she expresses her heartfelt thoughts about community and women's rights. Read and recall the trailblazer and leader she exemplified.

SPEECHES

1) International HIV/AIDS Legislation - April 2, 2003

Thank you Chairman Kolbe and Ranking Member Lowey for affording me the opportunity to speak today on issues important to me. Since coming to Congress I have carried the mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS legislation and I come before this distinguished panel as a long-standing advocate in educating the public on the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS.

I have introduced bills since the 105th Congress addressing the growing crisis of the transmission of HIV/AIDS from infected mothers to their newborn children. While this is now commonly referred to as the prevention of MTCT, early on, worldwide concern about the pandemic in Africa and India wiping out millions and millions of people due to AIDS was just beginning to emerge. I, along with millions of people around the world, was delighted when I heard the President's State of the Union address committing \$15 billion over the next five years. I wrote a letter to the President following his speech commanding him for his leadership in addressing HIV/AIDS in a meaningful way. I would like to submit my letter along with these remarks for the record. I have two requests addressing HIV/AIDS and both of my requests ask for inclusion in FY2004 appropriations.

HIV/AIDS – PEACE CORPS

First, with respect to the Peace Corps, the President requested an increase in his FY04 budget for Peace Corps volunteers, some of whom assist host countries and local communities in addressing HIV/AIDS prevention and care. I support that increase. My bill, HR 1145, provides an additional \$5 million for the Peace Corps for health volunteers focused solely in the area of HIV/AIDS. And I would like to take this time to thank Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur for cosponsoring HR 1145.

According to the latest figures, there are 6,678 Peace Corps volunteers serving in 69 countries, but only 2,128 of them work part time on HIV/AIDS activities. A mere 1,460 of those are spread out over 24 countries in Africa, and in addition to addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, must divide their attentions to providing several other necessary services like improving education of students, encouraging economic development, and increasing the agricultural capability of farming communities. Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Lowey, my bill asks for \$5 million which would fund 125 additional Peace Corps volunteers who would work just on HIV/AIDS,

and solely on train-the-trainer programs to educate and improve the skills of professionals, local organizations, and indigenous people in HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. I respectfully request this distinguished panel to consider my legislation for the FY2004 appropriations. This is a small price to pay for immediate intervention of a pandemic we all recognize is overwhelming in countries and on continents.

I was recently sent an email from a Peace Corps volunteer who has served in Sierra Leone and India, and was the Country Director in Mongolia. He writes that he strongly supports my bill HR 1145 and quote: "Knows how cost effective this bill will be in the field. It will positively affect many lives and build goodwill, understanding and peace." Mr. Zober's statement is especially poignant at a time when we are fighting a war abroad and fear further terrorism on our own land. Mr. Zober is a graduate of San Diego State University, was a Board Member of the National Peace Corps Association, and is currently serving in the Peace Corps in Israel.

I believe there are some former Peace Corps workers who have returned from their assignments and have worked in the area of HIV/AIDS. Let me just quickly introduce them, since they took the time off from their jobs to come here and support my legislation:

- Lauren Hale, who served in the Ivory Coast;
- Carrie Hessler-Radelet, who served in the Samoa Islands;
- Carolyn Baer, who served in Burkina Faso;
- Virginia Taggart, who served in Uganda; and
- Dana Aronovich, who served in Mali.

MTCT-PLUS INITIATIVE

My second legislation is the MTCT-Plus Initiative. Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Lowey, while much attention is being paid to preventing mother to child transmission (MTCT) of HIV/AIDS, we must turn to addressing the needs and rights of that child to grow up with parents so that millions of children are not left orphans before he or she can even walk. My bill, HR 1485, does this. Any effective program to make significant inroads in addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic must go beyond just breaking the cycle of transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother-to-child to a comprehensive program that takes care of the whole family after the birth of the child. In sub-Saharan Africa, family and societal structures are breaking down because of the deaths of a generation of parents.

For societies to continue providing food, education, healthcare, shelter, and other basic necessities of life, we must continue to care for the mother, father and other adult families members which is necessary for the child to grow and thrive.

Each year, more than 2.5 million women become infected, more than 500,000 transmit the virus to their infants and more than 1.5 million women die each year from AIDS. The number of children in the developing world who have been orphaned by the AIDS pandemic will nearly double from 13.4 million to 25.4 million by the end of this decade. Today, 5.5 million children in Africa have lost both parents, and in most cases, at least one of them to AIDS, and that number will rise to 7.9 million by 2010.

Groundbreaking progress has been made in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission. However, these programs offer little or no HIV care for the mothers. The tragedy is that most of the children saved by MTCT programs are likely to be motherless by the time they can walk. Senator Bill Frist, physician, and leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS, attended the 14th International AIDS Conference in Barcelona, July, 2002, and was quoted as saying:

“People realize today that when you knock out an entire generation of productive people, the teachers, the military, the people who support the civil institutions of the elected officials, which is what’s happening in many countries around the world, you do create 10 million orphans in Africa, going to 40 million, orphans who don’t have mentors, who don’t have the structure of civil society or of discipline. As we address this issue of increasing terrorism over time, clearly, we have to be concerned when we have what could be a lawless society. … We have what I believe is the greatest moral challenge of our time.”

In December 2001, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan met with leaders from several private philanthropic foundations including the Bill and Melinda Gates, the William and Flora Hewlett, the Robert Wood Johnson and other foundations, and announced a major program called the MTCT-Plus Initiative which is being administered by the Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health.

The Initiative is one program doing groundbreaking work on addressing the orphan issue. The Mailman School’s MTCT-Plus Initiative has already committed \$50 million to target 40 sites in eight African and Asian countries to extend care beyond just the blocking of vertical transmission of HIV/AIDS from the mother to the child.

All of the Initiative’s sites have MTCT programs where currently pregnant women are offered HIV testing, and if they are positive they are offered one or two pills of antiretroviral medicine to prevent mother-to-child transmission. The “Plus” in the MTCT-Plus Initiative goes further by extending care to mothers, giving them antiretrovirals continuously, as well as care for tuberculosis and other infections commonly incurred with HIV infection. MTCT-Plus will provide antiretroviral drug treatment and life-long care to more than 10,000 pregnant HIV-infected women, children, and other family members in a family-centered care model that can be replicated around the world, decreasing the chances of a child growing up as an orphan. The MTCT-Plus Initiative is presently supporting HIV/AIDS care and treatment activities at 12 demonstration sites – eleven of them in sub-Saharan Africa and one in Thailand.

It is important to note that Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist is an original cosponsor of Senator Kennedy’s bill S 2649, the International AIDS Treatment and Prevention Act of 2002, which was favorably reported out of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in the last Congress. This bill supports initiatives like the MTCT-Plus Initiative in its section titled “Family Survival Partnerships.” The Senate bill provides \$75 million over two years to “Support, through public-private partnership, for the provision of medical care and support services to HIV positive parents and their children identified through existing programs to prevent MTCT of HIV in countries with or at risk for severe HIV epidemic with particular attention to resource constrained countries...”

Other cosponsors of the Frist/Kennedy bill include Senators Santorum and DeWine, as well as my California colleague Senator Feinstein. The House International Relations Committee is scheduled to markup up HR 1298 which has in Section 315 of that bill a similar provision for a family survival partnership pilot program. Providing \$75 million to the MTCT-Plus Initiative would expand the program in a number of ways to provide treatment to additional patients at existing sites where the demand for care and treatment greatly exceeds the current capacity to deliver such care. The Initiative does not reinvent the wheel; it uses current programs and infrastructure and with additional funding would expand the services at existing demonstration sites.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Lowey, I would like to add one more point, about the importance of addressing HIV/AIDS in the interest of women around the world. In early March in my office, I met with Madame Jeannette Kagame, the First Lady of the Republic of Rwanda. We discussed the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa, its disproportionate impact on women and children; it was this critical issue that gave the impetus to her starting the "African First Ladies' Alliance Against HIV/AIDS" with other First Ladies of Africa. First Lady Kagame reiterated at our meeting what she had said at the Global Health Council Conference in May 2002. Speaking for other African countries ravaged by HIV/AIDS, she referred to the MTCT-Plus Initiative as the "family package" program.

Furthermore, at the 14th International AIDS Conference in Barcelona, July, 2002, Peter Piot, the Joint Director of UNAIDS, attended the announcement of the Mailman School's MTCT-Plus Initiative, and called it "Pioneering, because for once we will be able to say that it will be women who benefit first from a technology, a new initiative." I close my remarks underscoring the urgency. If we do not fund the MTCT-Plus Initiative now, it will be too late to tell the millions who are being infected and who are dying that help is on the way for them and for their children. I respectfully request this be given priority consideration for FY 2004.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of HR 1145 and HR 1485.

2) In Support of Title IX - June 19, 2002

Ensure that the promises of equal access to education and advancement in the workplace remain a reality for all women, particularly women of color. I am concerned that since 1996, Congress has eliminated funding under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for programs that once supported Title IX and gender-equity services in 49 state education agencies.

- About half of the states lack a dedicated employee to monitor compliance with Title IX as required, and the 10 federally funded Equity Assistance Centers have not received a funding increase in five years.
- The Women's Educational Equity Act, the federal government's only program focused on creating education opportunities for girls and women, was overlooked in the President's FY 2003 budget.
- In 2001, the Supreme Court ruled that individuals cannot file lawsuits under Title IX alleging retaliation.

There is clearly still a need to better educate the public about Title IX, and to chip away at the discrimination that impacts girls and women in education and in the workplace. We must remove any and all barriers that prevent women and girls from living up to their full potential. The truth is, Girls and women are woefully underrepresented in the critical area of technology.

- There are glaring gaps in standardized testing across all races and ethnicities, therefore limiting women's access to higher education institutions, financial aid, and career opportunities.
- Women's employment opportunities at colleges and universities declines as the prestige of the institution increases.
- Women earn fewer doctoral and professional degrees than men do.
- Sexual harassment is an ongoing deterrent to equal opportunity for women students, and gender bias is pervasive on many campuses.

Female students of color, those who are disabled, and girls from poor families are all faced with special challenges that haven't yet been fully addressed. We must do more to enable our girls to grow up to become empowered women. We know that:

- Women comprise almost 60% of part-time students and 58% of students of students age 24 and older.
- Women attending a post secondary institution are twice as likely as their male counterparts to have dependents, and three times as likely to be single parents.
- Financial aid budgets offer little allowance for dependent care, making many student parents reliant on friends and family, causing them to drop courses, or to leave school altogether.
- From 1999-2000, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) found that women athletes got only 40% of scholarship funds in some athletic divisions, though this figure is an increase over the last nine years.

Another area of education where women are lagging behind men is in the education profession. When you look at elementary and secondary schools, fewer than 35% of principals are women, and only 21% of full professors are women, and a mere 19% of women head up our colleges and universities. The numbers are no better at elite institutions where women make up only 26.2% of the faculty. We've got to do more to encourage our girls to consider well-paying careers in non-traditional fields that will broaden their career options and earning potential. Too many of our girls choose fields like cosmetology, where the average hourly wage is \$8.49, or child care, which pays about \$7.43 an hour, as opposed to becoming plumbers, electricians or mechanical drafters, who earn about \$20 per hour.

If we want our girls to flourish and grow into self-sufficient women, then we must knock down barriers to their success in the classroom whether they choose to work in technology, the trades, or to pursue professional endeavors. On this, the 30th anniversary of Title IX, we should celebrate how far we've come, but we must also be mindful of the distance we still need to travel to ensure optimal educational and vocational opportunities for all young women.

3) Afghanistan Freedom Support Act of 2002 - May 16, 2002

Mr. Speaker: Today, we bring to conclusion an unrivalled bi-partisan process in support of war-weary Afghanistan. We are about to vote on this important measure that will provide material resources to support the re-building and reconstruction of a country that has touched the popular imagination over the past year.

As Democratic Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues, I am proud to add my voice in support of this defining bill. It cannot come too soon to help the Interim Administration as it moves forward to the next stage of instilling a spirit of sound governance in Afghanistan.

When the Loya Girga Assembly meets in June, the provisional government will begin setting out the key principles of the rule of law that can help bring about stability and security where even now, disorder and ethnic conflict too often prevail.

At least 160 women will be instrumental in playing a central role in this Assembly. It may not be enough, but it is a start. As I stated on the House Floor in December, "the future of women in Afghanistan, and ultimately the stability of any provisional settlement will rest upon a foundation of inclusion, not exclusion."

Mr. Speaker, the comprehensive package of assistance before us today for final passage affirms the important aspirations being sought by Afghans both inside and outside of that country. Helping Afghan women to regain their rightful place in national life is one of the best ways I know to combat terrorism in Afghanistan; and to lessen the sense of peril of the global community everywhere.

This historic bill also specifically calls for providing resources to the Ministry for Women's Affairs to ensure that the Ministry can carry out its responsibilities for legal advocacy, education, and vocational training.

I am pleased to have authored this provision, and to have had the cooperation of my distinguished colleague and fellow Californian, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, in this successful effort at the House International Relations Committee mark-up last month.

Afghan women must be assured of their basic human rights once more; to gain access to safe drinking water and sufficient food; to receive decent health and maternal care; and, foremost, to again move freely in their society without being subject to harassment and abuse.

4) Women's Caucus Testimony - May 16, 2002

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Obey for providing the Women's Caucus with this opportunity to identify critical issues concerning women. As the Co-Chair of the Caucus, I am proud to see such a strong showing today by the women of the House. I have always been a strong advocate for women's health issues including, HIV/AIDS research, prevention education and treatment programs. As you prepare to mark-up the FY 2003 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriation bill, I would respectfully request the restoration of FY 2002 funding levels for the Office of Minority Health under the Department of Public Health Service, funding for mother-to-child HIV/AIDS transmission prevention efforts, and funding for programs for the prevention of Heart Disease and Stroke in Women.

In our efforts to promote and preserve women's well - being, we must address illnesses that plague women, such as heart disease. Heart disease is the number one killer of American women. Studies suggest that women are more likely than men to die from a heart attack, and women who recover from a heart attack are more likely than men to have a stroke or another heart attack. Each year more than 500,000 women die of cardiovascular diseases. In fact, 44 percent of women die within a year following a heart attack compared to 27 percent of men. Greater funding for prevention programs is indeed vital. I ask that you fully fund the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention programs under the Center for Disease Control (CDC) at \$5 million.

It is estimated that 10 percent of all individuals who become infected with HIV/AIDS worldwide are children. Studies have shown that mother-to-child transmission is the largest source of HIV infection in children under age 15 and the only source for very young children. This in turn has affected the total number of births to HIV-infected pregnant women each year in developing countries. The current statistic for births to HIV-infected mothers is approximately 3,200,000. Fortunately there are ways to prevent this through education and prophylaxis to protect women of childbearing age from becoming infected with HIV in the first place and through counseling and voluntary testing to help infected women accept their HIV status and for them to know the risk it poses to their unborn child. Also, newborns can receive doses of nevirapine and other medicines to prevent the occurrence of AIDS. In order to carry out programs to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS, I respectfully request that \$5,000,000 is appropriated for FY 2003.

And finally, I want to address the matter of racial health disparities in birth outcomes. The Administration's FY 2003 budget proposed a cut of \$3 million in the Office of Minority Health under the Department of Public Health Service. I am requesting that this amount be restored to the FY 2002 funding level of \$50 million, which is 100 percent of the funding needed to help eliminate the currently shocking racial health disparities in birth outcomes, as recommended by the U.S. Surgeon General under the Healthy People 2010 target goals.

Disparities in the health care delivered to racial and ethnic minorities are real and are associated with worse outcomes in many cases, which is unacceptable. It is generally acknowledged that an African American baby born today is still twice as likely to die within the first year of life than a white baby. According to expert studies, this is not only true in terms of birth disparities between white and black babies, but also across racial and ethnic groups in terms of infant

mortality, low birth weight and premature births. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention data show that infant mortality rates are 14 deaths per 1,000 live births for blacks vs. 6 per 1,000 for whites. The current imbalance in low birth weight rates is similar.

The real challenge lies not in debating whether disparities exist, because the evidence is overwhelming, but in developing and implementing strategies to reduce and eliminate them. We must be aggressive on this issue. We must exercise all available options to address and resolve this tragic racial gap at birth and during the lifetime of our minority citizens. The prevailing gap must be closed by immediate action and through U.S. Government support and assistance.

Increased funding for research, education and prevention is needed to address serious diseases that threaten the lives of millions of American women and minorities each year. Despite the progress being made on different fronts, there is still much to do. I hope that we can all work together to ensure that promoting women's health, including minority women, and that of their children, is a priority in the years to come.

In closing, I would like to thank you again Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member Obey, for giving us this opportunity to testify before your subcommittee. My colleagues, Marcy Kaptur and Karen Thurman, have joined me this morning to bring our message home. We, the Women's Caucus, 62 Members strong, look to your efforts to help us provide effective legislative responses to these important issues affecting women and we ask for your support in favorably considering funding programs that will have sustained impact and results. We owe this to the women of America who deserve the highest level of attention to their well-being and security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5) Expanding the Reach - April 6, 2002

Good Morning, I would first of all like to thank my colleague, Rep. Diane Watson for her kind words. It is indeed a pleasure to be here this morning to be part of the 10th Anniversary Celebration of the Los Angeles African American Women Political Action Committee. The theme for today's Women's Empowerment Conference "Expanding the Reach" is very fitting when one looks at the challenges that African-American women face in today's society. We are grateful for the privileges and rights that we have, in comparison to our predecessors. However, the struggle which our leaders started is far from over, there are still challenges that we must overcome and there are boundaries that we must cross. The rights of women in general have often been addressed in every aspect of daily and public life in all levels of society. Women are no longer confined from participating in public policy making, and are free to express their needs and concerns. However, the challenges that women still have to overcome are tremendous.

We have come to realize that women work longer hours than men, taking into account household and economic activities, in order to achieve the same standard of living. This situation is made worse when reductions occur in public expenditures on social services. Very often women pay the price for these cuts through increased workloads and responsibilities. In addition, women do not always have full control over their most basic asset - their own labor. It is also widely admitted that women have greater difficulties in breaking free of poverty, given their larger share of family and domestic responsibilities and the existing inequalities in access to education, training and opportunities in the labor markets and decision-making.

The lack of access to, and control over, resources needed for one's livelihood, the lack of economic and political strength to compete with other interest groups for a better share of resources, and the inability to influence the decision-making process create a vicious cycle among women in their attempts for achieving the well-being of their families and themselves. Breaking out of such a heinous cycle demands more than getting a job, acquiring training, or being approved for credit. It implies being able to carry out one's own decisions and initiatives. It implies empowerment. Black women experience the effects of both racial and gender inequality having the least access to resources and opportunities. African-American women, in particular, constitute the majority of the poor. They are found in the lowest paid jobs and continue to bear the brunt of poverty, illiteracy and poor health, including HIV/AIDS.

However, the empowerment of African-American women has to go beyond just merely providing for their families, and their well-being. The empowerment of women must include their political participation, be it directly or indirectly. African American women's participation in politics is vital in order to empower, ensure the welfare, and ensure the rights of other African-American women. In order to treat the issue of gender in the history of African American struggles for political equality one cannot just "add women and stir." Rather, we must incorporate women into the processes, into the political arena to support individuals and issues that address the African American community.

There needs to be more policy and legislative interventions to approach the process of addressing the patent imbalances faced by women, in particular women of color.

Recognizing the challenge posed by such a call, as a Member of Congress, the Democratic Co-Chair of the Women's Caucus and an active member of the Congressional Black Caucus, I shall continue to propose and support initiatives in this score. I commend the Los Angeles African American Women Political Action Committee who have taken up the challenge to educate our community regarding the political process so that the electorate can make informed voting decisions on issues their well being. I congratulate them and would like to extend my support for their initiative in establishing the Los Angeles African American Women's Public Policy Training Institute. I truly believe that through this initiative we will together be able to move forward and empower the African American Women in our community and elevate them in the political arena.

In the conference today, I hope that we will be able to identify the key issues and aspects that we can together focus on and act upon in order to make it a truly effective outcome. To conclude, let me borrow the words of Maya Angelou to capture the resilience of African-American women;

Angelou writes:

"You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.
You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise
Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave
I rise
I rise
I rise

Thank You.

6) Budget Critically Impacts Women - March 19, 2002

Mr Speaker: I rise today as the Democratic Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues. There are some issues in the FY 2003 Budget proposal impacting on women that I would like to bring to the attention of this chamber. It was disappointing - Mr Speaker - to find that the Title X family planning program is not going to see an increase in funding. In fact, the program will be level-funded at \$266 million for the 2003 fiscal year. Title X is the only Federal program devoted solely to the provision of family planning and reproductive health care. The program is designed to provide access to contraceptive supplies and information to all who want and need them.

Title X is designed to assist low-income women. For many clients - especially women of color - Title X clinics provide the only continuing source of health care and health education. A growing numbers of uninsured women desperately need the care offered by Title X clinics because they cannot meet the increasing costs of medical services. If the Title X program had kept pace with inflation in recent years, it would now be funded at \$564 million. That would have been more than double the current level. We Democratic women are pleased to see that the Budget would provide \$8.4 million for the Women's Bureau at the Department of Labor. Unfortunately, this is a decrease of \$1.8 million from the 2002 Fiscal Year. The question I have, Mr Speaker, is what services to women are going to be cut to make up for this shortfall?

Already one organization has been threatened with closure. Women Work - The National Network for Women's Employment was led to believe that the Women's Bureau did not intend to continue funding - happily, this did not happen. Programs continue to be needed to assist women find their way into employment. The Women's Bureau - especially the decentralized regional Women's Centers - have played a major role in this area and deserves to be fully funded. The welfare of children is, of course, of grave concern to all Members of this House - not just to the women members. I am pleased to see that this Budget includes \$421 million for child welfare and abuse programs. These funds provide services to prevent child abuse and neglect. While it is laudable that this money has been allocated to such a worthy cause, it must be noted that the funding has been maintained at the same level as last year.

Americans want to see all children in happy and safe homes and protected from abusive situations. For this reason, Democrats would like to see these programs strengthened. It is pleasing to see that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will receive \$5.8 billion in this budget but Democratic women have noted that there will be a decrease of \$1 billion from the 2002 fiscal year. This is a very large reduction in the CDC's budget. We all agree that every baby born should be a healthy baby. It is disappointing to see that the Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities Center will receive \$1 million less than last year.

There is also a tragic imbalance - and racial disparity - in terms of babies born in the African American and white communities in our country. A black baby born today is twice as likely to die within the first year of life than a white baby. That baby is twice as likely to be born prematurely and at a low birth weight. In order to help address this major health problem, we would like to see a modest amount of \$3 million restored to the Public Health Service's Office of Minority Health that is located in the Department of Health and Human Services. The FY 03

budget includes \$156 million for environmental disease prevention. This is a \$1 million reduction. Cutting funding for environmental disease prevention is another unfortunate budgetary reduction.

Mr Speaker, we Democrats are deeply disappointed with this Budget and believe that it will have some unfortunate repercussions for the well-being and provision of social and health services to the American public - and particularly how these cuts will affect women.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

National League of Cities - March 11, 2002

First of all, I would like to thank the former Women in Municipal Government (WIMG) president and Mayor of Monrovia, California, Lara Laramendi Blakely for her very kind words of introduction. Secondly, I would also like to extend my thanks to the president of WIMG and Council President Pro Tem of Selma, Alabama, Rita Sims Franklin, for inviting me to speak to you on this auspicious occasion. I would also like to acknowledge the women mayors, council presidents and council members here today. Women in Municipal Government is an effective and admirable organization, designed to serve as a forum for communication and networking among women municipal officials.

I am a former city council member - and mayor - of the city of Carson, California. Indeed, I was the first African-American woman to be elected to the Carson City Council. Four years later, I was the first African-American woman to be elected to the California State Legislature from the same district. During my time in municipal government, I came to value the wisdom, knowledge and compassion of many women colleagues. When I was a new councilor in Carson, I often turned to women for help and guidance. Later - when I was experienced and knowledgeable myself - I was able to help and mentor other women who were at the beginning of their careers. For these reasons, it gives me very great pleasure to address you today. I am often asked - as is I am sure every woman in this room - why we need more women in politics? Why keep on pushing for more women mayors - more women councilors - and more women in Congress.

Well - the truth is - women do make a difference. Researchers have found that women do make a difference, especially when it comes to protecting women and children. (Michele Swers and Amy Caiazza, "Transforming the Political Agenda? Gender Differences in Bill Sponsorship on Women's Issues", 2000.) It is women who have worked - hard - to protect victims of domestic violence and sexual harassment - to create programs for women-owned businesses - to establish gender equity programs in education - to increase access to child care for welfare recipients - and have taken hundreds of other women-centered initiatives. I have been asked to speak to you today about my role as the Democratic Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues - which is usually called the Women's Caucus. I will also tell you something about the legislation that is important and relevant to me. And - finally - I will talk a bit about myself - and the people and events that motivated me to enter a life of service to the community.

This year is the Silver Anniversary of the Women's Caucus. Its history began when it was formed in 1977 - it was a significant new force coming out of the Women's Movement. The Women's Caucus has a national constituency - Congresswomen from all the states - and from both parties - are invited to join. The original purposes for setting up the Women's Caucus have remained unchanged. Amongst other criteria, the founders wanted to provide a forum for women members of Congress to speak out on critical public policy issues - especially issues of particular concern to women. They also wanted to develop leadership by and among the women Members of Congress in light of the historic and continuing under-representation of women in Congress. When the Caucus was formed 25 years ago, 15 women belonged. Today, 62 women are Members of the House of Representatives - 44 Democrats and 18 Republicans. 61 of those women belong to the Women's Caucus. (The only one who does not belong is a Republican, Rep. Anne Northrup, from Kentucky.)

The Congresswomen come from 27 states, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands. They are African American, Latina, Asian American, and Caucasian. Together, they bring to Congress a wealth of experience as mayors - state legislators - community activists - lawyers - and many other professions - as well as mothers and grandmothers. What has the Women's Caucus achieved? Since 1977, we have worked - successfully - to improve the lives of women and families. We have fought to open the doors of opportunity for women and girls in both school and work. We have championed fair credit - tougher child support enforcement - equitable pay - and retirement income. We have led efforts to promote women's health and protect victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, securing several billion dollars for these efforts.

When it was formed, the Caucus was considered to be a legislative service organization and - as such - was given accommodation, staff and a budget in Congress. It was highly productive and effective for 18 years. All that changed with the 104th Congress. In January 1995, the House of Representatives voted to abolish legislative service organizations. Almost immediately, the Women's Caucus lost its office, its staff and its accommodation. Some people thought that the Women's Caucus would not survive - but it has. The Congresswomen reorganized themselves into a Members' organization - and kept the same name, same goals and resolve. Today, the Women's Caucus operates out of members' personal offices. For instance - in my office - members of my personal staff coordinate and manage caucus matters.

One staffer in each member's office acts as the caucus contact. These aides meet every week to coordinate their work - caucus members meet at least once a month. The Caucus holds briefings and meetings for members, staff, colleagues in the House, and outside groups on legislative priorities. The influence of the Women's Caucus extends far beyond its impressive list of legislative achievements affecting domestic policy. We have championed women's issues around the globe. A recent example of this is our work concerning Afghan women. Many Afghan women's groups looked for support and assistance from the Women's Caucus. They asked not just for financial assistance but - equally important - our help to ensure that their rights would be respected and they would be able to play a full part in the reconstruction of their shattered country.

The Women's Caucus was able to play a pivotal role in the negotiations. The result was the Afghan Women and Children Relief Act of 2001, which was signed into law by President Bush on December 12, 2001. Significantly, the signing took place at the National Museum of Women and the Arts. I was there - at this moving, historic and memorable event - as the Democratic Chair of the Women's Caucus. Last Friday was International Women's Day and the Women's Caucus was involved in weeklong activities promoted by Lifetime Television. The theme of the week was - Stop Violence Against Women.

The result of these weeklong activities was the introduction of an important resolution supporting the goals of International Women's Day. Those goals recognize that women worldwide contribute to the growth of economics -participate in the world of diplomacy and politics - and improve the quality of the lives of their families, communities and nations. The resolution also makes the point that pervasive discrimination continues to deny women full political and economic equality - and that the lives and health of women and girls continues to be endangered by violence which is directed at them simply because they are women or girls. As

women - and members of WIMG - you all can appreciate the devastating effect that the cycle of misery and destruction - brought about by domestic violence - has on our communities. As Women's Caucus members, we want to support the community agencies that help battered women and their children. As well as my role with the Women's Caucus, I am also very busy with my committees and sub-committees.

As the ranking member on the Small Business Empowerment Committee, I have taken a deep interest in small business enterprises and been a strong advocate for women's business councils and centers. As you know, the diabolical events of September 11 have had serious repercussions for the American economy. Many small businesses have been badly affected - indeed some have not been able to reopen at all. To help this situation - as the ranking member of the House Small Business Committee's Sub-Committee on Workforce, Empowerment and Government Programs - I am planning a field hearing in Los Angeles at the end of March. We will focus on the pressing issues affecting small businesses and will be looking for solutions to the problems they are facing in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks.

Women-owned, minority and small businesses are confronted with enormous challenges regarding growing their businesses. A tremendous impediment for them is the availability of capital. In the aftermath of the events of September 11, I have supported legislation that would provide grants to small businesses in lieu of Physical Disaster Loans and Economic Injury Disaster Assistance Loans. These loans pose a hardship because business people have to put up collateral - such as their homes. Should they default on their loan, these unfortunate people could lose their houses. A second issue relating to the Small Business Committee is an amendment I offered to H.R. 3230 - the American Small Business Emergency Relief and Recovery Act of 2001. My amendment increases the authorization for appropriations to assist with technical assistance to Women's Business Centers.

I am also a member the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and - three - sub-committees - Highways and Transit - Aviation - and Water Resources and Environment. As you can imagine, this is quite a workload. But I can tell you that the major concern for the committee is Homeland Security as it impacts on the national infrastructure. Our nation entered a new era of security awareness in the wake of the attacks and nowhere is that felt more strongly than in the field of transportation. It is a challenge that confronts us in all transportation modes - from aviation to railways, highways, pipelines and waterways. With this concern uppermost in my mind, I introduced a bill - The Terrorism Threat to Public Transportation Act of 2001 - which directs the Secretary of Transportation - in consultation with the heads of other appropriate federal agencies - to conduct an assessment of terrorist-related threats to all forms of public transportation such as bus, air, and rail terminals.

America's ports are our nation's economic gateways to the world, as well as centers for travel and tourism. As part of the Defense Appropriations for the 2001 Fiscal Year, I voted for a provision that will provide some \$93 million for port security. In addition, we in Congress are working on a comprehensive port security bill that will coordinate programs to enhance the security and safety of our seaports against crime and terrorism. The Reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act 21 (TEA-21) is going to be another huge undertaking for the committee. TEA-21 has provided a tremendous boost to the nation's transportation system as well as to national, state,

and local economics. I'm convinced that the policies and directions of the federal-aid transportation program have benefited the personal safety - the mobility - and the movement of goods and services throughout this great country. More importantly, TEA-21 has improved the quality of life of all citizens.

Another of my initiatives in this area is to plan a Regional Transit Summit in Southern California for the spring or summer this year. Work has already begun on developing the format and the themes that we will be covering in this exciting convention. This talk has been a brief description of my role as a Congresswoman and Democratic Chair of the Women's Caucus. You might wonder what motivates me to take on such a heavy workload when I could be at home - taking things easy - and enjoying the company of my five grandchildren.

The answer lies in my childhood. My first mentor was my father. Because my mother died when I was just three-and-a-half years old, my father played a very important role in my life. He was a Baptist preacher in Birmingham, Alabama, and it was his guidance and encouragement that led me into a life of service. Growing up during the stormy days of the Civil Rights Movement, my formative years were colored by the spirit and courage of countless individuals who - during the 1950s and 1960s - dared to confront the bigotry and racial discrimination of American society. Later on, when I was a young wife with five tiny children, I was inspired by the words of President John Kennedy. When I heard saw him in California - and heard him speak - it was as though he was speaking directly to me. He spoke of liberation, freedom and justice - he had the ability to put into words the feelings of a nation - and he inspired me to seek a political career.

I have also found inspiration in the successes of the women who have gone before me. In each step of my journey, I have reflected on the women pioneers who broke through barriers in an effort to help women achieve equality. I honor those pioneers - visionaries such as Sojourner Truth, Eleanor Roosevelt, Dr. Dorothy Height, and Shirley Chisholm, the first African-American woman elected to Congress - who were instrumental in creating the opportunities that exist for women today. I do see myself as being on a mission - and my mission is to promote women's healthy survival and to celebrate their achievements.

I also see myself as a mentor for young women and - as a mentor - I encourage all women to realize their own potential as visionaries and leaders. It is because of the Elizabeth Cady Stantons, the Rosa Parks and the Shirley Chisholms that change was accomplished. It is imperative that we continue to speak out for positive change. As women, our voices and initiatives will enable us to achieve the lives we want - and deserve. I applaud your own service and wish you continued success in your good work and efforts.

Preventing Violence Against Women - Feb. 7, 2002

I want to talk about "violence against women". By that I mean stopping violence against women - eradicating it from our society. Violence against women is like a terrible disease and, like all diseases, it has devastating effects on many members of our workplaces and our communities. Violence against women is like a cancer in our society - hidden from view - but very dangerous. Many women die. Others live - and endure the beatings, the kicking, the broken teeth, the crushed fingers, the cigarettes stubbed out on their arms and legs and breasts.

Domestic violence is much more common than most people realize - it is a daily reality for millions of women. Even if you are not experiencing it yourself, you may well know a woman who is. The shocking statistics speak for themselves. A National Crime Victimization Survey found that approximately 2.8 million women aged 12 years and older experienced aggravated and simple assaults in 1998. A National Violence Against Women Survey carried out in 1995-1996 found that 52 percent of women reported being physically assaulted either as a child or as an adult.

Based on these reports, an estimated 52 million American women have been assaulted during their lifetimes. And it is nearly always women who are attacked by men, men who are either their current or former partners. In three out of five million violent offences in 1994, the victim knew the perpetrator. Violence affects not only women in the United States but also women all around the world. We hear of sickening attacks on women and girl children in many countries:

- We see acid thrown into the faces of young women in Bangladesh
- We see honor killings of young women in Pakistan
- We see bride burning in India
- We see female infanticide in China and India
- We see female genital mutilation in Africa and the Middle East
- We see the rape of tiny babies in South Africa

What can we, as American women, do about this universal violence against women? At home, we must help to break the cycle. We must not be defeated by violence against women. As friends and neighbors, we must be understanding. We can help women make their own decisions - and we can provide them with information about how to do it. If they are injured, we can make sure they get medical attention. We can help to look after their children. If there is one thing we can do above all else - we can offer our support. We can support individual women - and we can support the community agencies that help battered women and their children. For women in other cultures, we, American women, must draw international attention to their plight. We must publicize - to the widest audience possible - the ghastly atrocities perpetrated against women every minute of the day.

We must insist that governments listen to our message and provide the protections to women that all citizens deserve. If we are active citizens, we will be helping all women - American women and the women of the world.

Strengthen Social Security - Dec. 21, 2001

Mr Speaker: I rise today to register my disappointment with the recommendations contained in the draft final report of the President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security, which was released yesterday. The fact that the Commission could not agree on a single plan AND released three separate options is a matter of deep concern as Social Security is an issue of critical importance to my constituents and the people of this country. The three proposals all require profound and fundamental changes to the nation's retirement system.

I am concerned in particular with the impact any changes to the Social Security system will have on women, retirees and disabled workers. The three approaches taken by the commissioners share several problematic features - the plans call for benefit cuts for retirees and disabled workers and also for individual workers to open voluntary, private investment accounts to provide them with an income in their old age. Each of the plans divert Society Security resources elsewhere and none of the plans balance Social Security without the use of massive transfusions of general revenues. No independent actuarial analysis was released, making it difficult to assess the Commission's claims.

What is clear is that each plan would "carve out" private accounts from Social Security. Thus, they would divert a portion of trust fund revenues into private accounts. A diversion of 2 percentage points - the smallest diversion included in the three plans - would take \$1 trillion from the trust funds in the next decade. All three plans would also "clawback" benefits at retirement. That is, retirees would not receive both their full Social Security benefit AND the proceeds of the individual account as many have been led to believe by the supporters of privatization. Instead, their Social Security benefits would be reduced by the clawback mechanism to reflect the accumulations in their accounts.

Mr Speaker, I would like to point out the differences between the three plans. Plan 1 diverts trust fund revenues to individual accounts and does nothing to restore solvency to Social Security (other than the clawback). This means that privatization makes the problem worse, not better. The second plan includes a 43 percent benefit cut for future retirees which are the clawbacks and cuts in disability benefits. The claims that this plan restores solvency to the system cannot be substantiated and the Commission does not say where this money will come from.

The third plan includes benefit cuts for early retirees and disabled workers, and includes a disguised increase in the retirement age - so that workers will have to work more years to receive the benefit they would get under current law. The Commission claims that this plan will restore solvency by adding large amounts of general revenues to make the system balance.

The first two plans also claim to improve benefits for widows and low-income workers. While this looks like a good idea, the benefits will not make up for the loss of guaranteed benefits required for by privatization. In addition, since the plans are not fully financed, these benefit improvements may be the first to be dropped.

Mr Speaker, these proposals will have a negative impact on women, retirees and disabled workers. While all workers contribute a share of earnings in order to ensure a minimum standard

of living for the elderly, disabled-workers and their families, children of deceased wage earners and surviving spouses, it is women, Mr Speaker, that constitute the majority of elderly Social Security beneficiaries. Approximately 60 percent of Social Security recipients are women over the age of 65 and about 72 percent of beneficiaries above the age of 85 are women.

Women in our nation rely heavily on Social Security as a source of income in old age: 27 percent of women over age 65 count on Social Security for 90 percent of their income. As it relates to our disabled, 37 percent of beneficiaries are disabled - they are not retired. The Social Security System was designed to provide a foundation or retirement income for disabled people and to provide protection for their families. This bill is absent on this issue. Mr Speaker, we recognize that women, on average, earn less than men, meaning that they count on Social Security's weighted benefit structure to ensure that they have an adequate income in retirement.

Women are less likely to be covered by an employer-sponsored pension plan. This means that Social Security comprises a larger portion of their total retirement income. Women lose an average of 14 years in earnings because they take time out of the workforce to raise their children or to care for their ailing parents or spouses. When women are in the workforce, they often work in part-time job. This means that they have less opportunity to save for retirement. Since women live six to eight years longer than men do, they must make their retirement savings stretch over longer periods of time. Consequently, women depend considerably upon Social Security's progressive, life-long, inflation-indexed benefits.

Privatizing Social Security would undermine many of the features that benefit American women, retirees and the disabled, the most. Privatization would encourage individuals to invest their proceeds in private accounts, especially through the investment marketplace and the stock market. Private pension plans require sophisticated knowledge of the Stock Market. Many women lack the skills involved in making investment decisions, decisions that would be vital to their long-term financial security. In addition, because women earn less, live longer and spend less time in the workforce, they will have less to invest in their private pension plan. The result would be that women would have to live on smaller benefits from smaller accounts.

Finally, besides the risks evident in investing in the Stock Market, there is nothing to prevent individual private pension plans from being eroded by inflation. This is particularly devastating for women, who have less money to retire on and the need to make their money last longer. Social security resolves this problem by increasing benefits each year through a Cost-Of-Living-Adjustment (COLA). This safety net, it appears, will no longer exist under a privatized Social Security System.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

QUOTES

1. It is difficult to get Latina and Asian women to speak out. We must make it clear it's not their problem, it's our problem. We need magazines like this one to keep talking about the issue. And know that we women in Congress are with you 100 percent. - *Author: Juanita Millender-McDonald*

2. Each one on this earth needs some inspirations sometimes, that is our main goal creating this section we always needed to let our visitors and users to add a real value to their life by getting inspired from Juanita Millender McDonald quotes.

3. From the depth of history until this moment, many Juanita Millender McDonald authors sayings wrote in books & filmed in movies. are the way of expressing peoples thoughts.get many of great sayings and share them.

Juanita Millender McDonald Picture quotes were designed to be Beautiful, elegant and modern so when you share them you will be 100% sure they will be impressing your friends.