the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court and the arrest in October of former Chilean President Augusto Pinochet—which could help make human rights violators answerable. Amnesty also singled out the United States as the only country known to have executed juvenile offenders in 1998.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CRITICAL CARE SPECTRUM ACT

HON. JAY INSLEE
OF WASHINGTON
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, June 29, 1999

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Critical Care Spectrum Act, which will benefit victims of heart failure and strokes by ensuring appropriate broadcast spectrum for medical telemetry devices. I have been working closely with hospitals, medical equipment manufacturers, health care providers, broadcasters, patients and other users of the broadcast spectrum to achieve the legislation introduced today. I am especially grateful for the guidance and assistance I have received.

Medical telemetry devices have allowed greater care for victims of heart failure and strokes. These devices send a signal, using part of the allocated broadcast spectrum, from a monitoring device attached to a patient to a central receiving point where the data can be viewed by medical personnel. Doctors and health care workers tell me that these devices are essential to the delivery of quality health care because they have a monitoring device attached to a patient and can warn doctors before medical problems become too severe to treat.

In recent years, the broadcast spectrum has become crowded with wireless communications, satellite broadcast transmissions, and the growing number of radio and television stations. As a result of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the spectrum has become even more cluttered, due to the requirement for television stations to change to digital broadcasts. While stations make plans to move to the new digital spectrum, they retain their analog broadcasts, and take up more of the spectrum than they require. The increasing number of broadcast channels has given consumers a variety of programming choices to choose from, but has also posed an indirect threat to medical telemetry devices, some of which use the same broadcast spectrum.

Last year in Dallas, when a television station switched on to a digital broadcast, it knocked out the telemetry devices in Baylor University Medical Center. We were lucky that no significant medical problems occurred, and the monitoring station in Dallas should be commended for taking the station off the air as soon as they were made aware of the problem. This event served as a wake up call to medical telemetry device manufacturers and broadcasters. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has provided warnings to stations that were planning to switch over to a digital broadcast. The advisories have been very helpful, and broadcasters have been working with local health care facilities to make sure the Dallas situation does not happen anywhere.

In my home state, I recently learned about the precautions that were taken when KOMO-TV, Channel 4, switched over to a digital broadcast. KOMO was in constant communication with all health care facilities in the broadcast area, and had technical representatives on hand in each of the facilities to make sure that no medical telemetry devices were impacted. KOMO, KING-TV and KCTS in Seattle have all switched to digital broadcasts. They have worked closely with hospital leadership and the community with regard to this issue, and I am grateful not only for their concern, but for their assistance through the Washington State Broadcasters Association with the introduction of this legislation.

We cannot expect this success to continue without defining which areas of the spectrum should be reserved for medical telemetry devices. As more and more stations flip to digital, the spectrum gets more and more crowded. Medical telemetry manufacturers have been aggressive in solving this problem too. Spacelabs Medical, which use the same broadcast spectrum.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me by cosponsoring the Critical Care Spectrum Act of 1999.