

people who will be participating in the National Day of Conscience To End Child Labor and Sweatshop Abuses. On Saturday, October 4, 1997, people across our Nation and across the globe will join in a call to end child labor and sweatshops and to kick off the Holiday Shopping Season of Conscience.

As part of a 3-month national and international mobilization beginning on Saturday, October 4, 1997, thousands of organizations across our country will participate in vigils, rallies, walks for conscience, signing petitions, distributing of leaflets, demonstrations, and services. The National Day of Conscience will inaugurate the Holiday Shopping Season of Conscience—a national movement to encourage consumers to reward companies which turn away from sweatshops and labor exploitation and penalize those which continue to violate human rights.

Many people assume that the exploitation of children and the existence of sweatshops is a problem only in poorer countries or that it is a problem which does not exist in this country any longer. But many workers here in the United States still labor under exploitative conditions—long hours, subminimum wages, unsafe workplaces, and violations of child labor.

It will surprise many to learn that the United States ranks first among affluent nations in the rate of injury and death to working minors. Annually there are over 200,000 injuries of children and young people in our Nation's workplaces and 100 deaths among our working youth. In agriculture, 23,500 children are injured each year and more than 300 children die each year working in the fields. We cannot continue to allow our children's lives to be risked in hazardous, dangerous, or illegal work.

It will also surprise many to learn that sweatshops have returned in the United States in numbers and forms that are similar to the deplorable conditions that existed at the turn of the century. In 1995, Americans were shocked when investigators exposed the slave-like conditions of garment workers in El Monte, CA. Who can forget the young female immigrants from Thailand who were enslaved and forced to live in a compound encircled by razor wire? These women were forced to work 20-hour days in deplorable slave-like conditions for as little as \$1 per hour. The El Monte sweatshop, it was later revealed, made apparel for some of this country's top fashion labels.

Mr. Speaker, the El Monte case unfortunately is not an isolated instance. The GAO recently reported that 2,000 of 6,000 garment shops in New York City and most of the 5,000 shops in Los Angeles operate in violation of minimum wage, overtime, or child labor laws. The National Day of Conscience and the Holiday Shopping Season of Conscience are an effort to make consumers aware of companies which are the worst sweatshop and child labor violators.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that Americans knowingly purchase products made by children or by a worker who is forced to work under harsh and degrading sweatshop conditions. The great value of the National Day of Conscience and the Holiday Season of Conscience is that through wide participation and education consumers can be encouraged to avoid purchasing goods produced in sweatshops and by illegal child labor, and we can bring about an end to sweatshops and exploitation of our children.

Mr. Speaker, we can do much more to make our Nation's children's lives safer and more secure as they enter the work force. My good friend and colleague, TOM CAMPBELL, along with another 38 of our colleagues, have joined together in supporting comprehensive domestic child labor law reform. This legislation, H.R. 1870, the Young American Workers' Bill of Rights Act, sets new minimum standards for protecting children in the workplace and assuring time for academic achievement during the school year, while still allowing for beneficial work experience.

Mr. Speaker, this weekend will mark the beginning of a significant mobilization by consumers and grassroots organizations to end sweatshop abuses and child labor both here and abroad. It is my hope that we in the Congress will mobilize support here in the Congress to enact legislation which will ensure that the job opportunities for our youth are meaningful, safe, and healthy.

HONORING THE MASON DISTRICT NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM AND ALL OF ITS PARTICIPANTS

HON. THOMAS M. DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 1, 1997

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a neighborhood organization that is making a difference in the quality of life in northern Virginia. The Fairfax County Mason District Police Department is honoring its neighborhood watch participants on Saturday, October 4, 1997. This day of appreciation celebrates the success of a program which has helped the general crime rate to decline steadily since 1988.

The neighborhood watch participants throughout the Mason District are dedicated individuals who selflessly offer their time to improve their community. The Mason District has the largest number of and most active volunteers in northern Virginia. As a former county supervisor from the Mason District, I can attest to the dedication of those involved in the neighborhood watch. All of those in the Mason District share a tremendous sense of pride in the accomplishments of our neighborhood watch.

The individuals who work in this program coordinate with the police so they may keep abreast of crime in or around their community. The time and energy they give in walking their neighborhoods, tracking suspicious activities, people, and cars helps the Fairfax County police deter would-be criminals. The savings to taxpayers through the years has been millions of dollars, and the savings in crime deterred has also been measurable. The neighborhood watch program in Mason District proudly shows its strength and its numbers every year at the national night out where most of the over 100 watch patrols participate. The participants in this program have truly proven that getting involved in your community does make a difference. Those who take the time to cast a watchful eye on their surroundings ensure that they have a safer and more friendly place to live. The Parklawn neighborhood watch discovered a fire at Glasgow intermediate school in its early stages. Their early detection meant

that firefighters arrived early and saved the school from serious damage. In other instances, leads established by the watch have led to solving burglaries and convicting car thieves.

The members and coordinators of the Mason District neighborhood watch work in one of the most diverse communities in the Washington area. They often bridge culture and language gaps to come together and build safer neighborhoods. Often, the Mason District neighborhood watch has led to a better understanding of different cultures and backgrounds as people recognize that they share the same community values. One of the greatest assets of the Mason District neighborhood watch program is the bonds it has built between individuals and neighborhoods. The neighborhood watch is a program that truly brings neighbors together. In one instance, a widow and a widower met when paired together on a watch patrol in Sleepy Hollow. Six months later they were married. I can't promise every single person who volunteers for the watch in Mason District will be guaranteed a spouse, but it is clear that the neighborhood watch has brought many of its diverse population closer together.

I know my colleagues will join me in saluting the Mason District neighborhood watch organization that has had so much success. The Mason District neighborhood watch participants have certainly earned a day of appreciation. Their work has made the Mason District one of the nicest communities on our Nation.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EMANCIPATION OF ENSLAVED AFRICANS IN WHAT IS NOW THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

HON. DONNA M. CHRISTIAN-GREEN

OF VIRGIN ISLANDS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 1, 1997

Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN. Mr. Speaker, last week I came to this floor to invite my colleagues and all Americans to join my constituents and I as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the emancipation of enslaved Africans in what is now the U.S. Virgin Islands, the district I proudly represent.

Many of my colleagues have agreed to co-sponsor the resolution I have submitted in recognition of this significant event in our history, and I thank them for their support.

Mr. Speaker, today, October 1, we remember and celebrate the "firebun," which represents a continuation on the part of the people of the Virgin Islands, to achieve a yet greater degree of self-determination.

For while the events of July 3, 1848, represented the end of physical slavery, the firebun which occurred 30 years later, was a victory over economic slavery.

You see, Mr. Speaker, 1 year after our emancipation in 1848, the Danish colonial government established the Provisional Labor Act to indenture workers for the continuation of the sugar cane industry on St. Croix.

A bare subsistence wage scale was established, fees were set to discourage off-island travel, and workers were restricted from changing jobs, or moving to another estate except on October 1 of each year.

That day, October 1 became known as Contract Day. After 30 years of existence under this oppressive act, St. Croix was once again ripe for an uprising. On Contract Day 1878, more than 400 workers, reacting to two incidents in Frederiksted town and adopting the cry "Ironsides or outside", began the revolt known as the firebun, which ultimately destroyed close to 70 estates, and in which about four whites and 200 blacks reportedly lost their lives. The labor act was repealed 1 year later.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot close without recounting the critical role of women in the uprising. Mary Thomas, known as "Queen Mary," Axellina Solomon, known as "Queen Agnes," and Mathilda McBean, known as "Bottom Belly," emerged as the leaders of this revolt which would in effect continue for another 38 years until agricultural workers on St. Croix achieved their long-demanded improvements in wages and working conditions under the leadership of Judge D. Hamilton Jackson, whose birthday we will soon celebrate on November 1.

These three courageous women would receive long prison sentences for their role in the firebun, which were commuted after 10 years by the King of Denmark. Many of the men who joined them were executed.

Mr. Speaker, this day, October 1, is another proud day and milestone in the long history of my people in our quest for self-determination and freedom. It is especially so for the women of the Virgin Islands, for it represents the significant role we played in shaping and building a society dedicated to social and economic freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot be at home today to join in the celebrations in person, but I join them in spirit, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for granting me the time to make this statement in recognition of this day and the important moment in history which it commemorates.

IN HONOR OF MARK J. RUWET

HON. NANCY L. JOHNSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 1, 1997

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and appreciation that I rise today to express my congratulations and appreciation to Mark J. Ruwet for his 25 years of dedicated service to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency.

Mr. Ruwet has been committed to agriculture throughout his life. For the past 25 years, he has dedicated himself to the farmers of Connecticut, first as a county executive director from Litchfield County and most recently as program specialist. His years of hard work and tireless efforts have brought tremendous benefits to the farmers within the State. Mr. Ruwet's support and commitment to Connecticut's farmers is to be commended.

Mr. Mark Ruwet deserves the many accolades he will receive as he is honored for his accomplishments and dedication. For his tremendous contribution to farmers in Connecticut, I salute and thank him.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 1, 1997

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, on Monday of this week, 81 former Members of Congress, led by former Vice President Walter Mondale and former Senator Nancy Kassebaum-Baker, called on this Congress to ban soft money. They join a growing list of well-respected leaders of this Nation who have said that a ban on soft money is good for this country and good for our democratic process. Among the other leaders who have endorsed a ban are former Presidents George Bush, Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford.

Mr. Speaker, if you have no desire to respect the opinion of the majority of the current Members of Congress, at least listen to these former Members. The former Members who called for the ban receive no political gain from their position. They are a bipartisan group from throughout the Nation. They are the people who understand the issue, know how the process works, and recognize that a ban on soft money makes sense for our country.

Mr. Speaker, the list of those who support a soft money ban is only growing. The House leadership is the only road block to taking action on this crucial issue. It is time to allow a vote on campaign finance reform. I will no longer take "no" for an answer.

REPORT FROM INDIANA—REV.
PAUL KNECHT

HON. DAVID M. MCINTOSH

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 1, 1997

Mr. MCINTOSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to deliver my Report from Indiana. This week, I would like to share a special story of a dear and wonderful friend—Rev. Paul Knecht of Richmond, Indiana.

Reverend Knecht has recently retired after serving over 31 years as the executive director of Wernle Children's Home in Wayne County. Wernle Home is a dear place for both Ruthie and me. On many occasions we have visited our friends at Wernle. We've forged friendships with both the children and the wonderful people who care for them.

Working with abused and troubled children requires a special person, a special love, a special faith, and a special heart. Reverend Knecht is and was a special man.

Reverend Knecht dedicated his life to helping abused and troubled children all across Indiana. His service to God, his church and the needy children of Wernle Home will leave a loving presence of acceptance and stability in the lives of thousands of children who came to Wernle.

So today, I would like to commend the efforts for Rev. Paul Knecht. As he retires after 31 years of service, he will be missed. His life work has touched so many people, so many people and lives forever.

That Mr. Speaker is my Report from Indiana.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HEALTH CARE FRAUD PROSECUTION ACT

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 1, 1997

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join with my colleagues, Representatives FROST, MCGOVERN, HINOJOSA, SCHUMER, BALDACCIO, FRANK, THURMAN, MANTON, OLVER, and DELLUMS to introduce the Health Care Fraud Prosecution Act today. This bill addresses one of the most serious problems facing our health care system—health care fraud.

Members on both sides of the aisle have spent a lot of time this year trying to figure out how to stretch our health care dollars to make sure that Americans have access to the health care they need. If we want to succeed in our goal to reduce costs without sacrificing quality or limiting access, we need to set our sights on those who are cheating the system. Health care fraud consumes nearly 10 percent of our health care dollars, \$40 to \$90 billion, every year, stolen from our health care system through fraudulent billing.

Medicare and Medicaid are particularly vulnerable to fraud. In one investigation by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General, 75.5 percent of Medicare claims filed by one hospital were found to be fraudulent—that's \$25.9 million worth of bad claims from just one hospital.

This is simply unacceptable. We cannot afford this drain on the health care system. Every dollar we spend on fraud leaves us one less dollar to care for a child's ear infection before it gets serious or to help provide rehabilitation for a senior with a broken hip so he or she can return home. We can and we must crack down on health care cheats.

The Health Care Fraud Prosecution Act will increase funding or FBI agents, Federal prosecutors, and other criminal investigators to investigate and prosecute health care fraud. It will create stringent penalties for those convicted of robbing our health care system. And it will require those convicted of health care fraud to make restitution payments to patients and Government agencies.

Investing in law enforcement pays off. Right now, the Federal Bureau of Investigation returns \$40 to the U.S. Treasury for every \$1 it is given to investigate health care fraud. That's a return rate we can truly be proud of.

We all know health care costs are too high. As we search for methods to preserve the access of seniors to quality health care, to extend the life of the Medicare trust fund, and to insure the 10 million American children who have no health care coverage, it is more important than ever to crack down on fraud and abuse in the system.

This legislation will do just that. I urge my colleagues to support and pass the Health Care Fraud Prosecution Act.

TRIBUTE TO EDWARD R. OBERG

HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 1, 1997

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise before you today to