

same computer system that a large district has. But that's okay, because the real issue is that, with kids, you always need the human touch. Whatever your district's size, whether it's large or small, city or country, the most important thing we serve our students is a smile."

# NATIONAL AMUSEMENT PARK RIDE SAFETY ACT OF 1999

**HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY**

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 6, 1999*

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, today I am joined by ten of my colleagues in introducing "The National Amusement Park Ride Safety Act of 1999." They include Representatives MILLER (CA), HOFFEL (PA), WEXLER (FL), KUCINICH (OH), LIPINSKI (IL), MALONEY (NY), WEINER (NY), DELAUNO (NY), NEAL (MA) and WAXMAN (CA). This bill will restore the ability of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to investigate serious accidents in amusement parks that offer rides, such as roller coasters, which are permanently fixed to the site. While the CPSC has the authority to investigate accidents that occur on rides that move from site to site, rides that are permanently fixed in theme parks are off limits. This bill would correct this anomaly by closing the "roller coaster loophole."

Roller coasters are, in general, quite safe. But in the course of just 6 days at the end of August, an unusual number of tragedies on amusement park rides highlighted the fact that when something goes wrong on these rides, the consequences can be catastrophic. Today's rides are huge metal machines capable of hurling the human body through space at forces that exceed the Space Shuttle and at speeds that exceed 100 miles per hour. They are complex industrial-size mechanisms whose design, maintenance and operation can push the limits of physical tolerance even for patrons in peak condition, let alone members of the broad spectrum of the public who are invited to ride each day.

The fatalities at the end of August, which U.S. News & World Report termed "one of the most calamitous weeks in the history of America's amusement parks," included:

August 22—a 12-year-old boy fell to his death after slipping through a harness on the Drop Zone ride at Paramount's Great America Theme Park in Santa Clara, California;

August 23—a 20-year-old man died on the Shockwave roller coaster at Paramount King's Dominion theme park near Richmond, Virginia;

August 28—a 39-year-old woman and her 8-year-old daughter were killed when their car slid backward down a 30-foot ascent and crashed into another car, injuring two others on the Wild Wonder roller coaster at Gillian's Wonderland Pier in Ocean City, New Jersey.

The Consumer Product Safety Act charges the CPSC with the responsibility to protect the public against unreasonable risks of injuries and deaths associated with consumer products. However, rides in "fixed locations" such as theme parks are currently entirely exempt from safety regulation by the CPSC. State oversight is good in some places, bad in others, and in some states, the state has also exempted "fixed locations" so that there is no federal or state regulatory body overseeing

ride safety. The number of serious injuries on "fixed location" rides has risen dramatically from 1994 through 1998.

Why do we bar the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) from investigating accidents on roller coasters and from sharing that information with the rest of the country?

It makes no sense.

When a child is killed or injured on an amusement park ride, should the decision to investigate depend on whether the amusement park ride is "fixed" versus "mobile"?

Emergency-room injuries more than doubled in the last five years, yet the CPSC is prohibited from investigating any—not one—of those accidents, even when it involves a ride that may be in heavy use by mobile carnivals or fairs.

According to the CPSC Chair, Ann Brown, "The current regulatory structure as it applies to fixed-site amusement park rides is not sufficient to protect against unreasonable risks of injuries or deaths caused by these rides."

She is right.

The accident statistics highlight the folly of granting an exemption from federal safety regulation to amusement park rides. Injuries are rising rapidly on the one category of amusement park rides that the CPSC is barred from overseeing. The manufacturer or owner of every other consumer product in America is required by law to inform the CPSC whenever it becomes aware that the product may pose a substantial risk of harm—but not the owners or operators of "fixed-site" rides in amusement parks.

Some in the industry argue that this legislation is unnecessary because the states or the industry itself can provide sufficient protection. This argument fails on two counts.

First, many states have simply failed to step in where the federal safety agency has been excluded. The CPSC reports that there is still no state-level inspection program in Alabama, Arizona, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas, Utah and Vermont. In addition, Florida exempts the big theme parks from state inspection, Virginia relies on private inspections, and New York exempts New York City (which includes Coney Island.) California had no state program until last month.

Second, states are not equipped and not inclined to act as a national clearinghouse of safety problems associated with particular rides or with operator or patron errors. That is a federal function. Yet the federal agency charged with the protection of the public against unreasonable risk of injury or death is currently, by law, forbidden from carrying out this important task.

I urge my colleagues to support this measured effort to close the loopholes and to ensure patrons of amusement parks that the level of protection afforded by law will no longer hinge on the question of whether the ride itself is "mobile" or "fixed."

## PROFILES OF SUCCESS HONORS MRS. HILDA ORTEGA-ROSALES

**HON. ED PASTOR**

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 6, 1999*

Mr. PASTOR. I rise before you and my colleagues today to ask you to join me in paying

tribute to a woman who is described by friends as "La Super Chicana," Mrs. Hilda Ortega-Rosales.

Hilda recently received an Exemplary Leadership Award at Valley del Sol's Annual Profiles of Success Leadership Awards in Phoenix. Valley's award ceremony is the premiere Latino recognition event in Arizona each year that acknowledges Arizona's leaders and their contributions.

Raised in a south Phoenix barrio, Hilda was the third child of eight children. As she grew up, Hilda cared for her brothers and sister, put in long days to attend school, helped with household chores and worked in a vegetable packing house to earn money. Even today, she has not shortened those long days and always finds a way to fit in numerous volunteer hours in addition to her job as Customer Service Director for American Express Merchant Services.

Currently, Hilda sits on the city of Glendale Planning and Zoning Commission. Other volunteer posts have included Commissioner for Glendale Parks and Recreation Department, District Chair for the Arizona State University (ASU) Legislative Network Committee and Board Chair for Chicanos Por La Causa, Inc., in Phoenix.

From presidential to school board elections, Hilda has tirelessly given countless hours of her personal time to political campaigns. Other organizations which have benefited from her community involvement include Los Diablos, the Hispanic Alumni Association for ASU; Mujer, Inc.; United Way; Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; and ASU's Hispanic Mother/Daughter Program.

Taught by her parents to give back to her community, Hilda's volunteerism and dedication also is compelled by her desire to promote social justice, political power and economic development for Latinos. She is an exemplary role model for our country and someone who has personally made a significant impact on the Latino community.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, Hilda's community service has been immense. She has instilled the importance of community responsibility in family members and many individuals who look up to her. Therefore, I am pleased to pay tribute to Hilda Ortega-Rosales and I know my colleagues will join me in thanking her and wishing her continued success.

## A TRIBUTE TO THE MOST REV. BISHOP ALFRED L. ABRAMOWICZ

**HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 6, 1999*

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay my respects to a distinguished Bishop in my district, the most Rev. Alfred L. Abramowicz Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Chicago and Pastor Emeritus of the Five Holy Martyrs Parish, who recently passed away.

Born on January 19, 1919, he completed his secondary education at Quigley Preparatory Seminary and college at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary of Mundelein. Graduate studies were completed at Gregorian University, Rome, 1949–51 with a Licentiate of Canon

Law Degree. He served with the Archdiocese Metropolitan Tribunal for twenty years and for two years as a judicial vicar. Bishop Abramowicz's first appointment was associate pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in South Chicago from June 19th, 1943 to July 7th, 1948. He was named Auxiliary Bishop on May 2nd, 1968 and appointed pastor of Five Holy Martyrs Parish on July 14, 1968 and served until January of 1990.

Bishop Abramowicz's involvement in the community was far-reaching. In 1969 he served as national chairman for the U.S. visit of His Eminence Karol Cardinal Wojtyla of Krakow, Poland and was fundamental in planning the second visit of that same friend, Pope John Paul II to Chicago in 1979.

Mr. Speaker, Bishop Abramowicz's strong dedication to the Catholic church and to his community as a whole will be sorely missed. I am certain that his legacy will live on in the community for many years to come.

#### TRIBUTE TO JOSE AGUIAR

### HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 6, 1999*

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a young and successful entrepreneur from my congressional district, Mr. Jose Aguiar. Through his dedication, discipline, and success in small business, Mr. Aguiar can serve as a role model for millions of youngsters in the United States who dream of succeeding, like him, in the world of business.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute and wishing continued success to Mr. Jose Aguiar.

The following article, which appeared in the October 4, New York Daily News, describes Mr. Aguiar's career in more detail.

#### DRY CLEANER'S KEEN TO EXPAND

Dry cleaning is Jose Aguiar's business, but cleaning up is his goal.

The 37-year-old president of Kleener King, a chain of dry cleaning stores in the metro area, is poised to expand by opening a central facility that will handle all the cleaning from his growing number of stores.

"I'm at the cusp," the Bronx businessman said, adding that he will use a \$6.1 million loan from the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corp., and the Empire State Development Corp. to help spur his company's growth.

Growing from a small outfit to a chain of 20 in his native Bronx and in upper Manhattan didn't happen overnight.

In 1982, Aguiar dropped out after two years at Columbia University—where he was majoring in economics—to run his parents' business with his mother, Carmen, after his father, Jose Sr., became ill.

He held on to his parents' original location, Joe's Cleaners on Creston Avenue in the South Bronx, but soon sold the branch on University Avenue about a mile away.

"I didn't know how to manage one store, let alone two," he recalled.

After several years of working as a spotter—the person who pretreats all the stains—he started getting scared about his career prospects.

"I felt I had no future," he said, especially since some of his former Columbia classmates were moving on to plum positions in the business world.

A turning point came in the mid-1980s, when Aguiar went to an industry trade show.

"It opened his eyes and created a big appetite," said David Lewin, the owner of Ipso of New York, a dry cleaning equipment company. Over time, Lewin became a mentor as well as an investor in Aguiar's business.

"It all starts with one store," Aguiar recalled thinking.

He prepared a business plan and set about securing loans to fund an expansion, but scores of sources turned him down.

"They said, 'Grow it to a \$10 million company first' or 'Dry cleaning is not interesting,'" he said. "But I don't give up that easily."

After rounds of talks, he secured millions in a combined loan from several economic development groups in Manhattan and the Bronx for the centerpiece of his strategy—a \$2.5 million centralized cleaning plant, which he persuaded the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and city economic development agencies to jointly sponsor because he promised to create jobs.

The plant, in the Bathgate Industrial Park, will employ more than 100 Kleener King workers at peak operation.

As his company grows, Aguiar credits his parents for his perseverance. The couple moved to New York from Puerto Rico in the early 1950s, and opened Joe's Cleaners in 1956 with \$5,000 in seed money.

His father insisted he work every Saturday starting at 6 a.m. and after school, except when he played for softball and football teams.

Aguiar said some of his earliest memories were in the store. "I was a dry cleaning baby," he said, recalling photos of him sitting on a dryer or atop a clothes bin.

Thirty-five years after his parents' start, Aguiar was crafting his plans for Kleener King.

In the early days, the company was pulling in about \$250,000 in revenues. This year, that jumped to about \$2 million, and he hopes it could grow to about \$10 million in four years.

Working seven days a week at the business has been his routine since his mother died in 1993. Unmarried and without much family in New York, he works well into the evening before trekking home to Bayside, Queens.

"Kleener King is my life," said Aguiar, who for the past three years has been a guest speaker at Columbia University on entrepreneurship and who vows to attend business school one day.

In hopes of pursuing that dream, he's trying to get credit for his professional experiences to help achieve the equivalent of an undergraduate degree.

"I've learned a lot on my own," Aguiar said.

#### HONORING BEN DIGREGORIO

### HON. ELIOT L. ENGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 6, 1999*

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, Ben DiGregorio is that rare individual, someone who has devoted his life to the service of his country, his city and his community. He came to the Bronx when he was a year old and has lived here

ever since. He joined the Navy as a young man and when he was discharged, joined the New York City Police Department. He has a marvelous 34 year career and was named the first commanding officer of the 49th Precinct when it opened in 1985. He retired three years later but was not finished.

Captain DiGregorio was elected to Community School Board 11 and he has served in that capacity for 11 years. But he not only served on the Board but would go to schools to give career counseling and read to the students. He was honored by the Forum of Italian American Educators with their Community Service Award for his work on the School Board.

Ben and his wife Virginia have a daughter, Donna, and two sons, Steven and David. He is retiring from Community School Board and I want to join his friends and colleagues in wishing him and his family all the good that life has to offer. He has certainly earned it.

#### NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH

### HON. JERRY MORAN

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 6, 1999*

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure today that I rise to join my colleagues in supporting National Co-op Month. Across Kansas and across the country, cooperatives form the economic backbone of many communities. Co-ops provide power, purchase the agriculture products, add value to the farmer and rancher, and allow individuals to join together in their local communities.

Across the country, over 70 million people belong to some type of cooperative. Since Ben Franklin formed the first co-op in 1752, co-ops have operated with three basic principles: user ownership, user control, and user benefits. It is with those three principles that individuals can work together to add value and compete in a world where mergers and concentration are often the stories of the day.

In Kansas, farmers and ranchers have joined in innovative cooperative projects aimed at moving them from being producers, to being processors and providers of wholesome food products in the grocery store. Kansas' 21st Century Alliance has taken risks to move farmers into grain processing, beef processing, high-volume dairying, and even dry-edible bean processing. All of these ventures have been cooperatives, allowing producers ownership, control, and, hopefully, the benefits.

The challenge for Congress is to support and encourage more opportunities for farmers and ranchers to add value and gain a greater portion of the food dollar. Cooperatives provide that opportunity, and I look forward to pursuing new ways to assist cooperatives as they grow and advance on behalf of their member-owners.

Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues in congratulating cooperatives on their first century and a half, and wish cooperatives success in these and other ventures for the next century.