

Gerald has always considered patient care to be the most important issue in the medical profession. With changes in policy and technology, Gerald still regards the patient as the "hallmark of medical care."

It is with this, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to offer tribute in honor of Dr. Gerald Howe's retirement and thank him for his years of hard work, dedication and service.

ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER INTEROPERABILITY AND PORTABILITY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. EVA M. CLAYTON

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 31, 2000

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join with my colleagues in support of the electronic Benefit Transfer Interoperability and Portability Act of 1999. This legislation will enable food stamp shoppers to redeem their nutrition benefits electronically in authorized stores located beyond the borders of their states. The need for this legislation is significant.

According to a recent study conducted by Benton International on behalf of the National Automated ClearingHouse Association (NACHA), there were 1,685,857 interstate food stamp transactions during a six-month period. If we assume that interstate food stamp transactions existed nationwide for the entire year of 1999, the projected annual nationwide volume of food stamp interstate transaction would be 5.7 million. Although the vast majority of food stamp recipients spend their benefits at retailers close to home, the Benton study proves that a significant number of shoppers need the flexibility to shop at stores across state lines, which is a program benefit enjoyed without restrictions under the previous coupon redemption system.

When the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) replaced food stamp coupons with "Electronic Benefit Transfer" cards, program participants and retailers experienced enormous difficulty since there was lack of uniformity among state EBT equipment. Furthermore, FNS incurs additional costs to implement its regulation requiring States to equip authorized food retailers, upon request, with EBT-only terminal. For example, using a leasing fee of \$21.50 per month per terminal, the annual cost of the government for EBT-only terminal deployment nationwide may range from \$25,000 to 75,000. Even with the EBT-only terminal, the different designs and procedures in state equipment continued to prevent shopping in other states.

S. 1733 is a practical legislative solution to these problems. First it gives the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to develop a national uniform standard of interoperability based on the "QUEST" rules which were developed by retailers, State Food Stamp Program Administrators, and the Food and Nutrition Service under the guidance of the NACHA EBT Council. Although the QUEST rules are being used by a majority of the states, this legislation gives the Secretary authority to make the changes needed to fit the goal of the Food Stamp Program.

Also, S. 1733 limits the annual costs of switching and settling fees at \$500,000.00.

This is a positive change from the original draft of this legislation because the federal government should not finance new technology utilized by retailers.

From the outset, the Administration has worked tirelessly to ensure the success of the Food Stamp Program's conversion to electronic benefit delivery, and I offer my continued commitment and support in making sure that this critical nutrition assistance is provided efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PATRICK J. KENNEDY

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2000

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island. Mr. Speaker, on January 31, 2000, I was unavoidably detained and consequently missed two votes. Had I been here I would have voted: "Yes" on the passage of H. Con. Res. 244, rollcall vote No. 2; "Yes" on the passage of H.R. 2130, rollcall vote No. 3.

DAVE M. DAVIS, RECIPIENT OF THE 2000 GOVERNOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2000

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize the winner of the 2000 Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, Dave Davis.

Dave was nominated by the Grand Junction Commission of Arts and Culture for his activism as founder of Art on the Corner, a former executive director of the Art Center, a past appointee of former Colorado Governor, Roy Romer, to the Colorado Council on the Arts, and one of the leading artists in the Grand Valley since the late 1970's.

Dave was Executive Director of the Western Colorado Center for the Arts for nine years. During his tenure he created a multitude of innovative programs, quality exhibits, outreach efforts to underserved areas, and expansion of facilities, collections and classes. Dave's belief that the Grand Valley could become a renowned arts community is the foundation of everything he does.

Dave opened an exhibit, Art on the Corner, in downtown Grand Junction in 1984. This unique outdoor sculpture exhibit began as a display of 33 sculptures by Dave and other area artists along Main Street. Every year the exhibit is rotated and has grown to include over 100 works of art.

Dave is a native of Boulder, Colorado who moved with his family to Grand Junction in 1972. He attended Mesa State College. Dave's full-time pursuit of the arts began in 1977. He creates abstract and realistic sculpture. He is adamant in his desire to promote the arts both as a major economic force and as an industry. He is adamant in his desire to promote the arts both as a major economic force and as an industry.

It is with this, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to offer this tribute to Dave Davis with congratulations on being named the recipient of the 2000 Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

SPEECH OF

HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-MCDONALD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 1, 2000

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the contributions and the importance of education preparation in Catholic schools. For decades, they have enriched the lives of children past and present. I was educated at Holy Family High, a Catholic school in my hometown and I have felt the benefits throughout my life. The importance of education is one value that has remained with me through my years as a parent, an educator, and as a Congresswoman. Education is very significant in the continued success of our great nation. A Catholic institution provides a balance of strong education complimented by the support of a strong moral and spiritual environment to prepare well-balanced young persons for entering our society.

Statistics have shown that the United States has gained immense benefits from the Catholic education system, educating some 2.6 million students at a saving to our nation of more than \$17.2 billion dollars. Further, Catholic education has an impressive graduation rate of 95 percent and more than 83 percent of those graduates go on to college. Catholic schools focus not only upon intellectual encouragement and development but also on the moral and spiritual fiber of each student. These students preserve this enriched relationship with their faith, families and community.

Recognizing Catholic schools for their contributions to the community of the United States shows the respect we have for these institutions and to thank the dedicated faculties and administrators for the care they have taken of the students entrusted to their guardianship. Educating our youth is perhaps our greatest responsibility as a Nation, and I am thankful for the daily contributions made by these institutions toward that aim.

TRIBUTE TO THE VIRCO MANUFACTURING CO.

HON. STEVEN T. KUYKENDALL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2000

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Virco Manufacturing Co., an important business within my district. Virco today celebrates its 50th year as the largest manufacturer of educational furniture in the country.

Shortly after World War II, Julian Virtue bought the Slauson Aircraft Co. on February 2, 1950, and converted the war equipment manufacturing company to a firm specializing in the production of educational furniture. It

was under the leadership of Julian Virtue and his son Robert, now chairman of the board and CEO, that Virco went on to become an industry leader.

Virco is a leading supplier of tables, chairs, and storage equipment for schools, convention centers, auditoriums, places of worship, and hotels. Virco employs 2,400 individuals nationwide, including 700 jobs at its headquarters in Torrance, CA.

The Virco Manufacturing Co. is a valuable member of the Torrance community. Their contributions have been numerous. I congratulate Virco and its employees on this milestone and I wish them continued success.

**1999 CONTRACTOR OF THE YEAR,
GREGG RIPPY**

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2000

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize the 1999 Contractor of the Year. Mr. Gregg Rippy was nominated for the award by the Colorado Contractors Association.

The Colorado Contractors Association emphasizes skill, integrity and responsibility as key traits of its members. These qualities are also what the association requires for the Contractor of the Year award. Another quality that Gregg displays amply is leadership.

Gregg has been a Colorado Contractors Association member for 17 years and has won numerous awards from both the state and national levels. During his recent presidency of Grand River Construction Company in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, the company was named chapter of the year on the national level by the Associated General Contractors of America and Gregg was named national chapter president of the year. He is now a national director with Associated General Contractors of America and has served as chairman of the Colorado Contractors Association legislative committee for four years. Gregg is also a co-owner of Rocky Mountain Redi-Mix.

A Colorado native, Gregg has followed a family tradition by becoming a contractor. His father, grandfather and uncle were all in the construction business. He first joined Grand River Construction after graduating from Colorado State University and eventually became president of the company.

It is with this, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to offer this tribute to my dear friend, Gregg Rippy, 1999 Contractor of the Year. His commitment to his country, his community and his profession is deeply admirable and highly commendable.

**TAIWAN SECURITY ENHANCEMENT
ACT**

SPEECH OF

HON. THOMAS M. DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 1, 2000

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support H.R. 1838, the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act.

This legislation is important because it reaffirms our commitment to support democracy and economic stability in Asia. In 1979, Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act which ensured Taiwan's security by providing it with sufficient defensive weapons so it may protect and maintain its own national defense. While the U.S. and Taiwan do not share full diplomatic ties, our unique relationship with Taiwan demonstrates that Taiwan's security should be reinforced and enhanced.

The government of Taiwan is a representative democracy and the people of Taiwan will elect a new President next month. Taiwan is a bright example of how a democratic government which allows the free market to operate becomes a region of peace coupled with remarkable economic growth. Taiwan is the world's 15th largest economy and is the United States' 7th largest trading partner, while the United States is Taiwan's largest export market.

Given the events which have transpired over the past several years, it is essential that we protect American interests by promoting peace in the Taiwan Straits. H.R. 1838 will augment the process for defense sales to Taiwan by requiring the President to report annually to Congress Taiwan's requests for defense products, detailing why Taiwan needs these items, ad justifying any decision that the United States makes to reject or postpone such arms sales to Taiwan. Furthermore, H.R. 1838 will address the deficiencies in Taiwan's readiness by supporting Taiwan's increased participation at U.S. defense colleges, requiring the enhancement of our military exchanges and joint training, and require the Secretary of Defense to develop a program to enhance operational training and exchanges between the Taiwanese and U.S. militaries on the issues of threat analysis, force planning, and operational methods.

Taiwan is and continues to be a strong U.S. ally. For this reason, I believe the priorities outlined in H.R. 1838 are imperative if we are to maintain peace and stability in this region of the world. Given the People's Republic of China's tendency to engage in aggressive rhetoric and brinkmanship, Taiwan's self-defense capability should be improved and strengthened. A secure Taiwan would provide a better foundation and possible progress for cross-Strait dialogue.

I believe we must honor our commitments in the Taiwan Strait. The Republic of China is a vibrant nation with an expanding economy, and it is my belief that America should support Taiwan in its endeavors to remain free and democratic.

TIME FOR HAITIANS, NICARAGUANS AND CENTRAL AMERICANS TO ADJUST THEIR STATUS UNDER HRIFA AND NACARA

HON. CARRIE P. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2000

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today, I introducing a bill to extend the time for eligible Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Central Americans to apply to adjust their status and become permanent residents under the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 1998

[HRIFA] and the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act [NACARA]

My bill would extend the time for eligible persons to apply to adjust their status under HRIFA and NACARA to October 1, 2001 or until 12 months after the date that the INS adopts final regulations implementing HRIFA and NACARA, whichever date is later.

Presently, under HRIFA and NACARA, eligible Haitians, Nicaraguans and Central Americans must apply to adjust their status to permanent residency by April 1, 2000 or they will lose their right to do so. The INS estimates that at least 50,000 Haitians are eligible to adjust their status under HRIFA. The Haitian community estimates the number as closer to 100,000 people. To date, only about 18,000 eligible Haitians have applied. Similarly, there are thousands of qualified Nicaraguans and Central Americans who have yet to adjust their status under NACARA.

Qualified applicants must pay very substantial filing fees to adjust their status under HRIFA and NACARA. For large families, these fees can amount to thousands of dollars. I have been told of a case where a person working full-time, earning a \$20,000 income, had to pay over \$2,000 in filing fees for his family. Many eligible applicants who are working are finding it very difficult to come with the filing fees. These fees are extremely burdensome. We should be reducing them. At a minimum, we should give people more time to earn them.

Moreover, because of language and cultural barriers, many eligible applicants are not even aware of their rights to adjust their status under HRIFA and NACARA. Finally, there have been very substantial bureaucratic delays in the issuance of regulations implementing HRIFA and NACARA. The INS received many public comments on its proposed HRIFA and NACARA regulations and these comments are still being reviewed and considered.

To date, final regulations have not been issued under either HRIFA and NACARA. As a result, the INS has not even definitively stated the standards that will govern its interpretation and implementation of HRIFA and NACARA. Simply put, the regulatory climate remains unsettled.

Mr. Speaker, HRIFA and NACARA were designed to allow eligible Haitians, Nicaraguans and Central Americans to become permanent residents. We must not allow high filing fees, language or cultural barriers, or delays in the issuance of implementing regulations to frustrate the intention behind these bills. We need to extend the filing deadline to assure that all eligible Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Central Americans receive a full and fair opportunity to adjust their status.

We must assure that all eligible persons are fully informed of their rights to adjust their status, that they know definitively the final regulations under which their rights will be determined, and that they receive an adequate period of time to earn the substantial filing fees that presently must accompany applications under HRIFA and NACARA.

Mr. Speaker, Representatives LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, ALCEE HASTINGS and PETER DEUTSCH are original co-sponsors of my bill. I urge all my colleagues to support this critically important legislation.