to enhance the recruitment and retention of nurses by the department and the future of the nursing profession within the department, and recommends legislative and organizational policy changes to enhance the recruitment and retention of nursing personnel in the department.

Another issue addressed by the legislation concerns the maintenance of proper staffing ratios and the provision of overtime pay. The bill mandates that the VA provide Saturday premium pay to title 5/title 38 hybrid employees. Such hybrid-authority employees include licensed vocational nurses, pharmacists, certified or registered respiratory therapists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists. Moreover, it requires the VA to develop a nationwide policy on staffing standards to ensure that veterans are provided with safe, high quality care, taking into consideration the numbers and skill mix required of staff in specific health care settings. It also requires a report on the use of mandatory overtime by licensed nursing staff and nursing assistants in each VA health care facility, and to include in this report a description of the amount of mandatory overtime used by facilities.

H.R. 3447 offers several improvements in service for those veterans who require specialized medical care. It authorizes service dogs to be provided by VA to a veteran suffering from spinal cord injuries or dysfunction, other diseases causing physical immobility, hearing loss or other types of disabilities susceptible to improvement or enhanced functioning in activities of daily living through employment of a service dog. Additionally, it strengthens the mandate for VA to maintain capacity in specialized medical programs for veterans by requiring VA and each of its veterans integrated service networks to maintain the national capacity in certain specialized health care programs for veterans (those with serious mental illness, including substance use disorders, and spinal cord, brain injured and blinded veterans; veterans who need prosthetics and sensory aids); and extends capacity reporting requirement for 3 years.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation makes some important adjustments to regulations governing payment for services from non-service connected veterans. This is done through modifying the VA's system of determining non-service-connected veterans' ''ability to pay'' for VA health care services by introducing the ''low income housing limits'' employed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), used by HUD to determine family income thresholds for housing assistance. This index is adjusted for all standard metropolitan statistical areas (SMSAS), and is updated periodically by HUD to reflect economic changes within the SMSAS. The bill would retain the current-law means test national income threshold, but would reduce co-payments by 80 percent for near-poor veterans who require acute VA hospital inpatient care. This is important for those veterans with low incomes who reside in high-cost-of-living areas, like New York.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the legislation extends the authority of the VA to collect proceeds from veterans health insurance policies for services provided as non-service connected care.

This bill represents the latest step in the longstanding ongoing commitment of Congress to oversee and improve the system that provides health care to our Nation's veterans. For this reason, I urge my colleagues to join in supporting this vital measure.

INTRODUCTION OF THE ''PROMPT UTILIZATION OF WIRELESS SPECTRUM ACT OF 2001''

HON. W.J. (BILLY) TAUZIN

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2001

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the ''Prompt Utilization of Wireless Spectrum Act of 2001.'' For longer than I would like to acknowledge, the FCC and Nextwave have battled back and forth about the status of Nextwave's C block licenses. Nextwave obtained these licenses the way every carrier obtains a spectrum license from the FCC: by being the highest bidder at auction.

When Nextwave filed for bankruptcy, the FCC sought to cancel Nextwave's licenses. I asked, begged, and pleaded with Chairman Powell's predecessor, Bill Kennard, not to cancel the licenses, and, more importantly, not to reauction them.

Despite having filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, Nextwave retained a property right in those licenses, a right that could not be rescinded by the FCC or any other agency. Auction 35 went ahead anyway, raising a record amount. But the D.C. circuit confirmed what I had been arguing for some time: that Nextwave's property right to those licenses could not be violated.

Auction 35 has thus placed us in a quandary. Wireless carriers who were auction 35 winners are counting on that spectrum to roll out or enhance valuable services to consumers. And we have a giant hole in the budget that needs to be plugged.

Nextwave's C block licenses have laid fallow for too long and need to be put to good use. The settlement agreement authorized by the prompt utilization of Wireless Spectrum Act of 2001 may not be the prettiest or easiest way to ensure that these licenses are put to good use. But this legislation, and the corresponding settlement, appear to be the best way to put them to good use.

I applaud the parties for spending countless hours reaching this settlement. And I hope that both Houses of Congress can enact this legislation this year so that consumers can reap the benefits of putting this spectrum to its best use.

I thank Mr. SENSENBRENNER, Mr. THOMAS, and Mr. CONYERS for co-sponsoring this legislation. And I look forward to its prompt consideration.

HONORING EDNA BUTRIMOWITZ IPSON ON HER 90TH BIRTHDAY

HON. ERIC CANTOR

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2001

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable woman. Edna Butrimowitz Ipson was born in a small town outside Kovno, Lithuania in 1911. The youngest of six children, she is a survivor—a survivor of hunger, of hardship, of sacrifice. Mrs. Ipson survived the Holocaust.

When her husband could no longer practice law and opened a motorcycle business in their home, Mrs. Ipson turned her talents to the family business. She may not have been able to ride a motorcycle, but she certainly could sell them. Often times, she had been known to say, ''When my husband comes home, you'll see. If this motorcycle isn't everything I said it was, you don't have to buy it.''

She and her son, Jay, were in line with the rest of her family to be taken to the Riga Latvia concentration camp when they were pulled out of line by a guard who had known her husband. While the rest of her family did not survive the concentration camps, she was sent to the airport where she worked endless days as a slave laborer, loading and unloading coal cars.

In 1943, the Ipsons escaped from the ghetto to a small farm in Trakai where a Polish Catholic farmer risked his life to save her and her family. For nine months, they lived in a hole in the ground, escaping detection.

Yet even after liberation, their lives were not easy. While her husband sought ways of escaping, Mrs. Ipson took sole responsibility for providing for their family. She risked her life, traveling through Russian Military lines to illegal procure food from the black market. If caught, she would have been jailed and severely punished. However, she persevered and kept their family alive.

Her family finally escaped using Mrs. Ipson's maiden name, Butrimowitz, and forged Polish papers through Poland to the American-Zone in Berlin. Finally, after being sponsored by Mrs. Ipson's uncle Abraham Brown, they immigrated to America.

Once in America, her phenomenal will and fortitude continued to serve her family. Mrs. Ipson became the first female service station attendant. She would wash the windshield and check the oil of the service station customers—a very unusual sight in those days. Yet, she was one of the best salespeople in the area. While servicing the vehicles, she would bring out Like New car wax, shine a spot and convince the driver he needed the wax to make his car look ''like new.'' Her service station sold more car wax than any other in the area.

Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Ipson has led an amazing life of joy, sorrow and unending sacrifice. In fact, she often sacrificed celebrating her own birthday, protesting that Hanukah and her December Wedding anniversary were more important then her birthday. This year, her son, Jay, is honoring her life and celebrating her 90th birthday. Although I cannot be there in person, Mr. Speaker, I hope you will join me in honoring this remarkable woman and in wishing her the happiest of birthdays.