

health plan products by virtue of their commitment to clinical excellence, customer service and continuous improvement."

Mr. Speaker, Touchpoint has worked hard to earn this mark of distinction, and I'm proud to honor them here today.

RECOGNIZING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF LATINAS

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2002

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, as we begin to celebrate Hispanic Heritage month, I rise today to honor the accomplishments of Latinas across our nation and highlight their contributions.

Today there are over sixteen million Hispanic women living in the United States. Latinas have been contributing members of our society since its inception. We are writers, scientists, community organizers, and business leaders. Latinas have made inroads in all facets of society and today I stand, as a Latina Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, to honor the often overlooked achievements of this population.

We are recipients of the MacArthur "Genius" Award—like writer and poet Sandra Cisneros, and immigration advocate Cecilia Munoz;

We are recipients of NASA's Exceptional Service Medal—like astronaut and scientist Ellen Ochoa;

We are part of the National Women's Hall of Fame—like the co-founder of the United Farm Workers Union, Dolores Huerta, and Antonia Novello, the first female and first Hispanic Surgeon General of the United States.

In the face of societal obstacles like unequal pay, educational disadvantages, unmet health care needs, and civil rights struggles, Latinas have already accomplished so much. Yet we know we can do much more. During Hispanic Heritage Month we celebrate our success, but we must be more aware of helping, Latinas maximize their great potential all year-round.

Recuerda que el éxito se alcanza convirtiendo cada paso en una meta y cada meta en un paso. Hoy es el día de realizar nuestros sueños. (Remember that success is achieved by taking each step as a goal and each goal as a step. Today is the day to realize our dreams.)

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS ACT OF 2002

SPEECH OF

HON. STEVE BUYER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 17, 2002

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 3253, as amended, which reflects the House-Senate compromise that was reached. This legislation was originally introduced by Chairman Chris Smith to establish at least four medical emergency preparedness centers at designated VA medical centers. As a cosponsor of this legislation, I want to thank

Chairman Smith for his leadership in moving this important legislation towards final passage.

I also want to thank Chairman Smith, members, and staff in both chambers for preserving H.R. 3254, the Medical Education for National Defense (MEND) for the 21st Century in the final package. That language is incorporated in Section 3 of H.R. 3253, as amended, and is entitled: Education and Training Programs on Medical Responses to Consequences of Terrorist Activities.

Section 3 of H.R. 3253, as amended, would establish an education program to be carried out through the Department of Veterans Affairs. The education and training curriculum developed under the program shall be modeled upon the F. Edward Hebert School of Medicine of the Department of Defense's Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences (USUHS) core curriculum, which includes a program to teach its students how to diagnose and treat casualties that have been exposed to chemical, biological, or radiological agents.

As a Nation, we must be prepared for the new face of terror that we have been forced to confront in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks. What has become all too clear is that our health care providers are not resourced or trained with the proper tools to diagnose and treat casualties in the face of biological, radiological, and chemical weapons.

It is imperative that such a program be disseminated to the Nation's medical professionals and current medical students. This section of the bill takes advantage of the nexus that already exists between the medical education community and the VA. Currently, 107 medical universities are affiliated with a VA medical center. This nexus is already in place and that is what we plan to exploit.

The VA's extensive infrastructure of 163 medical centers, 800 clinics, and satellite broadcast capabilities, will enable the current and future medical professionals in this country to become knowledgeable and medically competent in the treatment of casualties that we all hope will never materialize.

We cannot afford to assume that our country will never again experience a biological, chemical, or radiological attack on the American people. We must, as elected Representatives, act to ensure that if the worst of our fears are realized that the country's medical professionals will be ready and able to deal with these situations.

It is not the intent of this legislation to create new community standards of practice. We must recognize that diseases such as smallpox, botulism, and the plague are not normally treated or recognized in this country. It is extremely important that all of our health care professionals are familiar with and able to diagnose and treat suspected exposure to weapons of mass destruction.

The American Medical Association endorsed H.R. 3254, and the American Association of Medical Colleges has thrown its full support behind this plan. These two organizations know how vital it is to receive this important educational curriculum that addresses the medical aspects of biological chemical and radiological attacks, and they have recognized that the VA is in a unique position to assist with the dissemination of this information to the Nation's medical community.

It is often said that knowledge is power, and in this instance nothing could be more accu-

rate. The knowledge that would result from the implementation of this act is critical. Our medical professionals need to be offered training methods that would enable them to save lives . . . and I can think of no greater power than that.

Please, join with me and support final passage of this important piece of legislation.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES RESEARCH ACT (H.R. 5395)

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2002

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce today a bill that is critical to solving the economic and environmental problems posed by aquatic invasive species—the Aquatic Invasive Species Research Act. This Act authorizes funding to conduct research to support our efforts to detect, prevent and eradicate invasive species. It complements a bill being introduced today by Mr. GILCHREST in the House and Mr. LEVIN in the Senate to reauthorize the National Invasive Species Act. Many people may wonder what an invasive species is and why it is so crucial to keep them out of U.S. waters and so I will start off with some background.

The introduction of non-native invasive species is not new to United States. People have brought non-native plants and animals into the United States, both intentionally and unintentionally, for a variety of reasons since the New World was discovered. Some examples include the introduction of nutria (which is a rodent similar to a muskrat) by trappers to bolster the domestic fur industry, and the introduction of the purple loosestrife plant to add rich color to gardens. Both nutria and purple loosestrife are now serious threats to wetlands. Non-native species may also be introduced unintentionally, such as through species hitching rides in ships, crates, planes, or soil coming into the United States—zebra mussels, for example, came into the Great Lakes through ballast water from ships.

Not all species brought into the country are harmful to local economies, people, and/or the environment. In fact, most non-native species do not survive because the environment does not meet their biological needs. In many cases, however, the new species will find favorable conditions (such as a lack of natural enemies or an environment that fosters propagation) that allow it to survive and thrive in a new ecosystem. Only a small fraction of these non-native species become an "invasive species"—defined as a species that is both non-native to the ecosystem under consideration, and whose introduction causes or may cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. However, this small fraction can cause enormous damage—both economic and environmental.

Aquatic invasive species can be very costly to our economy. Estimating the total economic impact of harmful non-native species is extremely difficult. No single organization accumulates such statistics comprehensively. However, researchers at Cornell University estimate that invasive species cost Americans \$137 billion annually. This includes the cost of

control, damage to property values, health costs and other factors. Just one species can cost government and private citizens billions of dollars. For example, zebra mussels have cost the various entities in the Great Lakes basin an estimated \$3 billion during the past 10 years for cleaning water intake pipes, purchasing filtration equipment.

Beyond economic impacts, invasive species cause ecological costs that are even more difficult to quantify. For example, sea lamprey control measures in the Great Lakes cost approximately \$10 to \$15 million annually. However, we do not have a good measure of the cost of lost fisheries due to this invader. In fact, invasive species are now the number two threat to endangered species, right behind habitat loss. Quantifying the loss due to extinction of these species is nearly impossible.

To protect our environment and our economy, it is critical that we prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species to U.S. waters and eradicate any new introduction before the species can become established (once an invasive species is established, it is almost impossible to eradicate it). Spending millions of dollars to prevent species introductions will save billions of dollars in control, eradication and restoration efforts once the species become established. Prevention requires careful, concerted management, but it also requires good research. For example, it is impossible to know how to prevent invasive species from entering the United States without a good understanding of how they get here, an understanding that we would develop through the pathway surveys conducted under this bill. We cannot screen the planned importations of non-native species for ones that may invade without a thorough understanding of the characteristics that make a species invasive and an ecosystem vulnerable, a profile that would be created in this bill. Finally, we can't prevent invasive species from entering our waters through ships' ballasts (a known pathway) without good technologies to eradicate species in ballast waters. This bill supports the development and demonstration of technologies to detect, prevent and eradicate invasive species.

In fact, research underlies every management decision aimed at detecting, preventing, controlling and eradicating invasive species; educating citizens and stakeholders; and restoring ecosystems. Research is also crucial to ensure that resources are optimally deployed to increase the effectiveness of government programs. This bill sets up a comprehensive research program to support efforts to detect, prevent and eradicate invasive species through informing and reviewing management initiatives. Now let me explain some of the details of the bill.

The bill is divided into six sections. In the first three sections of the bill, a comprehensive research program is established through the United States Geological Survey, the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to conduct surveys and experimentation on invasive species, and analyze and disseminate the results. The goal of this program is to support efforts to prevent the introduction of, detect and eradicate invasive species. This will be done by notifying early detection and rapid response efforts, informing relevant policy questions, and assessing the effectiveness of implemented policies. For instance, infor-

mation about new invasive species discovered in the monitoring effort will be directly disseminated to those agencies that can respond rapidly. And policy makers will learn about the pathways and practices that are most responsible for bringing invasive species into U.S. waters so that they can set up targeted responses to reduce the risk posed by those pathways.

In the fourth section of the bill, a research, development and deployment program is set up to promote environmentally sound technologies to better detect, prevent the introduction of, and eradicate invasive species. This includes programs to develop dispersal barriers, and the expansion of a program geared toward demonstrating technologies that prevent invasive species from being introduced by ships. The fifth section of the bill focuses on setting up research to directly support the Coast Guard's efforts to set standards for the treatment of ships with respect to preventing them from introducing invasive species. The National Academy of Sciences will be asked to make recommendations for standards, and researchers will be asked to evaluate the effectiveness of any standard and recommend protocols to test technologies on ships to make sure they meet that standard. Finally, invasive species research depends on strong academic programs in systematics and taxonomy and so the National Science Foundation will be given funding to support academic research in those areas.

Preventing aquatic invasive species from entering U.S. waters and eradicating them upon entry are critical to our economy and environment, and good policy decisions depend on good scientific research. I urge all of my colleagues to support this very important bill.

TRIBUTE TO MORRIS MICHAEL SCIONTI

HON. JIM DAVIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2002

Mr. DAVIS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor of Morris Michael Scionti, a passionate political activist who lived every moment of his life with tremendous enthusiasm and flair. As Chair of the Hillsborough County Democratic Executive Committee, Mike displayed unwavering loyalty to his country and his party.

Mike first shared his love for the political process in the classroom. For thirty years, he taught high school civics and history classes with the same affection and conviction that he later brought to politics. After teaching, Mike dove full force into politics, playing an integral role in Lawton Chiles' successful campaigns for U.S. Senate and Governor, among other races. He then went on to work for the Division of Business and Professional Regulation and as executive director of the Florida Athletic Commission.

Tampa Bay, however, will remember Mike most for his countless contributions to Hillsborough County's Democratic Executive Committee. Never one to shy away from a good political argument, Mike was an excellent choice to take the helm of the organization. With his boundless energy, he always found a way to excite people about politics.

Despite all of his commitments in the community, Mike, a father of three, always found

time for family. I would like to express my heartfelt sympathies to Mike's children and family members. Morris Michael Scionti will be remembered in Tampa Bay as a passionate and fiercely loyal competitor. Our community will miss him greatly.

HONORING JOHN AND ANN MARIE WOOLLEY, HUMBOLDT COUNTY, CA

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2002

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize John and Ann Marie Woolley, two extraordinary citizens of Humboldt County, California who have dedicated their lives to public service. They are being honored for their life-long contribution to one of the nation's most precious rights—participation in the political system. Their contributions are worthy of appreciation and recognition.

Ann Marie Woolley, a member of the faculty of College of the Redwoods, is Coordinator of the California Early Childhood Mentor Program. She has served as Head Start Coordinator and Regional Supervisor, North Coast Children's Services and is a full time instructor of Early Childhood Education at College of the Redwoods. She has been an advocate for services for young children for 25 years. In addition, she has coordinated and directed parenting workshops and consumer homemaking programs. Ann Marie Woolley was named College of the Redwoods Outstanding Associate Faculty Member of the Year, 2001–2002. She is an accomplished musician, has edited an environmental newspaper and written music reviews and is a member of numerous environmental and social justice organizations.

John Scott Woolley, Third District Supervisor, County of Humboldt, has been actively involved in community service projects throughout his career. At Humboldt State University, the Center for Community Development, John was responsible for the initial development of community programs that assisted seniors, women and children throughout the region. As the Community Economic Development Planner at the Northern California Indian Development Council, John coordinated statewide programs which included federal tribal recognition petitions, an American Indian health satellite clinic and labor and business training in natural resources improvement contracting. He is an outstanding county supervisor who works hard for his district and represents the county on the boards of the North Coast Emergency Medical services, North Coast Railroad Authority, Whole Child Interagency Council, and North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District. His civic and philanthropic contributions to our community are numerous.

They share the happiness of family life with their two sons, James and Kevin.

John and Ann Marie are being recognized for their outstanding contribution to the political process by the Humboldt County Democratic Central Committee as "Democrats of the Year, 2002."

Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate at this time that we recognize John and Ann Marie Woolley for their unwavering compassion and for their contribution to the ideals and traditions that have made America great.