

young people. He has donated incredible amounts of his own time and many resources to the betterment of children's lives. His mother, Gloria Barron, spent twenty years creating The Touch Museum at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind. She was an example of selflessness and service, and to honor his mother, Tom Barron founded the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes. The prize honors young people from diverse backgrounds who have shown exceptional leadership in making the world a better place. Recipients of the award have distinguished themselves by organizing many wonderful projects, including the creation of scholarships, working to conserve a local river, and organizing a rodeo for disabled children.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in expressing our gratitude to Tom Barron for his extraordinary contributions to Mother Earth and to all of her children.

RELIGIOUS FANATICISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN SAUDI ARABIA

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, in recent months our Nation, and this Congress, has sought to understand the motivation for and consequences of religious fanaticism, especially in the Middle East. An opinion article entitled "In Saudi Arabia, an Extreme Problem," published in the Washington Post today brings into focus the fundamental problem of religious fanaticism in Saudi Arabia. This insightful article asserts persuasively that political and religious fanaticism has given rise to the deplorable human rights conditions, particularly concerning women, in Saudi Arabia. The article is all the more compelling because its author, Sulaiman Al-Hattlan, is a Saudi Arabian citizen and a courageous voice for democracy and human rights and who has witnessed first-hand the devastating effects of religious fanaticism in his country. He believes that the Saudi government must pursue reforms in order to promote education, free-thinking, political participation, and the human rights of the Saudi people. Mr. Speaker, I earnestly commend the following article to the attention of my colleagues and request that the article be placed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

[From the Washington Post, May 8, 2002]

IN SAUDI ARABIA, AN EXTREME PROBLEM

(By Sulaiman Al-Hattlan)

While the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah rightly searches for peace in the Middle East, it is equally important for us in Saudi Arabia to seek peace for our own home.

As a citizen of Saudi Arabia, I dread the possibility that Osama bin Laden might instigate a repeat of a deadly 1979 Saudi government mistake. In that year, a group of religious fanatics occupied the Grand Mosque of Mecca. They denounced the legitimacy of the Saudi government, claiming that it wasn't "Islamic" enough. The government managed to reclaim the mosque, and later the group's leader and most of his followers were executed.

But the end of the story had a twist: Though the government killed the extremists, it then essentially adopted their ideology. After the Mecca incident, Saudi au-

thorities began imposing crushingly strict and pointless rules. Women were banned from appearing on television. Music was not allowed to be played in the Saudi media. Stores and malls closed during the five daily prayers. Members of the religious police were granted more power to intervene in people's personal lives. The Saudi government did all of this to please the Islamists, perhaps fearing further extremist threats. The fundamentalists interpreted these government actions as a nod to their power and an indication that they were now dictating the rules of the game.

The result has been all sorts of restrictions that have created notions of fanaticism in the kingdom, and a society with a constant undercurrent of a "witch hunt." Different groups in Saudi society end up competing with fundamentalists over who can appear more conservative in the public eye. Our private life, too, has been full of contradictions and hypocrisy, as we seek to avoid being alienated or excluded as "seculars" or "liberals." In our obsession with our image, and fearing each other, we all lose. As a society, Saudi Arabians lost 20 years of a generation by avoiding a harsh reality: Our government was wrong, and, by extension, so were we. None of us dared to say it loudly then, and some still cannot say it. But our reaction to the 1979 Mecca tragedy has created a generation of angry, confused young people, many of whom have become fanatics, including those 15 Saudis among the 19 suspects in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and the 100—or more—Saudi prisoners in Guantanamo. How many other confused young Saudis are still out there?

It does not take a great deal to describe the motives of terrorism. Oppression and poverty are an easy recipe for fanaticism. People with no option of independently leading their lives will more willingly follow an extremist mentality because they know nothing else, and have no moderate alternatives to compare it with. This extremist mentality becomes so entrenched and pervasive that its endurance is not dependent upon the life or death of one persuasive leader. Therefore, whether bin Laden eventually is killed or survives the current war is a temporary concern; in the long term, the real issue is the endurance or destruction of his rabid philosophy.

The Saudi government itself must fight against all kinds of monopoly of thought or debate. Right now, it faces a historical opportunity to develop its educational system, augment freedom of the press and expand women's rights, among other pressing issues. It can begin to give qualified, young, educated Saudis access to more political participation. This would involve ending regionalism, a process that gives greater privileges to some families from certain Saudi regions. As an added bonus, such a measure would safeguard against future tribal conflicts—still very much a part of Saudi national politics—that could result from the continuation of regional economic and political favoritism. It might also help end the civil cold war our society, silently, is going through.

Saudi Arabian society must also start a tough process of social and political reform. Our independent writers and intellectuals should be part of a public social dialogue that tolerates different ideas and thoughts. Our universities need to open doors for political and social activities to their students: At the very minimum, students ought to have the right to form students' organizations. This would teach them the concept of "social activism," and to organize civilized and peaceful activities within their universities. Such ideas can help the next generation create and participate in a productive and peaceful civil society, instead of dying in

Afghanistan or elsewhere for causes that most of them do not even fully comprehend.

What we learned from the deadly 1979 Mecca experience should be put to use now. Ending political and religious fanaticism is crucial for the survival of the Saudi society and its leadership. Release from this chokehold can only come from within Saudi Arabia. Just as Prince Abdullah has become the most promising hope for peace in the Middle East, he is also our best hope for immediate social and political reforms in the kingdom.

ENHANCED BORDER SECURITY AND VISA ENTRY REFORM ACT OF 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. NEIL ABERCROMBIE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, I voted "Present" on final passage of the Senate amendments to H.R. 3525, the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Reform Act of 2001. I fully support the bill's stated purpose of reducing threats posed by individuals and organizations which would enter the United States with the intent to commit acts of terrorism.

My concern with this measure centers on Section 306, entitled "Restriction On Issuance Of Visas To Nonimmigrants From Countries That Are State Sponsors of International Terrorism." Section 306 establishes a sweeping, over-broad prohibition against issuing non-immigrant visas to citizens of any nation on the State Department's list of terrorist states.

This could preclude the kind of people-to-people contact that can change cultures, and even the political regimes of those countries. Even at the height of the Cold War, we had exchange programs involving students and scholars from Communist nations. By sharing their first-hand experiences and changed perspectives, returnees from these programs helped undermine the demonized image of the USA projected in the official propaganda of the Soviet Union and its satellites.

In many of the nations on the prohibited list, there is a vast reservoir of good will toward the United States and a broadly based public sentiment exerting a countervailing pressure against their regimes' official hostility toward our country. Iran is a case in point, where large numbers of voters in the most recent national elections cast their ballots in favor of candidates who disagreed with the policies of the dominant faction. It is a serious mistake to discount that popular sentiment and to ignore opportunities to strengthen it by exposing citizens of those nations to Americans and American life.

Section 306 authorizes the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Attorney General and heads of other agencies, to make exceptions to individual aliens covered by this Section if they are found to pose no threat to the safety or national security of the United States. Section 306 directs the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Attorney General and heads of other agencies, to develop standards for making these exceptions.

The language here is unacceptably broad. If the exemption guidelines or standards were

outlined in the legislation, we would have had an opportunity to discuss and consider the merits of programs like education and cultural exchange and their usefulness for attaining U.S. national security and foreign policy goals. As it stands, it allows the current or a future Administration to establish exemption standards so narrow as to preclude the possibility of accruing the benefits of a broader—but still regulated with an eye to security considerations—exchange of citizens. In abdicating its role in setting standards, the Congress has forgone an opportunity to have a voice in this important aspect of policymaking.

COLONEL KENNETH J. SWEET
HONORED AS LANCE P. SIJAN
AWARD RECIPIENT

HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, May 16th 2002, the Greater Milwaukee Aerie 4214 Fraternal Order of Eagles will award Colonel Kenneth J. Sweet (Retired) the Lance P. Sijan Award.

Lance P. Sijan was born and raised in the Milwaukee community of Bay View. After graduating from the Air Force Academy in 1965, he went to serve in DeNang, Vietnam where he flew sixty-six combat missions. On his last mission his plane was shot down over enemy territory and, although he evaded the enemy for 6 weeks, rescue efforts failed and he died as a prisoner of war.

Lance was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor along with the Distinguished Flying Cross, two Purple Hearts, two Air Medals and a Certificate of Honorable Service. His courageous service is recognized throughout the country with scholarships and memorials.

Throughout a career that spans over 40 years, Colonel Kenneth J. Sweet (Retired) has served his country faithfully and in the same courageous manner as Lance P. Sijan.

Colonel Sweet's first assignment with the Army Air Corps was at Wheeler Field, Hawaii where he was on guard duty on December 7, 1941 when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. He was among the first to fire a rifle in defense of his country at the start of WWII. After the war ended he became one of the founders of the 128th Air Refueling Wing when the unit gained Federal recognition in 1947.

During the Korean War, Colonel Sweet was active for 21 months, and earned his commission on September 29th, 1961. Retiring in 1982 with 40 years and 8 months of service to his country, Colonel Sweet remains active in the community, advocating for military retiree's in Wisconsin and founding the Wisconsin National Retiree Council in 1983, and has served as its director for 16 years.

So it is with great pride that I thank Colonel Kenneth Sweet for his years of dedicated military service, and congratulate him on receiving the 2002 Lance P. Sijan Award.

SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE IM- PORTANCE OF HEALTH CARE EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE COVERAGE MONTH

SPEECH OF

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. MOORE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my support for H. Con. Res. 271, a resolution calling on the President to designate a National Importance of Health Care Coverage Month.

It is time for the leaders of our country to acknowledge that we are facing, in the near future, a nationwide health care crisis. This crisis will cut across all sectors. Seniors insured by the Medicare program and low-income children insured by the Medicaid program are facing severe cuts in nearly every state. Workers with employer-based insurance will face radically increased premiums, and the uninsured, who are already the most vulnerable will still be without.

The Baby Boomers will soon retire and flood the Medicare program. In preparation for this long-anticipated event, Congress has set forth unrealistic budgets calling for severe cuts in Medicare reimbursement for home health care, hospital services and nursing home services. At the same time, some physicians are refusing to take new Medicare patients due to an illogical and unworkable reimbursement scheme.

Hospitals are closing their doors across the country due to low federal reimbursements and lack of nursing staff. Recently, in my district, all but one hospital emergency room was declared "on diversion"—meaning they were unable to take any more ambulances or emergency patients. Yet, the administration plans to cut the hospital update again this year. We must do all that we can to ensure that this does not happen. I want to enter into the record a letter signed by myself and 24 Blue Dog colleagues asking the Speaker to support adequate reimbursement to all Medicare providers.

Think for a moment if our already crumbling health care infrastructure was challenged by a crisis—a terrorist attack resulting in a large number of casualties or a bioterror attack. The time for us to act—to secure our health care system, in terms of infrastructure, workforce and health insurance coverage—is now.

Approximately 44 million working Americans are uninsured. We in Congress need to realize that continuing to ignore the problem of the uninsured in our country will cost us as a nation—in terms of overall health and financial security.

The uninsured are more likely to delay doctor visits, delay needed care or choose not to receive that care at all. Last year, more than 40% of uninsured adults delayed a necessary medical test or treatment. Twenty percent say that they needed, but did not get, recommended treatment last year. Many who received treatment did so at a hospital emergency room. A third of uninsured children did not see a doctor in the past year.

Delaying, or not receiving health care treatment, can lead to more serious health problems. The uninsured are more likely to be hos-

pitalized for avoidable conditions, such as pneumonia or uncontrolled diabetes. The uninsured who are finally diagnosed with cancer may often be in late stages or beyond treatment.

In addition to health consequences, the financial burden on families can be severe. Debt due to high, unexpected medical bills is one of the primary reasons that families file for bankruptcy. Nearly 30% of uninsured adults say that medical bills had a major adverse impact on their families' lives.

The burden falls on our local communities through our health care safety net—but that safety net is being stretched very thin. Community clinics and public hospitals in my congressional district, and all over the country, are straining under the burden of caring for uninsured Americans. Safety net providers, despite their good work, cannot take the place of quality health management and health insurance.

We know who the uninsured are. And we know where they work. The statistics show us that, overwhelmingly, low income workers in small businesses are the most likely people to be uninsured. According to the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, the working uninsured are most likely to be employed in firms with less than 25 employees.

But we in Congress are not doing a good job telling small businesses about the tax benefits available to small business owners who do the right thing and offer health insurance. A study of employers commissioned by the National Association of Health Underwriters found that small businesses are not always aware of the benefits, tax and otherwise, associated with offering health insurance.

Fifty-seven percent of small employers do not know that health insurance premiums are 100% tax deductible. Sixty-five percent of employers do not realize that health insurance premiums are treated like general business expenses with regard to taxes.

I have seen the Child Health Insurance Program make a difference to kids in my district. But despite the success of the CHIP program, 26% of poor children and 16% of near-poor children remain uninsured. Nine million American children remain uninsured.

Madam Speaker, it is time for our nation to address the health care crisis that is looming on the horizon. Congress needs to act immediately to ensure that our health care system is secure, by adequately funding and maintaining our infrastructure, addressing the workforce shortage, especially that of registered nurses, and ensuring that health care coverage is available and affordable for all Americans.

This resolution is a small part of that effort. Today, we need to take the first step to make the public aware of the importance of health care coverage—to ensure that small businesses are aware of the benefits of health insurance coverage, and that parents know when their children are eligible for Medicaid or CHIP.

Congresswoman WILSON and I are asking the President to designate a National Importance of Health Care Coverage Month to help bring this issue to the forefront of the national health care debate. During that month, I will challenge my colleagues to tell small businesses, parents of children and uninsured people in their congressional districts about the importance of health care coverage, the