

have some of the highest rates of poverty, poorest health, highest mortality rates, and lowest levels of educational achievement in the United States.

A unique legal and political relationship exists between the United States and Indian tribes that is reflected in the Constitution, various treaties, Federal statutes, Supreme Court decisions, and executive agreements. This creates a responsibility for the federal government to facilitate and complement tribal governments' efforts to improve the quality of life for Native Americans and encourage economic development in Indian Country. This bill does just that.

Numerous external efforts at economic development in Indian Country have proven unsuccessful. The most successful efforts have been initiated from within native communities themselves. Economic development efforts that empower native communities and give them the tools to make their own decisions should be encouraged and pursued.

I believe that education and economic development go hand-in-hand in Indian Country. Indeed, higher education is a fundamental form of economic development. Yet, an uneducated workforce continues to be a cyclical obstacle to economic growth in Indian Country.

The cycle is vicious. Businesses are often unwilling to locate in to Indian Country because of the lack of an educated workforce and Native American youth see little value in an advanced degree because there are no jobs on the Reservation that would reward one. Those native youth that do obtain a higher education often do not return to their communities because there are no jobs.

Higher education is costly to attain. As college and graduate school costs continue to swell, students are increasingly shouldering high levels of debt to pay for a college education. In fact, thirty-nine percent of student borrowers now graduate with levels of debt that require monthly payments in excess of eight percent of their total monthly incomes.

Loan repayment assistance for higher education graduates choosing to work in Indian Country will help break this cycle of poverty and promote economic development. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO CAROLINE CRYER

HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, all too often as I watch the evening news or open the paper, I am bombarded with stories of teens going down the wrong path. Today, I have the pleasure of celebrating a teen from my district, Caroline Cryer, who is excelling as an athlete and a student.

Caroline, who is the captain of the Cherry Creek lacrosse team, has been named All-American for the second-straight year. This past spring the senior was second in the state in assists (43) and points (101) after winning her third state championship in lacrosse. In addition, she was named both the Rocky Mountain News and Denver Post player-of-

the-year and the Denver Post/Denver Athletic Club High School Student-Athlete of the Year.

Lacrosse is not the only sport Caroline has shown a talent for; she has excelled in both varsity field hockey and varsity basketball. She won a state championship in 2002 for varsity field hockey.

While participating in these extracurricular activities, Caroline has maintained a 3.76 GPA and graduated with the highest honor roll honors. She has decided to attend Duke University this fall, where she is sure to succeed after taking four college AP tests.

Mr. Speaker, with students like Caroline Cryer in our communities, the next generation promises to do great things. It is my distinct pleasure to honor Caroline here today, and wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO DAVID UETTERLING ON THE OCCASION OF HIS ELECTION TO STATE COMMANDER OF THE OHIO DIS- ABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

HON. PAUL E. GILLMOR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. GILLMOR. Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to pay special tribute to Mr. David Uetterling of Defiance, Ohio on the occasion of his election as state commander of the Ohio Disabled American Veterans.

David Uetterling has a lifelong record of service to the people of Ohio and the people of America. David entered the United States Army in 1965 and served an 18-month tour of duty in Vietnam. David was injured while serving his country in Vietnam.

A resident of Defiance, Ohio, David has been a life member of the Disabled American Veterans Defiance Chapter 36 since 1982. He served 4 years as commander of the Defiance chapter. David has held various DAV offices at the state level and most recently served as bingo chairman and adjutant/treasurer.

During the 83rd Annual State Convention from June 10–12 in Dublin, Ohio, David Uetterling was unanimously elected state commander of the Ohio Disabled American Veterans, an organization comprised of more than 48,000 veterans. In addition to his service in the DAV, David is a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS, ELKS, and American Legion.

Mr. Speaker, the service of our disabled veterans is vital to the people of the Fifth Congressional District of Ohio. David Uetterling has effectively displayed leadership to his community through service to the many veterans organizations in which he is involved. His passion to advance the issues that affect veterans most makes him a model citizen of the Fifth District.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying special tribute to David Uetterling. Our communities benefit greatly through his service. On behalf of the people of the Fifth District of Ohio, I am proud to recognize David Uetterling's great achievement. We wish David and his family all the best as we pay tribute to one of Ohio's finest citizens.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO MARK BURGET

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to pay tribute to Mark Burget of Boulder, Colorado and his hard work to advance the goals of The Nature Conservancy. Recently, Mark announced he would be leaving his position as the Colorado Director of the Nature Conservancy and moving on to The Nature Conservancy Director of the Global Priority Group. As he moves on in his career, I am honored to recognize his accomplishments before this body of Congress and this nation.

Mark spent his childhood in Chester County, Pennsylvania. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College, and his master's in business and Juris Doctoris degree from the University of Virginia, he began his work for the Nature Conservancy in 1992. Soon after, he accepted the appointment as Colorado State Director for the Nature Conservancy. He was Colorado Director for eleven years, where he worked hard to protect 416,000 acres of natural land in Colorado. His new position with the Nature Conservancy will be the Director of the Global Priority Group, where he will work to identify and to act on the most urgent needs for conservation across the globe.

Mr. Speaker, Mike will serve The Nature Conservancy well in his new capacity. He has already done much to protect natural lands in the state of Colorado, and I am confident he will continue to build upon this proud legacy. I congratulate Mike on his new job and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

TRIBUTE TO U.S. COAST GUARD CUTTER "MACKINAW"

HON. BART STUPAK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an extraordinary vessel stationed in my district. For the last 60 years, the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Mackinaw* and her crew have sailed the northern Great Lakes, keeping these vital waters open and safe. On August 12, past and present crew members of the *Mackinaw* will gather in Cheboygan, Michigan to celebrate the ship they affectionately refer to as "Big Mack" or "Queen of the Seas," and its six decades of service to the State of Michigan and the United States.

In 1941, the United States Congress authorized the construction of a new ice breaker for the Great Lakes. Three years later, on December 20, 1944, the *Mackinaw* was commissioned in Toledo, Ohio and made its maiden voyage to its new home, Cheboygan, Michigan. At 290 feet long, the *Mackinaw* was, and is, the largest and most powerful Coast Guard vessel on the Great Lakes.

Today, there are still men and women in Cheboygan who remember the *Mackinaw's* arrival in their harbor when thousands gathered on Christmas Eve to welcome the new cutter to their city. Since then, the residents of

Cheboygan have taken enormous pride in the *Mackinaw* as the ship and her crew worked to keep shipping lanes open. In its first year of service, the ship opened waterways nearly six weeks ahead of schedule, which allowed vital cargo to reach its destination and kept our nation's war machine running at top capacity.

As the nation shifted to peacetime production, the *Mackinaw* kept up its wartime pace. It continued to break up ice several feet thick every spring to ensure the safe arrival of essential raw materials for the steel and auto industries of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. The *Mackinaw* has seen the extraordinary expansion of American industry, and made an extraordinary contribution to that expansion.

Mr. Speaker, my most fond memory of the *Mackinaw* is the bitterly cold winter of 1993–1994. During that winter, the *Mackinaw* showed her brute ice-breaking strength time and time again. The *Mackinaw* freed countless vessels from frozen icy impasses. She has rescued stranded boaters, provided safe passage, and even rescued animals in peril.

Staff of the *Mackinaw* so admire the vessel and the Cheboygan community that they gather every five years for a reunion of current and past shipmates.

Mr. Speaker, the *Mackinaw* and her crew have played a role not only in national and international commerce, but also in more local relationships. The crew of the *Mackinaw* has long been an important part of the community in Cheboygan, with members pitching in to fight fires, forming relationships with residents, and many even settling in Cheboygan after their retirement.

As we move closer to 2006 when this historic vessel is decommissioned and replaced with a new cutter *Mackinaw*, Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to join me in paying tribute to the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Mackinaw* and her crews over the last 60 years. They deserve our deepest gratitude, and I wish them well when they gather next month to celebrate 60 years of fond memories.

PROPOSED AMERICAN HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of a health care proposal that I am proud to introduce.

For years now, elected officials at all levels of government have struggled to address the nation's health-care crisis, and meet the ever-increasing demand for affordable health care. A significant part of the population lacks access to the most basic health coverage. In 2002, 43.6 million Americans were uninsured—80 percent of whom were members of working families. Closing this gap is one of the greatest domestic challenges our nation faces.

As health-insurance premiums rise each year, businesses face difficult decisions. To maintain the same level of coverage, they must either cover these extra costs or pass them along to employees. Many business owners confront an even starker choice: Decrease benefits or drop coverage altogether.

Those of us in Congress have a responsibility to ensure that no family is forced to go

without health coverage. My proposal for meaningful health care reform requires a commitment from the government to act in the best interest of its citizens.

A national template for this type of coverage—one that every Member of Congress is intimately familiar with—already exists: the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP). Through the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the federal government manages health insurance for more than 8 million federal employees, retirees and dependents. This program, composed of private insurance carriers, is administered by the federal government, which assumes responsibility for approving or disapproving carriers, negotiating benefit and rate changes, and auditing carriers' operations under the law. With incredibly low administrative costs and a below-average annual premium increase, the federal government has been able offer a wide variety of choices and protections to its employees and Members of Congress.

My legislation offers a framework for a system wherein all Americans are offered the opportunity to participate in an FEHBP-style program—called the American Health Benefits Program (AHBP). Under this design, all Americans not eligible for existing federal programs—such as TRICARE, Veterans Health Programs, Indian Health Services, Medicare and Medicaid will be required to participate. The government will provide a defined contribution toward every enrollee's premium and actively manage and regulate the process of informed consumer choice, motivating private insurance companies to produce a favorable combination of efficiency and equity. Plans will compete for enrollees on the basis of benefits as well as efficiency, service and price.

Employers will be relieved of the annual burden of having to negotiate new health care packages for their employees. They will continue to play a critical role in the health care system through a flat tax on payroll—which promises to be more stable and consistent than premiums offered to them by insurance companies.

It is time we started offering every American the kind of coverage and oversight that we, as Members of Congress, have come to rely upon. Health care is much more than an issue that polls well with voters. As elected officials, we must take the incremental steps needed to develop a universal health-care system that is affordable, high-quality and well managed.

I firmly believe that health care is a basic inalienable right of every American. If we work together to address this critical issue, I know we can realize this goal.

HONORING LUKE PALDER ON THE COMPLETION OF HIS INTERNSHIP

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Luke Palder on the completion of his internship. Luke has been a tremendous help to me and my staff while he has interned in my Washington, DC, office this summer.

This is Luke's second summer as an intern for a member of the House of Representatives, which is remarkable when you consider

that Luke will begin his senior year of high school this fall.

Luke dedicates himself to excellence, and he commits himself fully to every project he undertakes. His internship in my office has been no exception. He has received the highest praise from constituents who have toured the U.S. Capitol with him. And he has proven himself to be a valuable addition to the office.

Luke treats everyone he meets with kindness and respect. With his dedication and determination, I am sure that he will be successful in every endeavor he pursues. I wish him all the best in the future.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO RAY DOMENICO

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to honor Ray Domenico of Welby, Colorado. Ray recently passed away from a stomach illness at the age of seventy-four. He will be remembered as the consummate farmer and a true American patriot. It is my privilege to recognize the life and memory of Ray before this body of Congress and this nation.

Ray was born and raised on a farm in Welby, Colorado. Following high school, Ray enlisted in the United States Navy and proudly served our country on a destroyer during the Korean War. After returning from the war, Ray returned to his roots and worked on his family farm. Ray spent many hours out of the day cultivating both fruits and vegetables. He was known for his work ethic, and he instilled the ethic in his children by leading through example.

For Ray, family was the most important part of his life. When he returned home from the Korean War he married Agnes in 1954. Ray and Agnes had known each other for most of their lives, since Agnes grew up on the neighboring farm. The couple raised a large family of thirteen children, with an even larger second generation comprised of thirty-eight grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, the Welby community will sorely miss Ray Domenico. Throughout the farm community, he will be known for his hard work and dedication to the cultivation of his crops. In this difficult time of bereavement, I wish to express my deepest condolences to his family and friends.

REMEMBERING ROY BURKE "R.B." HEAD, JR.

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to pay tribute to an outstanding citizen and beloved family man, the late Roy Burke Head, Jr., of Whitesboro, who passed away on April 7 at the age of 92. A stranger to none, he was affectionately known to his friends and family as R.B. or simply "B."

R.B. was a kind and generous man who devoted his life to his family, his community, and