

in 2001 to cosponsor a resolution which passed the House and Senate to recognize the Ellis Island Medal of Honor.

Beyond the Ellis Island Medals, NECO has provided leadership in a wide range of humanitarian and national civic work. This includes raising more than \$1 million to renovate and refurbish the Immigrant Wall of Honor on Ellis Island, a wall which contains the names of more than 200,000 immigrants to the United States who first aimed to begin the American dream on Ellis Island.

One of the best-known of NECO's programs is the Forum Children's Foundation. This project involves sponsoring children from various third world nations who are in need of urgent medical assistance to come to the United States and receive this care. To date more than 30 children have been provided with surgeries and related care that could be characterized as either life saving or life changing in nature. The Foundation assumes the responsibility for the costs associated with the care and the transportation necessary to receive it. In this endeavor they have made a genuine difference in the lives of not only the children but their families as well.

NECO in its history has been deeply involved as an advocate to combat the rising local, state, and national problem of hate crimes. It began in response to one of the most heinous of all hate crimes that was committed against James Byrd in Texas. NECO in addition to helping the Byrd family with the funeral costs, also established two scholarships a year in conjunction with the James Byrd Jr. Foundation for Racial Healing. NECO has worked closely with the sponsors of comprehensive hate crime prevention legislation in both the House and the Senate working to educate and inform the Congress about the need to prevent hate crimes by providing law enforcement with adequate resources and responsibility. Today in our nation we average nearly 25 hate crimes a day and it is obvious that we must do more to combat the problem.

NECO is constant in its efforts to combat negative ethnic and racial stereotyping. This has included work with the Family Exchange Peace Program. This program brings thousands of school children and their families together to raise awareness about the diverse racial and ethnic heritage of New York City as well as to encourage racial, ethnic and cultural harmony.

NECO also is responsible for one of the most important Italian American organizations, the Coalition of Italo-American Associations. The Coalition representing 143 organizations around the nation with a membership of some 1.5 million works in conjunction with NECO on the key mission to fight discrimination including negative media stereotyping, and to spotlight the contributions which Italian Americans make and continue to make to America.

NECO also is responsible for the Forum Club, a leading business organization in New York City, which sponsors monthly high-level programs with prominent speakers from government, media and business.

Over the past 20 years NECO has distinguished itself in many humanitarian programs and initiatives. It has stayed true to its mission to promote the strength of diversity and to promote understanding and harmony. Its positive mission and message is challenged so often by some harsh realities of modern society such as hate crimes and discrimination, yet

NECO's strength of character and sense of commitment has been unwavering.

It is a special honor for me to recognize NECO and its great work these past twenty years. I salute NECO's leadership including its Board of Directors, staff and volunteers and most especially their Chairman, Bill Fugazy. NECO is an outstanding model of an organization which does so well by doing such good.

#### THE LOSS OF MASTER SERGEANT RICHARD L. FERGUSON

#### HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 27, 2004*

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, it is with profound sorrow that I rise to recognize the death of Master Sergeant Richard L. Ferguson, United States Army—a brave soldier who served with dignity and honor in Iraq. I join his family and the people of Rhode Island in mourning this great loss.

On Tuesday, March 30, Master Sergeant Ferguson was killed in Samarra, Iraq, when the vehicle in which he was riding overturned in a non-hostile incident. He served with 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group out of Fort Carson, Colorado. Raised in Coventry, Rhode Island, Master Sergeant Ferguson joined the Army at the age of 17 and served his nation honorably as a member of the elite Special Forces. His assignments sent him around the globe on important and challenging missions, and it was while stationed in Germany that he met his wife, Marianne. Marianne now lives in Colorado with their children, Jonathan, Jordan, and Jason.

Master Sergeant Ferguson's many years in the Army demonstrate his dedication to our nation's freedom, a belief shared by others in his family that were also called to service; his father, Lee F. Ferguson, Sr., served in Korea, his brother, Lee Jr., was a member of the 82nd Airborne, and his brother Eric is in the Air National Guard. Richard Ferguson also leaves a sister, JoAnn Phillips of Coventry, and a daughter, Audrey. Those who knew him well spoke highly of his love of his family, and his patriotism. He was described as a leader who demonstrated humility, commitment and courage.

His loss causes us to reflect on the bravery demonstrated by our men and women in uniform as they carry out their obligations in the face of danger. When their nation called them to duty to preserve freedom, liberty and the security of their neighbors, they answered without hesitation. We remember those who have fallen not only as soldiers, but also as patriots who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. May we keep their loved ones in our thoughts and prayers as they struggle to endure this difficult period and mourn the heroes America has lost.

We will continue to hope for the safe and speedy return of all of our troops serving throughout the world.

#### IN RECOGNITION OF PIEDMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S STUDENT COUNCIL

#### HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 27, 2004*

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Piedmont Elementary School of Piedmont, Alabama. This fine elementary school has established a Student Council in order to teach its students the importance of government and the democratic principles. As I read the letters of some of its young officers, I know that this experiment has been successful. These young people, under the leadership of student council sponsors Miss Leslie Gary and Mrs. Melinda Whaley, are indeed a credit to their school, their community and their state.

As a reward for their service on the Piedmont Elementary School Student Council and to further their education about our American government, these students will be traveling to Washington, D.C., on April 27 to May 1, 2004. The Alabama Legislature has designated them as "Ambassadors of Goodwill."

I welcome these Alabama Ambassadors of Goodwill and their principal, John H. McGill, as the Piedmont Elementary School Student Council visits our Nation's Capital. I salute these young people for their accomplishments.

#### THANKING SISTER IMELDA FOR THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF GUID- ANCE, SERVICE, AND LEADER- SHIP

#### HON. DAVID VITTER

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 27, 2004*

Mr. VITTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Sister Imelda Moriarty, Principal of St. Catherine of Siena School in Metairie, Louisiana. Sister Imelda is retiring after thirty-five years of teaching at St. Catherine. She is a pillar of the Louisiana educational community and will be sorely missed.

Sister Imelda began teaching at St. Catherine of Siena School in 1969 with a class of forty-one students. She became principal in 1974, and she will retire as principal in May of 2004. Since the arrival of Sister Imelda, St. Catherine has become the largest nonpublic school in Louisiana.

Generation after generation of children from the New Orleans area have attended and will attend St. Catherine. Under the guidance of Sister Imelda, thousands of students have received excellent educations and have become positive contributors to their communities. More importantly, these students have developed a moral, ethical and spiritual foundation to help guide them through life. It is through Sister Imelda's faith that she has become such a positive and powerful source in the lives of so many children.

My wife and I are both personally affected by the retirement of Sister Imelda. Three of our four children attend St. Catherine, and Sister Imelda's departure will be a very emotional event for students and parents alike. Younger students will miss her open arms and candy

jar (both always full). Older students will miss her quiet Irish brogue and countless forays onto the stage during plays and talent shows. Parents will miss her most unassuming air that always commands immediate respect from both parents and students. And, most of all, we will all miss her absolutely unwavering faith in God and dedication to our children.

I come to the floor of the House of Representatives today to personally commend, honor and thank Sister Imelda on the occasion of her retirement from St. Catherine of Siena School. Sister, may the road always rise to meet you and the wind always be at your back.

#### A TRIBUTE TO THE CAREER OF PATRICIA ANN JOHNSON

#### HON. MIKE ROSS

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 27, 2004*

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the dedicated service of an individual from my district who has devoted her professional life to enhancing the educational development of students in our great State of Arkansas.

Patricia Ann Johnson has given 36 years of service in education to primary and community college students. On April 30th, Ms. Johnson will retire from teaching, but her legacy will continue in the schools and community where she taught.

Ms. Johnson served Mena for 31 years, teaching the first, second, third, and fourth grades at Louise Durham Elementary School where she was a continued source of inspiration for hundreds of school children while working for their educational and social advancement. In addition to her elementary school teaching, Ms. Johnson taught physical and health education at Rich Mountain Community College to students enrolled in those programs.

Ms. Johnson is an outstanding example of the lifetime dedication to service of Arkansas educators. I urge all citizens of Mena and the staff and students of Louise Durham Elementary School and Rich Mountain Community College to join me in honoring the career of a truly gifted, caring, and committed woman on the celebration of her retirement.

#### REGARDING THE VALUE OF LONG-TERM RESEARCH STUDIES IN UNDERSTANDING HEALTH RISKS AND CONSEQUENCES

#### HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 27, 2004*

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an important forum that took place in our Nation's capital last month. This forum, called by the U.S. Medicine Institute, convened scientific leaders from throughout the Federal Government to discuss the value of longitudinal studies in determining populations' risks for developing various health care conditions or diseases.

Science has long recognized the value of such studies, but it is critical for us as policy-

makers to also understand their role in helping inform our decisions. As the Ranking Member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I am aware of numerous occasions upon which the Committee employed data from such studies to determine matters related to compensation for service-connected conditions and eligibility for health care benefits. For example, Congress has used longitudinal studies to determine conditions that should be compensated due to veterans' exposure to dioxin and to identify the effects of various exposures on the health of veterans from the first deployment to the Gulf. In the near future, VA intends to propose a followup study that will examine the long-term effects of post-traumatic stress disorder on veterans. This will provide important information to current and future generations of veterans.

Determining the effects of war-time exposures on veterans' health is often a convoluted task. During service, troops may be exposed to a variety of agents all of which may have health effects that are poorly understood. In combination, these agents may also have different effects. Further complicating matters, some exposures are known to cause health effects that do not appear until many years later. There are often too many unknown factors to determine exactly which troops were exposed to which agents at any point in time.

While there have been some limited improvements in documentation of troop locations, troop exposures and servicemembers' health before, during and immediately following deployment, large information gaps are likely to exist well into the future. Longitudinal research can help fortify available information and ensure that Congress and the Administration give individuals the benefit of the doubt.

I am pleased that the U.S. Medicine Institute saw fit to give this important topic its time and attention. I am offering the Institute's executive summary from its March 4, 2004 forum entitled "Taking the Long View: The Value of Studies Over Time" for inclusion in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD in the hopes that all Members will recognize the importance of supporting these studies to better inform our policy decisions.

#### TAKING THE LONG VIEW: THE VALUE OF STUDIES OVER TIME

Long-term studies help answer specific questions about health risks and consequences over time and often deliver by-products not originally envisioned but with ongoing, exponential value. Consequently, long-term studies are essential for informed policymaking and provide liberal return on the substantial investment they entail.

These were the views interwoven throughout a forum held on March 4, 2004, by the nonprofit U.S. Medicine Institute for Health Studies. The consensus among panelists and participants was that long-term studies undoubtedly deliver great benefit to society at large, as well as to the specific group or groups targeted in a particular protocol. For example, the 22-year-old Ranch Hand study of agent orange exposure in Vietnam offers a trove of longitudinal data on the aging process in men—with much of this data yet to be tapped.

Forum deliberations found long-term studies of such value in answering questions relating to public health that they should become a byproduct of how "we normally do business" in healthcare—especially as digital patient records make collection and analysis of data amenable to routine analysis.

These edited proceedings present the remarks of panelists at the forum and the ensuing discussion among participants. Observations presented during the group's deliberations include:

Long-term studies are essential for the understanding of disease and, consequently, for disease management. They give policymakers the data and findings needed to make rational determinations about eligibility for compensation relating to occupational exposures.

As long-term studies are done in future, they should be accompanied by "clear" business case analyses, "so that there really is a clear understanding of the rewards that come from the . . . investment in conducting these studies."

As disease patterns among Americans shift away from the acute toward chronic, multiple conditions, long-term studies will assume a greater role, because they allow examination of particular populations and pick up a "different set of information" about risk factors than short-term clinical trials can.

Decades-long studies such as the Framingham Study that delineated risk factors in heart disease and the Harvard Nurses Study of risk factors for major chronic diseases in women are well-known examples of the importance that long-term investigations can have in shaping health practices and policies.

Long-term studies conducted by federal agencies need the stability afforded by designated funding, rather than having their funds come through basic agency appropriations.

The Veterans Affairs and Defense departments use long-term studies to help answer questions about potential deleterious health effects in troops from exposures during deployments—questions now anticipated for every deployment: Who was exposed; are those exposed showing unusual disease; are those exposed dying at unusual rates or from unusual causes, or has their health changed over time; do those exposed show higher incidence of cancer(s); do the children of those exposed exhibit higher rates of birth defects?

A classic longitudinal study is the Air Force Ranch Hand Study, initiated in 1982, which has seen the collection of 74,000 biological specimens and 19,000 x-rays and has involved more than 13,000 physical exams, more than 20,000 questionnaires and thousands of records on conception and birth. In addition, more than 2,800 death records have been obtained.

This study is scheduled to terminate in 2006, but that directive has met with controversy on grounds there is much information yet to be mined. To resolve whether the study should be continued, Congress has asked the Institute of Medicine to examine the scientific merit of retaining and maintaining the medical records, specimens and other data collected for the study; the potential value of extending the study; and the advisability and costs of making study specimens available to independent researchers.

An important longitudinal study that is just beginning in the military is the Millennium Cohort Study, which involves an initial study group of 10,000, with 20,000 more to be added this year and another 20,000 to be added in 2007. The study will examine employment exposures and post-deployment consequences in a group exposed in Kosovo or Southwest Asia, compared to a non-exposed cohort.

Study participants will be followed every three years by postal surveys; demographic and health information will be obtained and correlated over a 22-year period.

The Veterans Affairs Department regularly turns to the Institute of Medicine for objective, independent literature reviews of the