

I am continually impressed by the dedicated directors and staff who work to make these facilities welcoming to all members of the community.

This week is National Senior Center Week, and the theme is "Senior Centers on the Move!" I cannot think of a better phrase to describe the seniors in Rhode Island. Senior centers give them the opportunity to get out of the house to attend exercise classes, computer seminars, dances, Feng Shui demonstrations, and hundreds of other activities. Some senior centers even sponsor overnight trips to neighboring cities. Many centers promote health and wellness beyond exercise classes, by bringing physicians and nurses to the centers for office hours. By hosting seminars on healthy living and the management of chronic illnesses, like diabetes, these centers are enhancing the lives of seniors and their families.

Rhode Island's seniors centers, and the centers around the Nation, are one stop centers for seniors and their families to get the care they need, both physically and emotionally. Whether you go to get your blood pressure checked, take an exercise class, or meet a neighbor for lunch, the senior center's staff welcomes you like family. I would like to congratulate Rhode Island's senior centers, and all senior centers, on National Senior Centers Week, and their directors and staff who work to bring the most up-to-date activities to the seniors community. The commitment of the directors and staff is commendable and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their dedication and for working to sustain the heart of our communities.

I would like to recognize the following Senior Center Directors in the First District of Rhode Island:

Debra Diniz, Barrington Senior Center; Rita Ayers-Gaulin, Bristol Senior Center; Mary Luz, YMCA Community Center; Lori Gagnon, Cumberland Senior Center; Bob Rock, East Providence Senior Center; Charlotte Richardson, Jamestown Senior Center; Lois Durkin, Lincoln Senior Center; Marjory O'Toole, Little Compton Community Center; Arlene Kaull, Middletown Senior Center; David Dean, Edward King House.

Pauline Moyer, Florence Cray Center; Amanda Leinhos, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center; Karen Testa, Salvatore Mancini Center; Joan Crawley, Leon Mathieu Center; Cynthia Koniecki, Portsmouth Senior Center; John Deluca, Davinci Center; Jessica Haley, Hamilton House; Sue Robbio, Jewish Senior Agency; Everret Cavalho, Mt. Hope Center; Lori Silvia, Fox Point Senior Center; Marilyn Heller, Smithfield Senior Center; Janice Gomes, Tiverton Senior Center; Elizabeth Hogue, Warren Senior Center; and Jill Anderson, Woonsocket Senior Center.

CO-SPONSORSHIP OF H.R. 4061

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 13, 2004

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in regards to H.R. 4061, the Assistance for Orphans and Vulnerable Children Act of 2004, which passed the House International Relations Committee by unanimous consent on March 31st.

Last week the International Relations Committee filed House Report 108-479.

Because House rules prohibit the addition of additional co-sponsors to a bill once the committee report has been filed, I am not able to formally add another Member of Congress as a co-sponsor of this legislation.

I ask that the record show that Mr. TERRY of Nebraska is in support of my bill and should be considered by this body as a co-sponsor of H.R. 4061.

CONGRATULATING MR. AND MRS. ALMON LONG ON THE HAPPY OCCASION OF THEIR 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 13, 2004

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. and Mrs. Almon J. Long of Larksville, Pennsylvania, as the happy couple celebrates the joyous occasion of their 50th Wedding Anniversary today.

My good friend Al Long is a retired grocery business owner who served in the Army. As a veteran, he has long been a strong advocate of veterans' rights. When I need to know what is important to our veterans, it comforts me to know that I can always count on Al to air the concerns of Northeastern Pennsylvania's veterans. When the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center was in danger of being closed, Al headed up the local effort to save the facility, including helping to round up more than 30,000 signatures that I personally delivered to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Al has held several offices within the Pennsylvania Department of Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, including State Commander for the organization. Al currently serves as the State Legislative Chairman.

Cora Long is a retired garment worker who remains active in the VFW Post 283 in Kingston.

The couple has three children, Linda Colianni of Larksville; Lori Schmidt of Wapwallopen; and Allan Long of Ashley. The couple also enjoys their three wonderful grandchildren, Vinny, Michael and Courtney. They also enjoy time with their pug, Rudy.

The Longs were married in the First Evangelical United Brethren Church with the Rev. Warren Loesch officiating. Cora's attendants included the late Joyce Shewan, Marilyn Valent Duda, the late Mrs. Ronald Williams and Patricia Swiderski. Al's groomsmen were William Rehn Jr., the late Edwards Shewan, the late Michael Figler, Arthur Rehn, the late John Lockman and William Young.

Cora Long is the daughter of the late William and Ruth Rehn of Wilkes-Barre. Al is the son of the late Mary Gregory of Larksville.

The couple will be honored at a party on Saturday, May 15, 2004, at Saint Ignatius Church in Kingston.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor and privilege to stand here today and pay tribute to the Longs, a loving couple who has played such a vital role in ensuring veterans' rights and who stand as pillars of their community.

HELP EFFICIENT, ACCESSIBLE, LOW-COST, TIMELY HEALTHCARE (HEALTH) ACT OF 2004

SPEECH OF

HON. C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 13, 2004

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill because we should not impose a one size fits all solution to the problem. We need to bring the patients, doctors and insurance companies to the table to address this problem as a whole and not just target one factor in the rising cost of malpractice.

Medical malpractice is an issue of concern and we need to look at ways of addressing the real issues. We need to look at patient safety. We need to look at ways of helping doctors that have been negatively impacted and we need to find ways to stop frivolous law suits. With these underlying problems is a one size fits all answer a solution. Will this address doctors and patients needs? Will this ensure that patients receive the care they need and will doctors be able to provide the appropriate care to heal our sick?

I do strongly believe that a factor that has been left out of this debate is the insurance companies. What role do they play and what information do they provide and is it accurate? Are these companies playing on the fear of doctors and patients to increase their premiums? We cannot continue down this path without addressing this issue. We must have an open debate where all the major players are involved and we do not pit doctors versus patients. If this problem persists and we start to lose doctors we must force all these players to the table to rectify the problem.

We are fortunate in the state of Maryland to have caps. These caps have done a good job in keeping the health care standards in the state so high. Anything we work in Congress should allow for the states to address their individual needs. Maryland is best suited to address the needs of the doctors and patients in our state. We do not need a forced federal one-size fits all solution for our state. We need an open dialogue.

HELP EFFICIENT, ACCESSIBLE, LOW-COST, TIMELY HEALTHCARE (HEALTH) ACT OF 2004

SPEECH OF

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 12, 2004

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, this bill claims to be a cure for the high cost of insurance premiums paid by doctors. But it's really just what the insurance companies ordered.

It's a public policy placebo that doesn't relieve the sting doctors are feeling from sky-high insurance premiums. It only offers the illusion of relief, while pumping cash into the bottom line of the insurance companies.

Capping damages may save insurance companies money when their policyholders are sued, but the bill doesn't require insurers to pass along one cent of savings to doctors in the form of lower medical liability premiums.

Last year, when H.R. 5, the so-called "HEALTH" Act, was considered in the Energy and Commerce Committee, I offered an amendment to ensure that any savings from the bill's caps on damages for patient pain and suffering would be passed along to doctors in the form of reductions in their liability insurance premiums. This would directly protect innocent doctors from the impact of rising insurance rates brought about by negligence, while increasing the likelihood that consumers would see some benefit from caps. The Republican side defeated my amendment.

I asked the Rules Committee to make my amendment in order so that we could have a full and open debate on it during Floor consideration, but the Republicans refused to make my amendment in order.

This year, the Republican Majority went one step further—not only did Republicans refuse to make my amendment in order, they completely bypassed the Committee process altogether, ramming this bill right to the House Floor without any hearings and without any opportunity to amend it in Committee.

The amendment I offered last year in Committee established the "missing link" in this bill between liability caps and lower premiums for physicians. It would have balanced the competing interests in a way that would allow some progress on this issue. But balance does not seem to be what the Republican leadership is looking for. Instead, they bring forward a bill that no one can amend at all and which blames rising premiums on the victims of medical errors by capping their damages for pain and suffering, while completely ignoring the effect that insurers' own bad business decisions have on the high cost of premiums.

Such a slanted, one-dimensional view of the problem is bad for doctors and bad for patients. Without any guarantee that savings from the bill's cap on damages will go to doctors—not the insurance industry—this bill deserves to be defeated. Someday, we will see a majority in this Congress that is willing to go to bat for consumers and doctors alike to reduce the soaring cost of providing good medicine, instead of handing out "discount cards" that are becoming a license to raise prices across the board. Sadly, that day has not yet arrived.

I urge my colleagues to reject this harmful bill. Put the interests of physicians and patients above insurance company profiteering. Vote "No" on H.R. 4280.

DEPLORING ABUSE OF PERSONS IN UNITED STATES CUSTODY IN IRAQ

SPEECH OF

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 6, 2004

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and good friend, the gentleman from Massachusetts for yielding me this time. At seven in the morning today, he and I, and the other members of the Committee on Rules, met to discuss this resolution.

Once again, the Republican majority has determined to use the Committee on Rules to frustrate the democratic procedures.

Once again, the Republican Party has stifled debate and offered a closed rule.

As America commits itself to promoting Democracy in Iraq, the Republican majority in the House of Representatives, for partisan purposes, refused to allow an open debate on this most important issue.

It is as if the Republican majority starts and ends every Congressional session, which is broadcast live by C-SPAN, by saying, "Please do not try this at home." Today, again, they set exactly the wrong example of how to proceed democratically.

I condemn these horrible acts, and would have supported a resolution that properly and sincerely addressed the horrors that took place in Iraq. I believe that such a resolution could have come to the House floor under unanimous consent, and would have enjoyed full bipartisan support.

Now, it is important for us to recognize that the American military has no peers. It is also important for us to recognize that the absolute, overwhelming, great majority of the men and women in the military are not the kind of people that are now being investigated, and are not the kind of people that would commit these abuses.

I, for once, will not allow the offensive acts of a few to stain the service of more than 300,000 American men and women who have risked their lives for freedom. Our military has worked too hard and accomplished too much to be stained by the actions of a few.

That said, in a society committed to civil and human rights like ours, there is no place for the sorts of atrocities that occurred in Iraq. No American would allow for this kind of conduct. Everyone feels awful that this occurred and deplores the abuses of persons in America's custody in Iraq.

However, this resolution does not say what I think it should say. It condemns the abuse, but presents unacceptable omissions and inexcusable political provisions. Therefore, the resolution needs to be amended.

First, I would have supported a resolution that condemned the abuses and sought accountability because I believe this to be a time for remorse and self-criticism.

We are a Nation used to pointing the finger elsewhere; now, the fingers of the international public are pointing—rightfully so—back at us. Therefore, we must harshly and steadfastly deal with these atrocities and hold responsible all those that have contributed to the abuses. I trust that we can do this together with our friends and allies, taking advantage of such international organizations as the United Nations and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe that have experience and knowledge on how to fight and prevent human rights violations worldwide.

But, this resolution instead tries to change the subject and avoid the problems by bragging about the removal of Saddam Hussein. This is not a time to spin the bad news or play politics. And, this resolution is not the proper place to defend the mistaken decision of going to war in Iraq. I refuse to belatedly vote for the war in Iraq under the guise of a dishonest and untruthful title.

Second, I would have supported a resolution that made accountable all those whom, regardless of rank or party loyalty, contributed to a culture that condones human rights abuses. Ultimately, what happened in Iraq and its aftermath has been a failure of leadership

of the Commander in Chief, and a failure of leadership of the Department of Defense from Secretary Rumsfeld, and the resolution should have pointed this out.

More courageous leaders would have recognized their responsibility, faced up to the situation, and said, "the buck stops here." But, instead, those in the Bush Administration failed to do their jobs and give straight answers. And, the resolution of the Republican Congressional majority has been drafted to absolve the leadership of any blame.

We must take a good and hard look at the Bush Administration. I trust that justice and accountability will come for those who perpetrated abuse of Iraqi detainees, and those in the chain of command who failed to act upon learning of these appalling acts.

Third, I would have supported a resolution that loudly and strongly decried the fact that for too long the information regarding the abuses in Iraqi prisons was in the hands of military higher-ups who did not deem the oversight responsibilities of Congress important enough for them to bring the matter forward. Congress was not notified of the problems at Abu Ghraib prison, even though the Department of Defense had a report outlining the conditions there at least 3 months ago.

To conclude, it is unfortunate that this matter does not come to the floor under unanimous consent. It does have, as I pointed out this morning, a few flaws that could easily have been corrected had the majority determined that it was proper to do so.

I take this opportunity to apologize not only to the detainees but also to all others who likely feel that America has lost its moral authority.

Had this resolution been true to its title, "Deplored the Abuse of Persons in United States Custody in Iraq," I would vote in favor of it. However, for the above-mentioned reasons, I cannot support the legislation in question. I will vote nay as a patriot, and a human rights defender.

I oppose this resolution in its present form.

MIDDLE-CLASS ALTERNATIVE MINIMUM TAX RELIEF ACT OF 2004

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 5, 2004

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the more than 2 million taxpayers who are unfairly burdened by the alternative minimum tax.

The AMT was originally designed in 1969 to ensure that the wealthiest Americans would still pay a fair share of taxes. The AMT now burdens many middle income Americans in what was once envisioned as an alternative minimum tax has now become more of a mandatory maximum tax.

The AMT is not a technicality of significance to only a few bureaucrats and the tax lawyers. It is not a mere glitch, the repair of which would only help a handful of wealthy individuals. It is a system that affects 2.4 million families this year. By 2010, 30 million Americans will be faced with minimum tax liability.

Unfortunately, under the Republican bill today, AMT exemption would only be raised to