

On that same day, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality released findings that showed that individuals with low literacy—lower-than-average reading skills—are less likely than other Americans to get potentially life-savings screening tests such as mammograms and Pap smears.

In addition, Secretary Thompson remarked that, “We must ensure that all Americans get the prevention and health information that they can understand and use to keep themselves and their families healthy.” He pointed out, “Health literacy can save lives, money, and improve the health of millions of Americans.”

The Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act would move us closer to the goal of ensuring equal access to quality health care.

Last year, the majority leader said, “Inequity is a cancer than can no longer be allowed to fester in health care.”

I agree. We know what happens when cancer is allowed to spread.

Too many Americans in minority communities have lost their lives because they are not getting the care they need. We cannot afford to wait any longer to confront the minority health gap in our country.

Americans are asking for our leadership on a challenge that is quickly becoming a national emergency. We have an obligation to answer their call.

EL DÍA DE LOS NIÑOS: CELEBRATING YOUNG AMERICANS

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, every year on the 30th day of April, nations throughout the world, especially in Latin America, honor and celebrate the importance of children to families and communities. Many Latino families honor their children on this day by celebrating El Día de los Niños in their homes. Today, nearly 45 million children under the age of 18 reside in the United States, and one in four of these children are of Hispanic descent. The El Día de los Niños holiday provides a wonderful opportunity for all Americans to pay tribute to those who represent the future of our great country—our Nation's youth. A growing number of cities, schools, libraries, museums, churches, and other community organizations across the nation observe this holiday by planning activities and events that celebrate children.

While El Día de los Niños recognizes the importance of children, the holiday also provides an occasion to shed light on the unique challenges currently facing Latino children in America. Every day nationwide, 751 Latino children are born into poverty; 518 are born without health care; and 561 Latino high school students drop out of school.

As every parent knows, our children are a gift we have been given in exchange for a commitment to put their well-being above all else. It is our covenant to meet our children's needs be-

fore our own and to work and plan so that they may have a better future.

The Bush administration's fiscal year 2005 budget proposal breaks that covenant by giving tax cuts for the wealthy higher priority than investments in our children. His administration has created record deficits that mortgage our children's future.

The choices contained in the President's budget fail to address the basic needs of children in key areas such as health care, education, Head Start, child care, housing, child nutrition, and the prevention of, and treatment for, child abuse and neglect.

The number of Americans without health insurance increased by 2.4 million between 2001 and 2002, the largest jump in a decade, to a total of almost 44 million. Among those 44 million are more than 9 million children under age 19, almost 90 percent of whom live in working families. However, the administration's budget proposal does nothing to significantly expand health insurance coverage.

Latinos are the most likely of all groups to lack health insurance. One-third of Latinos, 33.2 percent, lack health insurance, and nearly one-quarter, 24.1 percent, of Latino children are uninsured. Since a significant reason for the low level of insurance coverage among Hispanic children is the result of current law that bars them from participating in Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Program, SCHIP, removing these barriers to health care is key to ensuring that Latino children have access to health care services. Yet, the administration's budget does not recommend taking this important step, leaving millions of children without coverage.

Just when schools are struggling to meet the new requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, NCLB, President Bush has proposed the smallest increase in Federal education funding in 9 years. Since 2002, the NCLB program has been shortchanged by \$26.5 billion. This year alone, President Bush has proposed a budget that would underfund the NCLB program by \$9.4 billion.

The administration's budget shortchanges education programs that are particularly important for Latino students. Dropout assistance, bilingual education funding, Migrant Education, HEP and CAMP and the parent assistance program—all of which help migrant students—are all significantly underfunded.

The President's budget proposal would virtually freeze Head Start funding even though the program currently reaches only 3 out of 5 eligible preschoolers, and only 3 percent of infants and toddlers eligible for Early Head Start.

At a time when the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Services Programs serve only 19 percent of eligible migrant and seasonal children, the President's budget provides \$269.4 million—far short of what is needed to meet demand.

The President's budget proposal would flat-fund child care assistance at a time when only 1 out of 7 eligible children currently receives a child care subsidy; when States are making significant cuts to child care services due to State budget crises that are exacerbated by recent tax cuts; and when more than 550,000 children across the country are on waiting lists for child care assistance. The Senate recently voted 78 to 20 to increase the Federal investment in child care so that low-income working families can succeed in the workplace and make sure their children have safe, high-quality, appropriate care.

The President's budget proposal cuts section 8 housing assistance by \$789 million, intensifying the unmet need for affordable housing. Of the 2 million households that receive section 8 rental vouchers, 52 percent are families with children, making section 8 the main source of housing assistance for low-income children.

The President's budget proposal provides no significant increase in funding for child nutrition programs, while 22 million children live in households suffering from hunger or living on the very edge of hunger.

More than 900,000 children were abused and neglected in 2001, yet the investments proposed for preventing child abuse and neglect and assisting children and families in crisis, totaling \$151 million, fall far short of the need.

As we look to the future, we must do more than simply hope that our country will be in good hands. We must take steps to ensure that each child growing up in America has access to world-class health care and a quality education. El Día de los Niños allows us to celebrate the hopes and dreams of our children while reflecting on their many accomplishments and assisting them in reaching their future goals.

As a proud father and grandfather, I happily celebrate El Día de los Niños. However, my commitment to young Americans and the Latino Community will not end today. I am committed to championing legislation that will help families realize the vision of El Día de los Niños increased access to health care; higher investments in Head Start, education, and child care; access to decent housing; stronger child nutrition programs; and more child abuse prevention and treatment programs. By working to meet our children's needs today, we are building a better future for all Americans.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I speak in celebration of El Día de los Niños, a traditional Latin American holiday celebrating the future of children. This holiday honors Latino children and other children throughout the United States. In my home State of New York a number of important celebrations are taking place in honor of this important day.

Today, there are nearly 45 million children under 18 living in the United States and one in four of these children

are of Hispanic descent. Of the 3.5 million children under 18 living in New York, nearly 1 million are Latino.

While El Día de los Niños recognizes the importance of all children, the holiday also provides an occasion to shed light on the unique challenges currently facing Latino children in America. Every day nationwide, 751 Latino children are born into poverty and 561 Latino high school students drop out of school. In New York, 35.9 percent of Latino children live in poverty and nearly 20 percent of Hispanic youth drop out of high school each year.

We must do better for our children, especially our Latino children. The President's budget fails to provide adequate investments in education that could significantly improve the future of our most vulnerable children. President Bush's fiscal year 2005 budget eliminates the dropout prevention program and even calls them unnecessary despite the fact that over 27 percent of Latinos across the country currently don't graduate from high school. His budget freezes funding for bilingual education and migrant education programs; cuts funding for Head Start, after school programs, and college loan programs; and eliminates Even Start. This budget is devastating to programs designed to help Latinos gain an even footing in education.

That is why I joined my colleagues in the Senate in sending a letter to the Appropriations Committee urging the committee to target funding to meet the needs of our Hispanic children. To strengthen our Nation, we must take steps to ensure that all children growing up in America have access to a quality education. Throughout the remainder of the 108th Congress, I will continue to champion legislative efforts to aid all young Americans and the Latino community so that we can help these children pursue their hopes and dreams. Today, as we celebrate El Día de los Niños I encourage all Americans to stop for a moment and pay tribute to the future of our great country—our Nation's youth.

TRIBUTE TO TOM MEEKER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a fellow Kentuckian and UofL alumnus, Tom Meeker. Tom is the President of Churchill Downs, home of the Kentucky Derby. This Saturday, horse lovers from around the world will watch with anticipation as Tom presides over the 130th Run for the Roses.

In September of 1984, Tom was named President of Churchill Downs. Two decades later he oversees one of horseracings largest operations. His success didn't come easily or without personal struggles. When Tom assumed the reins at Churchill Downs, the 109-year-old racetrack was in need of a facelift. Today, the track is entering the final stage of a \$121 million renovation.

Under Tom's leadership, Churchill Downs Inc. has also expanded its oper-

ations and now owns six tracks in five States, as well as its own simulcast network. And the company continues to give back to the Louisville community through philanthropic donations.

Tom has been described as a hard working, aggressive, loyal and forceful leader. He has had some tangles over the years with the Kentucky General Assembly regarding expanded gambling and other business issues. But these encounters pale in comparison to the personal battle he fought with alcohol. Fifteen years ago he sought help, and returned a month later a changed man.

Churchill Downs is lucky to have Tom Meeker. Under his direction, it has matured and thrived to become the place we all come home to, particularly the first Saturday in May.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the article, "Churchill's Hard Charger; Tom Meeker rebuild the track—and his life" from The Courier-Journal, be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Louisville Courier-Journal, April 24, 2004]

CHURCHILL'S HARD CHARGER; TOM MEEKER REBUILT THE TRACK—AND HIS LIFE (By Marcus Green)

Tom Meeker was a 41-year-old lawyer with little racetrack experience when he took the top job at Churchill Downs in 1984.

The 109-year-old track "was about ready to fall down," said Meeker, who didn't think he'd last too long either.

But in two decades Meeker has built Churchill Downs Inc. into one of the three big players in the sport, along the way eliciting both great praise and sharp criticism.

Some who know Meeker describe him as a visionary, a bold and aggressive executive whose legacy at Churchill might rival that of the legendary Derby promoter Col. Matt Winn.

"If you look at Churchill Downs then and you look at Churchill Downs today, the only similarity is the name, the Twin Spires and the fact that the Kentucky Derby is there," said Gerald Lawrence, the track's former general manager and executive vice president.

"The place has just been completely changed. It's a foresight and a vision that (Meeker) had."

Today Churchill owns six tracks in five states and beams its races live to bettors at tracks, off-track betting parlors and homes across the country.

Despite having one year left in a \$121 million renovation of the flagship track in Louisville, Churchill still has the resources to offer \$45 million to buy the Fair Grounds in New Orleans, one of the last independently owned, top-tier thoroughbred tracks in the country.

In addition, Churchill Downs has emerged as a leading corporate citizen with Meeker at the helm, contributing more than \$7.7 million to charity over the last five years, including \$2 million to the local community.

"Tom is a great leader," said Churchill Downs Inc. board Chairman Carl Pollard. "And I think we have to give him credit—most of the credit, if not all of the credit—for recognizing that the industry was changing and that in order to take advantage of the change in the industry we had to be more than one racetrack."

Meeker, who commanded Marines in Vietnam, has been described as a hard-working, aggressive, loyal and forceful leader.

Meeker volunteers another word.

"'Arrogant' has come up any number of times," he said. "I think that's a function of being action-oriented. I mean, if there's one thing you can't criticize about our team is we do things."

But Meeker said he would not have been able to guide the company's expansion if he didn't get help for his drinking after the 1989 Kentucky Derby.

"The taint that I painted on the company—you know, 'Here is some drunk running the company. What can he do?'—at that point, I kind of figured it would be short-lived before I moved on," Meeker said.

Change, for Meeker, often meant breaking with tradition.

During his first year as president, Meeker rankled some when he raised Derby ticket prices to fund on-track improvements.

He called the track's neighborhood "blighted" and promoted Sunday races to the dismay of area ministers.

And critics note that the same man who now embraces simulcasting was initially opposed to it—a fact Meeker readily admits.

"Change is such a tough taskmaster. It truly is," Meeker said. "You have to have the sense of purpose, conviction and risk-taking to be able to weather some of those storms and believing what you are doing is the right thing."

Most recently, the track's multimillion-dollar renovation has given Churchill a much-needed face-lift—but it also adds mammoth stacks of luxury suites that come close to overshadowing the famed Twin Spires and has left some longtime Derby ticket holders without a view of the race.

The changes have upset some traditionalists.

Meeker argues that replacing the patchwork of clubhouse and grandstand additions that had been bolted on to previous expansions will enhance the track's architectural integrity.

"If we don't move," Meeker said, "we're going to get lost in the wash."

Under his leadership, Churchill also expanded its portfolio by buying other tracks and later formed a separate simulcast network.

"He's taken Churchill Downs from just a facility that was used two days a year: the Oaks and Derby," said trainer John T. Ward Jr., a former Kentucky racing commission member. "... He's continued to promote quality racing in everything he's done, and he understands there's a definite relationship between the racing and the horsemen—even though he's made a few horsemen mad."

Ed Flint, who negotiated with Meeker when he was president of the Kentucky Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association, would partially agree.

"He did some great things for Churchill Downs. He's made a lot of changes out there that have been good for the industry," Flint said. "But at the same time, I think his negotiating tactics and his style have hurt the industry some."

Added Flint: "He had the mentality of a go-get-'em, hard-nosed type of person, and he let that run over into trying to negotiate a lot of things that pertain to a lot of people. You know, racing touches a lot of people—owners, trainers, grooms, backside workers."

Louisville businessman J. David Grissom, a Churchill Downs director since 1979, said Meeker used to be impatient with average or mediocre performance but has become more patient through the years. Still, Grissom said: "He does not suffer fools gladly."

Not overlooked as a priority when Meeker took over 20 years ago was refocusing Churchill as a community player.