a requirement on foreign airlines to carry armed law enforcement personnel on flights into or over the United States determined by U.S. intelligence to be a threat or suspected threat.

With this important directive in mind, my legislation would allow the Federal Air Marshal Service to offer their specialized training to foreign law enforcement personnel. The legislation would also require the sponsoring foreign country to reimburse the Service for the cost of training.

The Air Marshal training facility located in Pomona, NJ, is unique. It is the world premiere facility for the very specialized on-board aircraft law enforcement training. The training they receive there is far more sophisticated than just airborne firearm proficiency and hand to hand combat. Air Marshals are also trained to help out in any airborne emergency situation, including evacuating passengers and flying a pilotless plane. The facility does a tremendous job teaching students to safely and efficiently eliminate a terrorist threat under very confined and crowded conditions all while traveling at over 30,000 feet in the air.

My legislation will allow students from across the globe access to the intense training regime available only at the Pomona facility and better equip America's allies to help us fight the War on Terror.

RECOGNITION OF NATO ENLARGEMENT

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 2004

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the upcoming enlargement of NATO when Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia are added as official members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Each of these nations, formerly part of the Soviet bloc, has emerged from their long struggle towards freedom as examples of the good that can come from people working together towards a common goal—in this case democracy and individual freedom.

As one of the co-chairs of the Baltic Caucus and a fourth generation Lithuanian, I can personally attest to the efforts and personal sacrifices that the people of these nations have been making for many decades now. Their determination to rid themselves and their countries of communist and dictatorial rule is a humbling lesson for those of us who have never known life without freedom.

We should welcome their commitment to freedom and provide them with the support they need to help insure that these growing democracies will flourish and become role models for other nations yearning for the same. Adding these nations to NATO is an extremely important step forward in our efforts to promote freedom and in our efforts against worldwide terrorism.

Already, many of these nations have made tremendous contributions to our efforts to stabilize Iraq and have a lasting impact in bringing peace to the Middle East. Clearly, these are nations that recognize the world beyond their own borders.

I am extremely proud to welcome Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia into NATO. I especially want to congratulate the many citizens and patriots in these nations and across the world who have struggled to get us to this historic moment. Your efforts will make a difference for generations to come.

COMMENDING INDIA ON ITS CELEBRATION OF REPUBLIC DAY

SPEECH OF

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand here today representing the citizens of America in honoring India's Republic Day. Fifty-five years ago India reached the goal that every great nation strives to attain which is the formation of a Democratic Republic. We as a Democratic nation must extend our recognition to the fellow nations of the world who represent the ideals of freedom and liberty, the same virtues, which make our country so beautiful and celebrate with them as we are all believers in Democracy.

The Indian nation represents one of the emerging nations in our increasingly globalized world. Boasting a GDP, the main indicator of economic success, that is number 4 on the world rankings, shows how impressive their rise has been in such a short period of time in relation to gaining independence from monarchy rule.

Their citizens which are part of the social and economic fabric of many of the world's countries including the United States are known for there academic success, business prowess, and social acceptance. Specifically in the United States they are a vibrant community holding the highest per capita income of any other minority community.

The Indian American community's love for the US and its people has also been demonstrated in their increasing participation with the political scene. Wanting to get involved so as to be in a position to add a new and fresh perspective should be commended and supported. We must remember that our forefathers once immigrated from foreign lands and it was their work and commitment to a strong country that allowed us to flourish through the years. Today we as Americans will recognize the same efforts being put forth by the Indian American community in their attempts to add to America's prosperity and continual success in the years to come.

I commend India for it's 55th Anniversary of its foundation as a republic and point to many future years ahead of successful partnership between India and the United States.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO PROTECT CALIFORNIA MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES FROM BEING FORCED INTO HMOS BY THE REPUBLICAN MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BILL

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 2004

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise with my California colleague HENRY WAXMAN and 24 of our Democratic California colleagues to introduce important legislation to protect California's Medicare beneficiaries from being forced into HMOs.

The Republican Medicare prescription drug law has many downfalls. The legislation we are introducing today corrects only one of them, but it is an especially important fix for seniors and people with disabilities who live in California.

As part of the prescription drug law, Republicans insisted on including a demonstration project beginning in 2010 that would require the traditional fee-for-service program to compete against private HMOs and other managed care plans for payment. This so-called ''premium support'' or ''comparative cost adjustment'' demonstration will cause Medicare beneficiaries who choose to remain in traditional fee-for-service Medicare to pay more and more for that choice. This cost differential will economically force people into HMOs—even if those plans do not meet their health care needs. Its part of the overall goal of the bill to dismantle Medicare as we know it.

Because we don't want California's seniors to be forced into health plans against their will, we've authored legislation to exempt California from eligibility for this wrong-headed demonstration program.

Senator BOXER has introduced companion legislation in the Senate (S. 2116). Upon introduction, she said the following:

> In California, 12 of its metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) now qualify for the demonstration project. If the two largest MSAs are chosen for this demonstration project, 1.4 million Californians will be faced with a Hobson's choice. They will be required to join an HMO or pay higher premiums.
>
> That brings us to the real question: Why is this necessary? Is it because seniors can't choose HMOs under the current system? No. Seniors can choose to join an HMO right now if they wish. I'll tell you why: It is a backdoor attempt to achieve Newt Gingrich's vision for a Medicare that will 'wither on the vine.'''

We agree with Senator BOXER. Seniors and people with disabilities should have the right to join a managed care plan in Medicare if they feel that plan will best meet their health care needs. That right exists in Medicare today and is preserved in the Republican-passed prescription drug legislation. However, no senior should be FORCED to join an HMO because it is the only way that they can obtain affordable health care.

That's why we've joined together to introduce this bill to exempt California from eligibility for the demonstration program—a demonstration that would force seniors into a Hobson's choice that will limit their access to the health care they need and result in the real goal of the Republican-passed Medicare legislation: the dismantling of the Medicare program.