

INTRODUCTION OF THE HEALTH  
CARE COSTS ACT OF 2005

**HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, October 28, 2005*

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, today I'm pleased to introduce the Health Care COBRA OffSet Tax Savings (COSTS) Act of 2005. This important legislation is a step forward in helping working families afford quality health care in this country.

Rewarding work is one of the most fundamental core values of our Nation. Our founding fathers built a society on the notion that if you work hard, you will have an opportunity to provide a better future for your children and thus build a stronger, more competitive Nation. And, as we've seen throughout our Nation's history, America's workers have not disappointed.

Unfortunately, however, too many Americans today are working hard every day, but are still unable to make ends meet and provide even the most basic needs for their family, such as food, shelter, or health care. The legislation I'm introducing will help address one of these important challenges: affordable, quality health care for working families.

The statistics are undeniable—almost 46 million Americans have no health insurance and more than 1 million of the uninsured are in my home State of New Jersey. But that's just the beginning of the problem. Even families who are fortunate enough to have health insurance, are struggling to pay the premiums, which in New Jersey, have increased at four times the rate of earnings. Since 2000, the employee share of health care premiums in New Jersey increased almost 43 percent, or almost \$400 a year. When family earnings increase by only 10 percent over the same period, it becomes harder and harder to afford health care for your family.

The Health Care COSTS Act does not address the entire problem, but it will help some workers afford to keep their health insurance when they're between jobs. Currently, many workers who receive health coverage through their employer are entitled to keep that coverage for up to 18 months after they leave their jobs. This coverage is known as COBRA coverage. However, many don't take advantage of COBRA coverage because it's simply too expensive. The employee, who has just lost their job, has to pay the full cost of the coverage, making it prohibitively expensive for most families.

The Health Care COSTS Act helps moderate-income families with the cost of COBRA by providing an "advanceable" tax credit for half the cost of these health care premiums. The tax credit would go directly to the health plan administrator, thus reducing the workers' monthly premiums by 50%. This is not a hand-out, but a helping hand for workers who have contributed to the economic well-being of their community and have earned the opportunity to care for their family while they get back on their feet and find another job.

Clearly, there is much more to do in addressing the health care crisis in this country, but this is an important first step in helping working families afford health care coverage during one of the most difficult and vulnerable times a family might face. I hope this legisla-

tion will be a starting point for discussion of the significant challenges families face in affording quality health care in this country.

TRIBUTE TO ROSA PARKS

SPEECH OF

**HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 26, 2005*

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of one of the most important figures in our Nation's history: Mrs. Rosa Parks. In 1955, this courageous and gallant young lady took a stand. Or more correctly, took a seat, on a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Her refusal to give up her seat to a white man may have resulted in a disorderly conduct conviction and a \$14 fine. But her refusal to move to the back of the bus ignited a flame that started a revolution. She brought forth change among the American people. The consequences and significance of her stand makes her a true hero in American history.

We always hear how Mrs. Parks refused to give up her seat because she was tired from a long day of work, but this is only a half truth. Yes, she was tired. But Rosa Parks' weariness came not only from a hard day's work, but also from years of discrimination that she and our people faced daily due to the racist and segregationist laws of our country. She knew that blacks were required to give their seats to white passengers if there were no more empty seats. But Rosa Parks made a conscious decision to fight. All of us here today, white, brown, black and blue, are better off today because Rosa Parks said, "No."

Rosa Parks' arrest served as a catalyst for a massive 381 day boycott of the public buses in Montgomery, which was led by another great individual, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. During this time, African Americans would car-pool, walk, bike, taxi, or do whatever else they had to do to get to their various destinations. They did everything, but ride the bus. Despite the harassment that everyone involved in the civil rights movement faced, the boycott continued and was successful. Resolution was finally achieved in 1956 when the case was brought to court, and the segregation of buses was ruled unconstitutional. As we all know, what Rosa Parks jump started in 1955, eventually led to passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights act of 1965.

During her lifetime, Mrs. Parks worked for the equality of not just black people, but all people. She was elected secretary of the Montgomery branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, unsuccessfully attempted to vote many times to prove her point of discrimination, and founded the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development, an organization which aids in the social and educational development of our youth.

Rosa Parks demonstrated that one person can help so many other people by standing up for what they believe in. While we grieve her death, we also celebrate her life. We must remember her actions inspired others to dream more, learn more, and do more. With that, we all become more. A great man once said, "All of the great leaders have had one char-

acteristic in common; it was the willingness to confront unequivocally the major anxiety of their people in their time. This, and not much else, is the essence of leadership." Great leaders of the time, such as Rosa Parks, were tired of the inequality, and tired of the disparity that African Americans were facing at that time.

She challenged; she led; she served; and she inspired. Rosa Parks died with honor and principle. We have, but no other option, to live our lives in a manner which honors and mirrors the virtues she pursued with absolute courage and bravery.

HONORING REBECCA K. BLOOD ON  
HER DISTINGUISHED CAREER

**HON. RICK BOUCHER**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, October 28, 2005*

Mr. BOUCHER. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to honor Rebecca K. Blood on the occasion of her retirement from the American Public Power Association (APPA) after 13 years of work to advance policies of great importance to our Nation's economy and consumers. Throughout her service on behalf of consumer-owned utilities across the country, Ms. Blood has been a highly effective advocate of Federal policies that promote the development of renewable energy sources.

Ms. Blood has many important successes to point to in her distinguished career, including the establishment of the Federal Renewable Energy Production Incentive (REP) program in the Energy Policy Act of 1992, which was enacted due in large part to her tenacious leadership.

This provision of the Act encouraged significant new development of renewable energy programs in public power communities throughout the country. As well, she has been an important voice for sound Federal licensing processes for our country's hydroelectric facilities, with the goal of ensuring rigorous environmental review within a workable and timely agency process. Ms. Blood has also been intricately involved in clean air issues throughout her career—and is exceedingly knowledgeable of the policy issues related to air emissions and climate change. In all of these areas, she has shown a great ability to develop strong and successful coalitions on behalf of key consumer and environmental interests.

A native daughter of the great State of Michigan, Ms. Blood came to Washington, DC as a graduate of Michigan State University. In the 80's, she served on the staff of Michigan Senator Carl Levin and Congressman Phil Sharp of Indiana. She also worked tirelessly for the two-term Governor Richard Celeste of Ohio, during the development of the Clean Air Act (CAA) of 1990, before going on to make a career in the electricity industry. Throughout her remarkable career, Ms. Blood has always made a point to mentor others, who have greatly benefited from her experience and insights.

Ms. Blood is well known in this town for her integrity, forthrightness, good humor, and unwavering commitment to the many public power communities across the country that she has so ably represented over the past 13 years. I join her many dear friends and colleagues here in Washington, DC in expressing

our gratitude for her legacy of work and her steadfast friendship—and wish her all the very best in her future endeavors.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS  
MONTH

**HON. MARTIN T. MEEHAN**

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, October 28, 2005*

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. By increasing awareness of the prevalence of domestic violence, we hope that more victims come forward and make use of the services available to assist them.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice domestic violence is defined as, a pattern of coercive behavior designed to exert power and control over a person in an intimate relationship through the use of intimidating, threatening, harmful, or harassing behavior. Partners may be married or not married, heterosexual or homosexual, separated or dating.

Domestic violence is one of the most common and yet least talked about crimes. Nearly one in three adult women experiences at least one physical assault by a partner during adulthood. Approximately four million American women experience a serious assault by an intimate partner each year. Every fifteen seconds in the United States a woman is brutally battered by her partner and a woman is raped every six minutes. During the course of this speech, 15 women will be battered and another will be raped.

Children are also more likely to be abused in homes with domestic violence.

Violence is a learned behavior and children who are abused, or who witness domestic violence, are more likely to abuse their own partners or children, creating a cycle of violence that is difficult to break.

Domestic violence victims are not just those that have witnessed or been subjected to abuse. The impacts of abuse are felt by everyone in contact with the victim. It threatens the well-being of entire communities. Friends, family, co-workers, and communities are often called upon to help repair the lives shattered by domestic abuse.

I became active in the struggle against domestic violence long before I came to Washington. As a prosecutor in the Middlesex County DA's Office, I created priority prosecution policies to put the most violent domestic abusers behind bars. In my first term in Congress I became involved in this issue nationally as an original co-sponsor of the Violence Against Women Act, VAWA. I remain committed to preventing domestic violence and providing victims with the support that they need to this day. I was an active participant in strengthening VAWA with the passage of VAWA in 2000 and I was a co-sponsor of the Debbie Smith Act of 2003, which will improve the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault cases by using DNA evidence. This bill was included in the Justice for All Act of 2004 and became law on October 30, 2004.

Sadly, we are not making as much progress as we need to on this issue. In fact, since 1974 the rate of assaults against women aged 20–24 has increased almost 50 percent. We

can and should do much more. We must continue to reach out to victims and restrain abusers. We need to craft stronger legislation and to change existing legislation to ensure that the protections and services included in VAWA extend to all our citizens.

As we recognize National Domestic Violence Awareness Month let us renew our dedication to protecting our Nation's women, men and children from one of the greatest threats to the social fabric of America.

CONGRATULATING GEORGE GILLET  
ON BEING INDUCTED INTO  
THE COLORADO SKI AND  
SNOWBOARD HALL OF FAME

**HON. MARK UDALL**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, October 28, 2005*

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mr. George Gillett on his induction into the Colorado Ski Museum's Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame for 2005. Mr. Gillett's accomplishments have greatly impacted the ski community, and he deserves recognition for the many contributions that he has made.

When George Gillett bought Vail & Beaver Creek Resorts in 1985, a new era for the Colorado ski industry began. With his pioneering focus on customer service, Gillett redefined the skiing experience. He launched a massive installation of high-speed detachable chairlifts at Vail, kick-starting the growth that would make Vail America's number one ski destination.

Mr. Gillett also supported major alpine ski events at a time when most ski areas in America preferred not to host international races. Through his perseverance, Vail hosted the 1989 World Alpine Ski Championships, proving to the world that Colorado could successfully host major international ski championships. Due to his support, Vail later hosted the 1999 World Alpine Ski Championships. George Gillett is still active in the ski community, running Booth Creek Ski Holdings and managing resorts throughout North America. In 1999 Ski Magazine voted him one of the "100 Most Influential Skiers of All Time." His innovative thinking and passion for redefining the ski industry have left a lasting mark on Colorado skiing.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join with me in expressing our gratitude to Mr. Gillett for contributing to his community and industry in far-reaching ways. We recognize his accomplishments in making Vail & Beaver Creek world class ski resorts. I'm proud to offer warm congratulations to Mr. Gillett on his well deserved honor in entering the Colorado Ski Museum's Hall of Fame.

PROTECTION OF LAWFUL  
COMMERCE IN ARMS ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 20, 2005*

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to S. 397, the Protection of Lawful

Commerce in Arms Act. I believe this bill unfairly grants the gun industry immunity and takes away an individual's or state's ability to hold gun manufacturers, gun dealers, and gun trade associations accountable for negligence and product liability standards that apply to other industries. The bill perpetuates the gun industry's disregard for public safety and holds up their "see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil" approach to gun manufacturing and distribution.

My opposition to S. 397 is an effort to crack down on negligent gun companies whose sole interest is making money even when it is at the expense of innocent lives and law enforcement. This bill would void a number of pending cases around the country which seek to hold the gun industry accountable for its actions. That includes cases brought against the gun industry by the City of Chicago and Cook County on behalf of victims of a shooting rampage a few years ago. That one tragic incident killed Ricky Byrdson and injured others in our community. Those cases charge that the gun industry causes a public nuisance by being negligent in gun sales practices, particularly by making them available to minors and others who are banned from owning guns. This bill takes us backwards and gives immunity to the very industry that has the power to regulate the manufacturing and distribution of its products. One death by a handgun is too many. But when 647 people are murdered by guns in one year in just one city, as was the case in Chicago in 2002, now is not the time to give immunity to the gun industry.

Although I oppose S. 397, I support an amendment that was added to this bill before it passed in the Senate. The amendment offered by Senator KOHL draws its provisions from the Child Safety Lock Act. It would prohibit the sale, delivery, or transfer by a licensed importer, manufacturer, or dealer of a handgun to anyone who does not have a secure gun storage or safety device. Child-safety locks cost as little as \$10 and could save lives if sold with firearm. In fact, the Illinois House of Representatives passed a bill this year that will require gun dealers to sell child-safety locks with every handgun, to help prevent children from shooting themselves or others. This is important because our children possess the physical strength to accidentally fire a gun. According to the Illinois Council against Handgun Violence, 25 percent of 3- to 4-year-olds, 70 percent of 5- to 6-year-olds, and 90 percent of 7- to 8-year-olds can fire most handguns. The American Bar association believes that a locking device to prevent accidental firing should be a standard for the gun industry as seat belts are for the car industry. I support this amendment, and I hope it is enacted.

S. 397 would strip away the legal rights of gun violence victims, including law enforcement officers and their families, to seek redress against irresponsible gun dealers and manufacturers. That is why the American Trial Lawyers Association, the American Bar Association, as well as law enforcement officers oppose this bill. As it is, guns are one of the few consumer products that are exempt from health and safety regulations. Therefore, litigation is the last opportunity for victims of firearm violence to hold the gun industry accountable when it acts negligently or recklessly. This bill would protect the gun industry at the expense of gun violence victims. We must not let the gun industry off the hook. I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on S. 397.