

the country celebrate Cinco de Mayo—a day that commemorates the past and relishes the present by embracing American culture. So many Mexican-Americans have made positive contributions to our Nation.

One area in particular where Mexican-Americans have made great strides is in the Armed Forces. There are many Mexican-Americans proudly serving and giving back to their country right now. I want to share the story of Daniel from South Gate.

He is the son of Mexican immigrants, who came to this country to make a better life for his family. Growing up, Daniel said he always felt patriotic. When I asked him what he thought patriotism was, he replied, "I think it's working for freedom. I have always felt that I needed to earn my rights and that I had to contribute, even for the right to vote."

He went on to say that serving in the military was his civic duty. So as soon as he was able, Daniel enlisted in the Marines and graduated boot camp at 17. Daniel was one of the first Mexican-Americans that many Iraqis had ever seen. I can think of no better ambassador for our country. While he was shot at, he returned to southern California unharmed.

As you can see by this story, Mexican-Americans share the same goals as other Americans of freedom, opportunity, and a chance to build a better life. On this day, let us salute Daniel, and all other Mexican-American soldiers and veterans for their great service to this great Nation.

RECOGNIZING "COVER THE
UNINSURED WEEK" May 1–8, 2005

HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 5, 2005

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, as our Nation recognizes "Cover the Uninsured Week", I rise today to bring attention to the plight of the 45 million Americans who lack health insurance and access to healthcare.

Mr. Speaker, we are facing a health insurance and healthcare crisis in our country. While our Nation spends more per capita than any other country on healthcare, our delivery systems are disjointed and ineffective.

There was a time when it was assumed that having a job meant having health insurance. This is no longer the case. More than 80 percent of uninsured Americans are workers, most with full time jobs. Within my own state of Maryland, 90 percent of the 750,000 citizens lacking health insurance are employed.

Increasingly, more Americans lose health coverage every year, and those who have coverage pay more for it. Healthcare and drug costs are rising, as are premiums. As a result, many small businesses struggling to stay competitive in today's economy cannot afford to offer their employees insurance coverage. As a result, workers with access to employer-based group insurance plans often cannot afford the costs they must bear for insurance premiums.

The inability to obtain medical insurance unduly affects minorities. A staggering 1 in 3 of Hispanics are uninsured, compared to 1 in 10 of the Nation's white population.

Whereas, the African American community is disproportionately affected by diabetes, car-

diovascular disease, and other health problems that require regular access to healthcare, 1 in 5 African Americans unfortunately are also uninsured.

The consequences are severe. Citizens without health insurance are less likely to seek preventative care or help with minor medical problems, leading to major, more costly medical problems. Without insurance, a person's health is compromised, and their lifespan is shortened. In fact, there are 18,000 deaths each year in this country caused by a lack of health insurance—these deaths are preventable.

The increase in the uninsured population affects not only the health of our citizens, but the health of our economy as well. In fact, nearly half of all bankruptcy filings result from medical expenses. Having just one uninsured family member suffer from just one major medical problem or hospital stay can devastate the financial and emotional resources of an entire family.

To stop the drain on our healthcare infrastructure, our society, and our economy, we must provide insurance coverage to all Americans. We must find a way to lower healthcare and drug costs. We must find a way to make premiums more affordable for employees and employers.

Our small businesses should not have to choose between economic success and meeting their employees' healthcare needs. Workers should not have to refuse insurance for themselves and their children because premiums are too high.

Please join me in supporting the goals of Cover the Uninsured Week. Join me and those stalwarts like Congressmen JOHN CONYERS, PETE STARK, CHARLIE RANGEL and FRANK PALLONE, and Congresswomen TAMMY BALDWIN, BARBARA LEE and DONNA CHRISTENSEN—as we continue our commitment to solving our health insurance crisis and to making sure that all Americans have access to healthcare.

Congress must urgently examine ways to transform our healthcare system so that it is comprehensive, universal, and sustainable. I look forward to taking part in that discussion.

GADSDEN HIGH SCHOOL, RECIPIENT OF THE COLLEGE BOARD
2005 INSPIRATION AWARD

HON. STEVAN PEARCE

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 5, 2005

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the accomplishments of an extraordinary New Mexico school. Gadsden High School in Anthony, New Mexico is the recipient of the College Board 2005 Inspiration Award. In its tireless pursuit of student success, Gadsden High School has seen a remarkable increase in Advanced Placement course enrollment and those taking the SAT, and record numbers of students are enrolling in and attending college.

Gadsden High School has helped students achieve equitable access to higher education despite social, economic and cultural challenges. It has made significant strides in exposing its students to higher education options and opportunities. One example of the

school's ingenuity in this endeavor is a pre-college program called MESA that focuses on math, engineering and science. Students who achieve core requirements may earn up to \$1,000 in college tuition, which some admitting colleges and universities elect to match.

In addition to the progress Gadsden High School has made in helping its seniors search and apply for scholarship opportunities, the school supports a summer camp for grades 9–12 to address college questions and planning. The staff also plans to develop an Applying to College Handbook to promote greater parental involvement. These efforts have resulted in an exceptional 57 percent matriculation rate, 98 percent of whom are first-generation college attendees.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to congratulate Gadsden High School on this well-earned distinction and express my gratitude for the leadership and innovation they have demonstrated. I commend Gadsden High School for the hard work they continue to perform, and I am proud to recognize Gadsden High School—a true model of commitment to higher education—today before my colleagues.

Gadsden High School's motto puts it best by saying "Believe, hope and look for miracles." With an unwavering will to overcome adversity and find creative solutions, Gadsden High School is working to create its own "miracles."

INTRODUCTION OF THE GREAT
LAKES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND RESTORATION PROGRAMS REAUTHORIZATION ACT

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 5, 2005

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce comprehensive legislation to protect and restore the Great Lakes. I am pleased to be joined by Rep. MARK KIRK and 17 bipartisan original cosponsors.

The Great Lakes are a national treasure, providing drinking water to millions of people and supporting billions of dollars in trade, fishing, and recreation. While we have taken steps to improve environmental conditions in the basin, the Great Lakes still suffer from pollution from contaminated sediments, storm water and agricultural runoff, and wetlands and coastal habitat loss.

As its name indicates, the Great Lakes Environmental Protection and Restoration Programs Reauthorization Act reauthorizes several federal Great Lakes environmental programs in one comprehensive package. The bill also provides a mechanism for coordinating activities among the various federal agencies that carry out these programs, along with a process for coordination and future planning among federal, state and local program managers and the private sector. Finally, the bill reauthorizes the State Revolving Loan Fund under the Clean Water Act, in order to address wastewater infrastructure needs.

The bill provides about \$4 billion over 6 years by increasing the authorization levels for current major environmental programs operating in the Great Lakes Basin. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the most effective way to undertake a major restoration initiative is to do so

within the context of current programs, through higher funding and improved coordination among federal, state, and local agencies and cooperation with interested stakeholders. The bill includes federal programs at the Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Agriculture, the Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The bill is specifically targeted to address the costly big-ticket items that will have a dramatic impact on improving the health of the Lakes. This includes \$1.65 billion for cleaning up Areas of Concern, a total that is consistent with recent low-end estimates from site experts on AOC sediment remediation needs. It also provides \$640 million for fisheries, wildlife, ecosystem and habitat restoration programs.

The bill provides about \$900 million for research and monitoring programs at the EPA, the Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory (GLERL) within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Great Lakes Science Center (GLSC) within the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The bill also authorizes extramural grants to public universities and private institutions to conduct this important work. These activities are critical to the successful planning, implementation and oversight of restoration efforts.

The bill also reauthorizes the national State Revolving Loan Fund and provides \$20 billion over 5 years to assist communities with the critical task of upgrading and improving their wastewater infrastructure. This piece is taken from H.R. 1560, passed by the Water Resources Subcommittee in the 108th Congress. Sewer system needs are a critical component of keeping the Great Lakes and their tributaries clean, and the State Revolving Loan Fund has been a successful program for helping cities and towns undertake these very expensive upgrades.

Finally, the bill codifies Executive Order #13340, signed by the President in May 2004, and codifies the regional collaboration process outlined in conjunction with the E.O. on December 3, 2004, by the Administrator of the EPA, the Great Lakes governors, tribal leaders, several Members of Congress, and others. This will continue to improve collaboration among the many projects and programs operating in the Basin and ensure long-term stability to the preparation and oversight of the comprehensive restoration action plan currently under development.

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to clean up and to protect this precious resource. My bill provides the funding and the coordination necessary to implement the programs we have in place and to accomplish the shared goals of the region. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA: PROMOTING STABILITY, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 5, 2005

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, earlier today, as chairman of the Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operation

subcommittee, I convened a hearing on the precarious situation involving Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Seven years ago this month, the East African nations of Eritrea and Ethiopia began a devastating two-year conflict that cost the lives of as many as 100,000 soldiers and civilians. The war, which largely took place on Eritrean territory, displaced a third of that country's population and caused massive destruction. The deprivation in both countries continues long after the war ended, and the suffering goes on.

Eritrea's economy has been battered by four years of drought, which has further diminished this country's ability to feed its people. The U.S. Department of State estimates that large budget deficits have been caused by continued high defense spending. If not for remittances from Eritreans living abroad, the country's economy would be hard-pressed to sustain itself. In Ethiopia, the United Nations Children's Fund has identified 25 hot spots around the country where people are facing serious risk of malnutrition. This current crisis, according to UNICEF, is at least partly caused by delays in the start of the government's safety net program, and continued military spending will only further exacerbate the problems with an economy now surviving due to foreign assistance.

Human rights and democracy also are diminished by the concentration of both governments on resolving the border issue.

In the current U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Eritrea was cited for its poor human rights record:

"Citizens did not have the ability to change their government. Security forces were responsible for unlawful killings; however, there were no new reports of disappearances. There were numerous reports that security forces resorted to torture and physical beatings of prisoners, particularly during interrogations, and security forces severely mistreated army deserters and draft evaders. The Government generally did not permit prison visits by local or international groups, except the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Arbitrary arrests and detentions continued to be problems; an unknown number of persons were detained without charge because of political opinion."

Congress has been particularly interested in the case of Aster Yohannes, an Eritrean national who has been held incommunicado without due process since trying to visit her husband in jail in December 2003. A number of my colleagues and I sent a letter to Eritrean President Isaias (EE-SIGH-US) Afwerki (AF-WORK-EE) on January 6, 2004, concerning this matter:

"We respectfully urge you to release Aster Yohannes immediately and allow her to return to her family," the letter stated. "Web will regard this as a first step toward restoring human rights in Eritrea. We look forward to resolving this and other important issues in the very near future."

I personally have met with Eritrean officials at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva and here in the United States specifically on this issue last year and only a few weeks ago. Yet, more than a year later, Mrs. Yohannes is still imprisoned with no trial in sight, as are two U.S. Embassy personnel held without trial since 2001.

Eritrea's half Christian-half Muslim population has coexisted peacefully, but there are tensions that could lead to serious problems. There have been incidents of violence involving Muslim extremists and even violent incidents involving Copts and other Christian groups. Government concern over the rapidly growing Pentecostal group has led to mistreatment of believers. On the whole, security issues seem to have put religious freedom aside in the priorities of the Eritrean government. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was unable to be with us today, but they have submitted for the record a statement and report that details troubling limitations on religious freedom in Eritrea.

For the first time last year, the Secretary of State designated Eritrea as a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violation of religious freedom.

Finally, after a promising start to its democracy at independence, Eritrea cracked down on the political opposition in September 2001 and continues to seriously limit the ability of citizens to express themselves through the vote.

The State Department human rights report noted improvements in Ethiopia's human rights record, but it continues to note serious remaining problems:

"Security forces committed a number of unlawful killings, including alleged political killings, and beat, tortured, and mistreated detainees. Prison conditions remained poor. The Government continued to arrest and detain persons arbitrarily, particularly those suspected of sympathizing with or being members of the OLF. Thousands of suspects remained in detention without charge, and lengthy pre-trial detention continued to be a problem. The Government infringed on citizens' privacy rights, and the law regarding search warrants was often ignored. The Government restricted freedom of the press; however, compared with previous years, there were fewer reports that journalists were arrested, detained or punished for writing articles critical of the Government. Journalists continued to practice self-censorship. The Government at times restricted freedom of assembly, particularly for members of opposition political parties; security forces at times used excessive force to disperse demonstrations."

In Ethiopia, Human Rights Watch has documented incidents of murder, rape and torture committed by the Ethiopian military against the Anuak (ANN-YOU-AK) people in the southwestern region of Gambella. As our witness will detail in his testimony, hundreds of Anuak villagers have been killed in a series of attacks by soldiers and civilian mobs since December 2003. Beatings and torture of Anuaks have become all too commonplace in Ethiopia under a government whose attention is not focused on such egregious human rights violations.

Concerns over a repeat of the irregularities surrounding Ethiopia's 2000 and 2001 elections prompted some of my colleagues to introduce H.R. 935 to urge the Government of Ethiopia to ensure free and fair elections on May 15th. I commend the sponsors of this legislation and support the call for orderly, peaceful, free and fair elections in Ethiopia.

The short time remaining may limit the impact of this important piece of legislation, which is aimed specifically at the upcoming