

plane crash representing this body in Ethiopia. Washington was determined to continue the work that Leland started and he ran for Leland's seat and was sworn in as Leland's replacement in Congress in 1990.

His years in Congress were spent on national issues and advocating for those who had no voice. Some in Texas did not agree with the way he voted and carried himself, but inside this beltway he was seen as a star on the rise. He was a maverick. He wooed his colleagues on many issues and upset more than one organization when he voted against big issues like NAFTA and even NASA.

One particular evening on this House floor he argued against amending our Constitution to protect the flag. He said, "I prefer a man who will burn the flag and then wrap himself in the Constitution to a man who will burn the Constitution and then wrap himself in the flag."

That is tonight Craig Washington. Although Craig Washington and I disagree on many political issues, I admire him because he never made a decision based on politics.

Eleven years ago, Washington left this Congress to return to his roots, Texas.

□ 2030

He has a home in Bastrop, Texas, a small German town near Austin, and today Washington devotes most of his time to fighting for those who have no advocate in our courts.

When I was a prosecutor, we tried cases against each other, and I found his word and handshake were his bond, as it is today. When I became a judge, I had the opportunity to see him represent people in the most serious of accusations. In court, he spoke with the oratory of Daniel Webster and often uses his words with such power, he could put the jury in a hypnotic trance.

Like Spartacus of the ancients, Mr. Washington goes into the pit of the courtroom arena armed with the sword of righteous indignation, the shield of the Constitution, and the breastplate of impeccable honor to fight for those broken of spirit. When Craig Washington does his final summation, I am convinced the angels from above get a seat in the rafters of the courtroom just to listen to his voice, a voice from heaven advocating persistently and passionately for the poor and persecuted.

Craig Washington may be quiet, but he is a hell fire and brimstone lawyer from East Texas that argues a case with such intelligence, intensity, and logic that juries are forever mesmerized. He has the courtroom demeanor and dignity the law deserves and a hallowed respect for the Constitution that is waning today among many lawyers and even some Supreme Court Justices who see the Constitution as an inconvenience to result-oriented agendas.

Politically, Craig Washington, I think, is a populist and an honorable

gentleman from the Old South from an era when honor was important. He serves his clients with distinction and compassion and tremendous energy. He is a tremendous criminal defense lawyer as well as a right-thinking American, and I stand today on this floor where he stood 11 years ago to salute Mr. Washington. I am proud to call him my friend; and if I ever leave Congress, I hope to return to the courtroom to join him in trial, to do battle together against the forces of evil, tyranny, and injustice.

COVER THE UNINSURED WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REICHERT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, this week marks Cover the Uninsured Week, running from Sunday May 1 through Sunday May 8. I rise today in support of the goals of Cover the Uninsured Week.

Cover the Uninsured Week will mobilize thousands of business owners, union members, educators, students, patients, hospital staff, physicians, nurses, faith leaders, and many others to call attention to the health care crisis in our country.

In hundreds of our communities across the country, events will highlight the fact that too many Americans are living without health care coverage.

Today, 45 million Americans live without health care coverage, including 8 million children.

As a Californian, I am troubled to learn that California leads the Nation in the number of uninsured people, with 6.5 million people who do not have any form of health care insurance. That is about 18 percent of our population; and additionally, one out of every 5 of our uninsured population in California is a child under the age of 18 years.

Uninsured numbers are even worse for the Latino community, which is disproportionately affected by the lack of health care coverage. As a Latina, I am saddened to see that Latinos have the highest uninsured rate of any racial group; and here in this figure, I would like to point out that back in the year 2003, as my colleagues can see, Hispanics represent 34.3 percent of those individuals that are uninsured. When we look at the different racial and ethnic groups, Latinos are the highest numbers that are uninsured.

The latest census figures indicate that 13 million Latinos are uninsured. That is more than one-third of our total Latino population in the country. This is despite the fact that Latinos constitute the second largest ethnic minority group in the country and have the largest labor force representation. Latinos hold the majority of low-wage jobs in the U.S., these positions mostly do not offer health care benefits.

I want to make a special note of the fact that nearly 80 percent of those without health insurance are employed. Listen, they are employed, but they have no health care coverage. So we have to stop the myth that the uninsured problem is only about people that are unemployed.

In fact, this is a picture here depicting a family in our district that shows people who are working. They are working, but unavailable to them is health care insurance; and in a country that prides itself on equality, it is evident that our health care system is broken when people suffer from a lack of access to health insurance and quality of care.

More disconcerting, Latino children, the most vulnerable group in our society, are 21 percent more likely to be uninsured than non-Latino children. In fact, almost one in three Latino children receives health care through Medicaid or what we know as the State Children's Health Insurance Program, the S-CHIP program. While plenty of Americans live without health insurance, programs like Medicaid and the S-CHIP program are often the only means of providing families like this with health care coverage.

Medicaid is vital for many Latinos, with 9 million Latinos receiving health care through Medicaid alone. Unfortunately, it is sad to say that President Bush's fiscal year 2006 budget proposal would cut funding for Medicaid by \$45 billion, a drastic cut in funding that is a valuable service for health insurance for those who cannot afford it.

We should not play with the lives of families like this and the future of our children by denying them access to critical health care services. Affordable and accessible health care not only decreases the expenses due to last minute emergency care; it allows for a healthier workforce and improves the overall quality of care for all.

Last week, I had the opportunity as Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Task Force on Health, and I was joined by other Members of our Democratic leadership, to highlight our commitment to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health care. Our health care system is not meeting the needs of all people. For racial and ethnic minorities and even for Asian Pacific Islanders, for all of our communities, we are sorely underserved by the services that should be adequately provided to all of us.

Democrats are committed to working towards expanding health care insurance coverage for all, and I am committed to addressing the health care needs of all of our communities. The uninsured problem affects every single one of us. Whether it is expanding our Federal safety net, programs like Medicaid, or working to eliminate racial and ethnic health care disparities or providing incentives for our small businesses to offer health care insurance, it is time that we take action now.

I urge my colleagues to make a Federal commitment to help provide coverage for the 45 million Americans across the country who deserve a guaranteed health insurance system because one in three Americans without health insurance is one too many, and these are the families that are out there looking for leadership in the House of Representatives.

PRESIDENTIAL VOTE FOR RESIDENTS OF PUERTO RICO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. FORTÚNO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORTÚNO. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit will hear the case of Gregorio Igartua-de la Rosa, et al., vs. United States of America. This landmark case deals with the right of U.S. citizens who reside in Puerto Rico to vote for the President and Vice President of the United States.

The right to vote for those who govern us is a hallmark of the democratic principles on which our Nation was founded. Universal and equal suffrage is not only a core value of this Nation's political system, but has been recognized by the international community as a fundamental civil right. Despite this broad consensus in favor of the right to vote, U.S. citizens who reside in Puerto Rico have for 88 years been denied the right to vote for the U.S. Government officials who make and administer the Federal laws to which they are subject.

Take special heed of the fact that this discriminatory and undemocratic state of affairs does not just apply to Puerto Ricans, who are U.S. citizens by virtue of having been born in a U.S. territory, but to any U.S. citizen who becomes a resident of Puerto Rico.

To clearly illustrate this point, if President George Herbert Bush, our 41st President, had chosen to retire in Puerto Rico instead of Texas, he would not have been able to vote for his son, our current President, George W. Bush. If any of my colleagues who are listening to me today and who are my colleagues in the 109th Congress elected to move to Puerto Rico after they retire from Congress, they would not be able to vote for the President of the United States.

This separate and less-than-equal class of U.S. citizenship for residents of Puerto Rico has placed the 4 million U.S. citizens who are residents of Puerto Rico in an indefinite denial of equal national citizenship, particularly at a time of national sacrifice in the cause of global democracy and freedom, where Puerto Ricans have contributed equally, many even making the ultimate sacrifice.

It is not my intention to dictate what the Court of Appeals for the First Circuit will decide. As a lawyer, I have always been respectful of the separation between the legislative and judi-

cial branches of government, but I trust that the court will do us justice.

I invite all of my fellow Members of this 109th Congress to monitor the court's decision because, in so doing, they will be exposed to the fact that the central problem facing the citizens of Puerto Rico is that they have been denied their most basic rights of self-determination, not by court decisions, but by congressional inaction.

In 1899, the United States first entered into a treaty which provided that the civil rights and political status of the residents of Puerto Rico shall be determined by the Congress. A full century has passed, but Congress still has not implemented any political resolution procedure that will enable residents of Puerto Rico to determine their form of self-government under a non-colonial, non-territorial alternative.

As most of my colleagues know, I am a firm believer in statehood for Puerto Rico, but I fully respect the right of my countrymen to freely choose the status choice of their preference, be it as a State of the Union, an independent Republic, or as a Republic associated with the United States.

The important element has to be that all viable alternatives be non-colonial and non-territorial in nature. Until this process of free self-determination is completed, Congress will not have fully discharged its responsibility.

HONORING CRAIG WASHINGTON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GENE GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am going to rise tonight to talk about a pressing problem of health care, but before I do, I want to associate my remarks with the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE), my colleague and neighbor, on Craig Washington.

Congressman Washington replaced Mickey Leland, if anybody could replace Mickey Leland, in this House; and I served as a State house member and State senator with Craig. I can only say and echo what the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) said, who I know saw him across from his bench many times, as he was both a brilliant lawyer and statesman, but also one of the most intelligent people I have known.

Again, I want to associate myself with those remarks and thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for doing that for Craig.

COVER THE UNINSURED WEEK

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about one of the most pressing problems facing the health care system in our country, the growing number of uninsured. Every year since 2000, an additional million Americans have joined the ranks of the uninsured.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation recently reported that the number of individuals without any health in-

surance in our country rose to 45 million this year. This is a problem that we literally cannot afford not to address.

In my hometown of Houston, we are proud to have the world-famed, world-class Texas Medical Center. Some of the most innovative and life-saving research and treatment developments are being discovered in our own backyard. The problem is that too many of our neighbors cannot access these life-saving treatments because they lack health insurance.

My State of Texas ranks number one in uninsured adults, with 31 percent of adult Texans living without health insurance. The statistics for the Houston area are just as troubling with more than 31 percent of our Harris County residents living without health insurance.

When a third of the State and county's population is without health insurance, I think it is safe to say this problem has reached crisis proportions. The increase in the number of uninsured is due, in part, to the changing nature of health care in our country.

Gone are the days when we could count on our employers to provide comprehensive health insurance for us and our families. With health insurance costs reaching \$10,000 per year, low-wage workers cannot fend for themselves.

With full-time minimum-wage workers bringing home roughly that much each year, they cannot spend the bulk of their earnings on health insurance, and many small businesses are finding that they simply cannot afford to purchase health insurance for their employees.

As a sideline, not only small businesses, but some of our larger businesses, whether it be General Motors or Shell Oil, talk about the disparities and how much they pay in industrialized countries like Europe and Japan for health insurance, and Canada, as compared to how much more they pay in our country.

It is no little surprise that today 80 percent of the uninsured in this country are gainfully employed. Unfortunately, my State of Texas also ranks number one in the percentage of uninsured working adults, with 27 percent of working Texans currently without health insurance.

□ 2045

This is a problem for all Americans as the uninsured often use emergency rooms as their primary source of medical care. In fact, a study of emergency room use in Harris County found that 57 percent of the diagnoses made in safety net hospital emergency rooms could have been treated in a physician's office or clinic. This increases health care costs for all Americans.

The uninsured are less likely to seek preventive health care and only get care once their problems reach emergency proportions. In fact, nearly 50 percent of uninsured adults have postponed seeking health care because they