be sorely missed, his life will continue to inspire those he touched.

OPPOSITION TO CLASS ACTION FAIRNESS BILL

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 17, 2005

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the so-called class action fairness bill. This legislation will close the courthouse doors to thousands seeking justice.

The bill we are considering today pushes almost all class actions into the federal courts and away from state jurisdiction. It is no secret that federal courts are generally less willing to consider complex civil litigation than state courts. They face incredible backlogs with hundreds of criminal drug cases and immigration cases. Federalizing class actions causes delays in getting relief for injured consumers.

Instead of fixing the current system, this legislation is only making it more difficult and time-consuming for Americans with legitimate complaints to have their day in court. Class actions are a critical way for people, particularly those without the resources to battle large corporations, to seek redress from companies for fraudulent behavior, defective products and employment discrimination. A strong class-action system is particularly important given the emergence of evidence proving corporate wrongdoing in recent years. This bill will give banks, credit card companies, insurers, HMOs, drug manufacturers and other big businesses a green light to defraud and deceive consumers without fear of being held accountable. Most troubling, this bill deprives Americans of an important forum—in many cases their only forum—for remedying genuine wrongs.

I support strengthening our class action system and reducing fraud, which is why I voted for a substitute bill. This legislation would ensure that people injured or discriminated against could still get the justice they deserve while making adjustments needed to reduce abuse in the class action system. The substitute puts an end to ''coupon settlements'' and court shopping. It keeps our class action system accessible and effective by carving out civil rights and worker rights cases. It protects cases brought by state attorney's general. Lastly, it asks the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts to report back to Congress on how the new law is working. The substitute is a real improvement in our legal system that will ensure the protection and justice promised to individuals, families and businesses by our Constitution.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF GUADALUPE COUNTY COMMISSIONER CESAREO GUADARRAMA

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 8, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Guadalupe County Commissioner Cesareo Guadarrama for his outstanding service to his community.

Commissioner Guadarrama is a native of Seguin, Texas. He is the owner of G3 Plumbing, and his experience in small business has given him the skill in leadership and organization that he uses on behalf of his district today.

Guadalupe County Commissioner Cesareo Guadarrama has a long history of civic volunteer activity. He has worked especially hard to help the youth and children of Seguin. He has been a part of many volunteer organizations, including Seguin Youth Services, the Guadalupe County Juvenile Citizens Advisory Council, and the Seguin Noon Lions Club. He served as Director of the Seguin Toys for Tots program, and was a member of the Seguin Independent School District Board of Trustees when it was recognized as the Outstanding School Board in the state of Texas, in 1990.

Cesareo Guadarrama's work has helped to create a brighter future for the youth of Seguin, and for all of the citizens of Guadalupe County. I applaud him for his spirit of service, and thank him for all he has done for his fellow Texans.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have had this opportunity to recognize the achievements of Guadalupe County Commissioner Cesareo Guadarrama.

FOSTER CARE MENTORING ACT OF 2005

HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 8, 2005

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, tonight I'd like to talk about legislation that I recently introduced—The Foster Care Mentoring Act of 2005 (HR 822).

Adopting a child is a life long responsibility, but let me be frank, the way we care for our children, especially children in foster care is a direct reflection of who we are as a society.

The Administration has boldly stated that they will ''Leave No Child Behind.'' I want to take them up on this pronouncement and extend this idea to the 523,000 children who are in foster care programs throughout this country.

These children cannot be left behind and must be given every opportunity to succeed.

The Foster Care Mentoring Act of 2005, will support the establishment, expansion and operation of programs using a network of public and private community entities to provide mentoring for children in foster care.

Specifically The Foster Care Mentoring Act of 2005, does the following:

Provides $15 million in grants to States to develop or expand statewide academic mentoring programs for children in foster care.

Authorizes States to use this funding to help recruit, support and train volunteers to serve as a foster youth's academic and personal advisers.

Authorizes $4 million to fund a national coordination and media campaign aimed at raising public awareness of the need to get involved in the life of a child waiting for foster care placement.

Engages college and graduate students by making them eligible to have their student loans discharged up to $2,000 for every 200 hours they serve as mentors to children living in foster care. A total of $20,000 in student loans incurred by participating college or graduate students would qualify for forgiveness.

My legislation is a good first step in approaching how we can better transition children into loving, supportive homes. But we must do more.

As I stated earlier, there are over 523,000 children in foster care. One in three of these children has been in care for over 5 years. Of the 25,000 children who leave the foster care system each year, they do so without ever having the promise of a permanent family fulfilled.

This is shameful! We must do better. Children in this country need to have a stable adult they can rely on and turn to for support while growing up. Mentoring is an excellent way to meet some of these children most basic needs.

The life experiences of children in foster care put them in a precarious and vulnerable situation. Children in foster care are more susceptible to; drug addiction, depression, delinquency, and pregnancy.

What's more, the constant turnover in placements for children in foster care makes it difficult for these young people to succeed in school.

Mentoring can make a difference in the life of young people in foster care and provide a lifeline to academic success and better life skills.

Traditional mentoring programs often do not include the type of training and recruitment necessary to equip mentors with the tools they need to most effectively serve the needs of these young people. Those that do yield amazing results:

Current statistics show that for young people who are mentored; 45 percent are less likely to begin using illicit drugs; 59 percent do better academically, and 73 percent set and attain higher life achievement goals.

The need for mentors for children in foster care is clear, however, few states have programs aimed at serving the special needs of this vulnerable population. I ask my colleagues to support H.R. 822 'The Foster Care Mentoring Act of 2005.'