Oscar Vazquez and Luis Aranda. The Falcons Robotics Team provides these students from low income neighborhoods a positive option for after school activities. One of the team members was failing most of his classes before joining the robotics club and credits the club from keeping him off of West Phoenix streets and avoiding trouble.

The Falcons Robotics Team's first mission was to put together a robot to compete in the Marine Advanced Technology Remotely Operated Vehicle Competition, the underwater robotics contest sponsored by NASA and the Office of Naval Research. They needed a remote-controlled robot that could explore a sunken mock-up of a submarine. Thus, Stinky was born. Constructed of plastic tubing, propellers, lights, cameras, a laser, depth detectors, pumps, and other equipment, Stinky was capable of recording sonar pings and retrieving objects 50 feet under water. Stinky got its unflattering moniker from the foul-smelling glue that kept it together. The team went into the competition feeling intimidated, but they won the grand prize, beating out MIT and other college teams with slicker robots and corporate sponsors.

Since their competition victory last year, the team has gone on to compete in the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) Robotics Competition, where it won the highest award, the Chairman's Award, at the Arizona Regionals in March. Dean Kamen, inventor and founder of FIRST, a multinational non-profit organization that aspires to make science, math, engineering, and technology cool for kids, presented the award. As Mr. Kamen explained, the FIRST Robotics Competition is about much more than the mechanics of building a robot or winning a competitive event. The FIRST mission is to change the way America's young people regard science and technology and to inspire an appreciation for the real-life rewards and career opportunities in these fields.

In his remarks, Mr. Kamen echoed the sentiments of many in Arizona who are following the progress of this team of innovators. The impact from the team's victory is priceless. Participation in the Falcons Robotics Team, and its competition successes, has changed the students' appreciation of engineering and science, and their attitude towards education. These students are now hoping to pursue higher education and are inspiring other students to strive for similar goals. The team's accomplishments are countering stereotypes of innercity students from Hispanic neighborhoods, and demonstrating that innercity ''tough kids'' can be just as talented and capable as the best from MIT. The Falcons team has become the subject of articles in Wired Magazine and the Washington Post, primetime stories on shows such as NPR's Here and Now and ABC's Nightline, and Warner Brothers is even planning a movie.

As the team now prepares to compete in the FIRST Championship ITom April 21 to 23 at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, I wish to honor the Falcons Robotics Team and the students, teachers, and community of Carl Hayden High School. The successes of Cristian, Lorenzo, Oscar and Luis demonstrate the accomplishments students can achieve, given a little inspiration from devoted teachers. I ask my colleagues to join me today in congratulating the Falcons Robotics Team, and wishing the students and teachers at Carl Hayden High School much continued success in their future endeavors.

PRESERVING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE DRUGS ACT

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to be introducing a revised version of the Preserving Access to Affordable Drugs (PAAD) Act. Unfortunately, the misguided Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 threatens to reduce or eliminate the prescription drug benefits that millions of seniors across the country already have. And if the law isn't bad enough as is, the Administration has ignored the recommendations of the President's State Pharmaceutical Assistance Transition Commission and denied New Jersey's request to automatically enroll those Medicare beneficiaries currently enrolled in New Jersey's PAAD and Medicaid programs into a preferred Medicare prescription drug plan.

This ruling effectively blocks New Jersey's efforts to preserve the generous prescription drug coverage the state currently provides to the 190,000 seniors enrolled in New Jersey's PAAD program and the 140,000 seniors and disabled enrolled in the state's Medicaid program when the new Medicare prescription drug benefit goes into effect on January 1, 2006.

In an effort to right this wrong, the bill I'm introducing today will ensure that our seniors have a seamless transition to the new Medicare Part D drug benefit, without a reduction or disruption in their coverage.

The PAAD Act will allow states to automatically enroll PAAD and dually eligible Medicaid beneficiaries in one or more preferred prescription drug plans to ensure that these beneficiaries are enrolled in a Medicare drug plan that maximizes both their federal and state prescription drug coverage. This will ensure that New Jersey seniors who currently receive prescription drug benefits under PAAD or through the state's Medicaid program are not made worse off by the new Medicare law.

In addition, the PAAD Act will allow New Jersey to provide supplemental Medicaid prescription drug benefits to low-income seniors and disabled who currently receive generous prescription drug benefits under the Medicaid program and who will now receive their prescription drug benefits through Medicare.

With approximately six million seniors nationwide, including 140,000 in New Jersey, who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid, it is absolutely critical that they do not lose access to their Medicaid prescription drug benefits, which are more generous than the new Medicare benefit will be. Not to mention, hundreds of thousands of seniors across the country, and 200,000 seniors in New Jersey, currently are enrolled in state pharmacy assistance programs, and will be forced into a private Medicare drug plan. We need to make sure the new Medicare Modernization Act transition happens with the least amount of confusion and loss of coverage possible. With this bill, we will solve these outstanding problems.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DARRELL E. ISSA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, on March 21st, 2005, I was traveling overseas with Minority Leader PELOSI on officially authorized travel. Had I been present during roll call vote 90, a motion to suspend the rules and pass Senate bill 686, for the relief of the parents of Mrs. Theresa Marie Schiavo, I would have voted ''aye'' in favor of passage.