revise the Organic Act to provide for the political and administrative re-organization of the Virgin Islands. With the Revised Organic Act of 1954, the present governmental structure of the Virgin Islands with its laws, administrative departments and its unicameral legislature were formed. The English literacy requirement instituted in 1936 was removed paving the way for Spanish speaking residents to have a voice in governmental affairs.

In 1968, after the First Constitutional Convention of 1964–65, the Elective Governor Act of 1968 provided for an elected governor and lt. governor to serve four year terms, a delegate to Congress, and the lowering of the voting age to 18. In 1970, the U.S. Virgin Islands elected the first of its seven governors to office. The Honorable Melvin Evans was elected the first Governor. My predecessor, the Honorable Ron de Lugo became our first Delegate to Congress and I am proud to serve as the fourth elected and first woman Delegate to Congress.

Since that time there have been several attempts to deal with the internal structure of our government, through drafting a new Constitution in 1981 and through a referendum on the nature of the territory's relationship to the United States which culminated in a referendum in 1993. This summer, Virgin Islanders will again attempt to draft a constitution to address many of the structural issues that continue to pose challenges to governance and every day living. It is my hope that on the 90th anniversary of the Transfer and our sojourn as part of the American family that we use it to analyze, plan and bring to fruition a common vision for our territory by 2017, the hundredth anniversary celebration.

Madam Speaker, there is much good that has come from this 90-year-old relationship between the U.S. Virgin Islands and the United States of America. Our islands have not only grown in population and diversity, but have made strides in governmental infrastructure and the provision of services in health, education, transportation infrastructure, and social welfare. Much of this has been accomplished in partnership with the federal government. There are many challenges that have also arisen because of rapid growth and development and lack of control over issues such as border control and the lack of a plan to manage our resources to include land and water use. We have been a beacon for development and advancement in the region and have attracted people from all over the world. It is my hope that this 90th anniversary will strengthen our resolve to become a stronger, more cohesive community with a dream and a plan for peace and prosperity into this 21st century and beyond.

RECOGNIZING THE COMMUNITY OF COLLYER, KANSAS

HON. JERRY MORAN

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 12, 2007

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the citizens of Collyer, Kansas for continuing efforts to sustain and revitalize their community.

On September 26, 2004 that effort was formalized through creation of the Collyer Community Alliance. Donna Malsom, president of the alliance, said the organization was formed because residents want to see their hometown raise another generation of Kansans. ''Our community is made up of hard working individuals who pull together to support businesses, projects and each other, Malsom said. ''Through our combined efforts, we made a conscious decision to 'save' our community.''

Despite its small size—133 people—Collyer is making a large commitment to its future. In the nearly 30 months since it was formed, the alliance has grown from zero to more than 200 paid memberships.

In order to obtain financing for community initiatives, the alliance has conducted a number of fundraising activities—the most famous of which are fish fries that are held every Friday evening during the Lenten season. In 2006, more than 1,000 plates were served. Having personally attended a fish fry, I can affirm that the food is delicious and the community spirit is inspiring.

Funds have also been raised by organizing Hunter's Burgers and Brats and Ground Hog Celebration Soup suppers, the Walsh Auction Lunch, Quinter School Forensics Tournament Lunch, WaKeeney Trash and Treasure Flea Market, Quinter May Day Celebration, Switchback Benefit Barn Dance and alumni celebrations. Money raised from these activities is supplemented by generous financial support from individuals, families, businesses and local units of government. Since its inception, approximately 75 entities have achieved ''sponsor'' status through the alliance.

This fundraising effort translates into impressive promotion of and support for the community. Last year, the Collyer Café opened in the refurbished Saint Michael's Convent. The alliance purchased the convent and the community donated well over 1,000 volunteer hours to this restoration project.

In July, the community hosts an After Harvest Music Festival which brings approximately 500 people to town. In October, the Fall Street Festival attracts more than 1,000 visitors to Collyer.

The alliance further promotes Collyer by maintaining an extensive website at www.collyerks.com. The site includes a history of the community, ongoing development projects, fundraising activities and community events.

An effort is being made to preserve the legacy of Collyer by obtaining historical designations on 14 community buildings. The Saint Michael's Buildings, Zeman Dance Hall, the old mercantile/grocery store and the Collyer Depot are just a few of these historically significant structures. With persistent effort, the alliance has achieved 501(C)3 nonprofit status retroactive to May of 2005. This approval is allowing the community to aggressively pursue restoration efforts.

An additional boost to preserve Collyer's legacy occurred in May of 2006 when the community was awarded a grant from the Kansas Humanities Council in support of an initiative to gather and record stories of immigrant families that settled in Collyer. Alliance members supplied the volunteer hours needed to complete this and several other grant applications.

Sandra Stenzel, community volunteer, acknowledges that the work required to create a future for Collyer is not easy. However, she believes the effort is worth it. ''Our community was founded on the principles of faith, freedom, education, progress and agriculture,'' Stenzel said. ''We are proud of our past, but we are even prouder of the vision we have for the future and the plan we have to get there.''

For rural communities to survive and prosper, citizens must be willing to create their own opportunities for success. Ongoing efforts to revitalize Collyer are an example of how hard work, vision and involvement support can create just such an opportunity. Citizens throughout Kansas are working together to enhance the quality of life in their communities. Collyer is a developing success story that demonstrates how teamwork and creative thinking can make a positive difference in rural America.

WALTER REED MEDICAL CENTER

SPEECH OF

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2007

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, the scandal at Walter Reed Army Medical Center has placed a spotlight on our entire military and veteran health care system. That is a good thing because the system is in need of a thorough reorganization. As a result of cuts in VA health care, more than a quarter of a million vets were refused enrollment in 2005 alone because they ''didn't qualify''. How many of these men and women were told when they reported for duty that they may or may not ''qualify'' for veteran's care after separation?

Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the notion that America's promise to its veterans is subject to later, arbitrary qualifications, but that quarter of a million veterans is the number we know of. Perhaps even more insidious are those vets who because of their PTSD or other injuries were discharged with less than honorable discharges most of the time with no hearing, no review. These men and women now reside in a kind of abyss between earth and hell. They have served their nation but their nation has turned its collective backs on them.

Mr. Speaker, we need to recall Vietnam Vet Jim Hopkins who finally drove his Jeep into the lobby of the Wadsworth VA Hospital out of frustration and protest in 1981. Jim Hopkins didn't get the treatment he needed and couldn't get anyone in the VA or the administration to listen to him. His subsequent tragic death led to a fifty-three day hunger strike by vets and finally shed some national light on our refusal to acknowledge the reality of PTSD and the impact of dioxin on the human nervous system. Now, a quarter of a century later there are many more frustrated vets, men and women who responded when their nation called, men and women who we have promised lifetime medical care in return who are shut out of the VA system. Men and women have been kicked to the curb, unseen and unserved. Mr. Speaker, the hour and day have come: it is time for this Congress, in turn, to kick open the doors of the VA system—to ensure that every veteran, every veteran, has received his or her due for their service.

RECOGNIZING LEWISVILLE AND FLOWER MOUND STUDENTS FOR RECEIVING TOP HONORS AT THE INAUGURAL NORTH TEXAS TEEN COURT TRAINING

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 12, 2007

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize student volunteers with the Lewisville-Flower Mound Teen Court, who were named ''Best Overall Prosecution Team'' and ''Best Overall Defense Team'' at the inaugural North Texas Teen Court Training.

The event was held on March 3, 2007, at the Texas Wesleyan University School of Law in Fort Worth, Texas. Volunteer youth attorneys, bailiffs, clerks, and jurors are given an opportunity to conduct trials of actual cases with Class C misdemeanor defendants from local Teen Courts. Over 200 teens, adult volunteers, and judges were involved in the competition.

Seth Duban, of Marcus High School, and John Maksym, a home-schooled student, were members of the winning prosecution team. Lewisville High School students Sarah Abdel and Jennifer Stanley, along with Lexia Chadwick of Huffines Middle School, composed the competition's winning defense team.

The North Texas Teen Court Training is a great event for the students, the community, and the Texas Wesleyan University School of Law. These exceptional young men and women had the opportunity to see and act out the judicial process in a way that they could not have otherwise. I would like to extend my congratulations and best wishes to the five winning students, and to all other participants. I am honored to represent such intelligent and academically driven students.

THE EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 12, 2007

Mr. RADANOVICH. Madam Speaker, with one of the most misleading names ever put to a piece of legislation, the House of Representatives voted last week on a bill entitled ''The Employee Free Choice Act.'' (H.R. 800). If made law, the Act would result in the most important changes in federal labor law since the enactment of the Wagner Act in 1935 and, contrary to its title, would deprive employees of free choice in the two most important issues involving unions by denying employees the right to a secret ballot election to determine whether or not they want to be represented by a union and by denying employees the right to approve or disapprove the first labor contract with their employer.

Under present law, the most common way to determine whether employees want to be represented by a union is through a secret ballot election conducted by a federal agency, the NLRB. The United States Supreme Court has emphasized that other methods of deciding about unionization are inferior. Under the new bill, a union would be able to gain the right to represent employees through a ''card check'' in which a union simply would have to collect the signatures of a majority of employees on union authorization cards in order to represent them. The result would be that employees' signatures on union cards, which now are used to call for an election, would be used to preclude them from having an election. Moreover, once unionized through a card check, employees would not be able to change their mind by the same mechanism.

Nothing could be more undemocratic, as is evidenced by the AFL–CIO's own study showing that when unions get from 60 to 75 percent of employees to sign union authorization cards, they win less than 50 percent of elections.

It seems painfully obvious that, as Congressman HOWARD BERMAN (one of the Act's co-sponsors), said when he was in the California Assembly, secret ballot elections are essential to ''the self determination of the workers'' that federal labor law seeks to promote. As Yale's Robert Dahl concluded: ''In the late nineteenth century, the secret ballot began to replace a show of hands. . . [S]ecrecy [in voting] has become the general standard, a country in which it is widely violated would be judged as lacking free and fair elections.'' Federal law now requires that in elections for federal office, the citizens must be able to vote ''in a private and independent manner'' and that ''the privacy of the voter and the confidentiality of the ballot'' must be protected. 42 U.S.C. §15481(a)(1). The lack of privacy under H.R. 800 would subject employees to overwhelming pressure from union organizers and other workers to sign union cards, putting them back in the 19th century.

Card checks not only violate the workers' right to privacy but deprive workers of the right to hear the arguments against as well as for unionization. Again, as Professor Dahl observed, ''voters must have access . . . to alternative sources of information that are not . . . dominated by any . . . groups or point of view.'' Unions usually solicit cards with no notice to the employer, so that H.R. 800 would deprive employees of the ''alternate sources of information'' necessary to make an informed, and hence free, decision.

H.R. 800 compounds these inherent defects in the card check process by providing no remedy if a union uses improper pressure or deception in getting employees to sign cards. Present law establishes a detailed and comprehensive procedure for dealing with election misconduct by both employers and union. H.R. 800 contains no such protections.

H.R. 800's card check provisions also violate the parity of the processes for employees to bring in a union and rejecting an existing union representative. Under present law and under the proposed new law, once employees bring in a union, it is not easy for them to change their mind and get rid of the union. In most cases, a secret ballot election is necessary both to bring in a union and jettison one. Under the proposed law, it would be easy for unions to get in through a card check, but difficult for employees to get free of union representation because the formalities of a secret ballot election would be required. There is no rational basis for establishing different procedures for choosing to be represented by a union and choosing not to.

H.R. 800 would deprive employees of their other basic free choice: the right to use their collective economic power to negotiate the best agreement they think they can get and the right to approve or reject any contract negotiated by their union. Presently, employees are free to strike if they do not approve of a proposed labor contract, but H.R. 800 makes the contract fixed by a panel of government-appointed arbitrators binding for two years and now most employees covered by a proposed labor contract have the right to vote whether or not to accept it. H.R. 800 would strip this right away from them for the first (and most important) contract with their employer. If their employer and union did not reach agreement on a first contract after 90 days, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (''FMCS'') would appoint a board of private arbitrators to determine the terms of the contract, which would be binding on the employees, the union, and the employer. There is no limit on the arbitrators' authority. They could raise wages by 100 percent or lower them. They could require employees to pay union dues or lose their jobs. This part of the law is clearly unconstitutional because it establishes no standards or procedures for the arbitrators to follow and does not provide for any review of the private arbitrators' decisions, either administrative or judicial.

In 1925, the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment a state law requiring certain private sector employers and workers to submit to binding interest arbitration by a panel of judges if the parties could not agree on a contract.

Accordingly, H.R. 800 can be upheld only if it provides procedural due process. It does not. Conspicuously absent from the statute are the procedural safeguards customarily considered necessary to ensure a fair hearing (e.g., the right to notice, to know what standards will be applied, to present evidence, to some kind of review, administrative or judicial). Of course, it is possible that the NLRB will utilize their rulemaking authority to provide for such procedures. Even so, neither agency is authorized to review an arbitration board's decision on the basis of non-compliance with such procedures. Similarly, an arbitration board's non-compliance with procedural safeguards is not a basis for judicial review. Moreover, in most arbitrations, the parties' agreement to a particular procedure is the best guarantee of fairness. Under H.R. 800, the parties have no voice in determining procedure.

In addition to due process infirmities, H.R. 800 effectuates an impermissible delegation of legislative authority to private actors, violating principals of separation of powers. Pursuant to H.R. 800, private arbitrators are vested with the ability to bind nonconsenting parties. Most importantly, employees are not parties to the mediation and have no right to participate in the arbitration proceeding or challenge the arbitrators' decision. While a majority of the affected employees will have signed union authorization cards (as defective as they are) supporting the union, the contract imposed by the arbitrators will bind all bargaining unit employees, including those who did not support union representation.

Aside from constitutional defects, H.R. 800 would eviscerate large portions of the over 70 years of case law developed carefully under the National Labor Relations Act. The resulting uncertainty would be a major force in destabilizing labor relations and causing labor strife the NLRA was intended to resolve. For example, over 97 percent of private sector labor