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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. SOLIS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 18, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable HILDA L. SOLIS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 25 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 9:50 a.m.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER).

HONORING DR. VINOD K. SHAH AND THE DOCTORS SHAH

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, rarely do I avail myself of this opportunity, but I do so today to recognize the extraordinary contributions of an extraordinary man, extraordinary woman and extraordinary family.

The holiday season is traditionally a season of giving. Today I would like to take just a few minutes to recognize the vital contributions of a man and his family who have continually given his time, his energy and his efforts to the residents of St. Mary's County and to southern Maryland, which I am honored to represent in this body, my dear and great friend Dr. Vinod K. Shah, affectionately known as Vinnie or V.K.

NOTICE

If the 110th Congress, 1st Session, adjourns sine die on or before December 21, 2007, a final issue of the *Congressional Record* for the 110th Congress, 1st Session, will be published on Friday, December 28, 2007, in order to permit Members to revise and extend their remarks.

All material for insertion must be signed by the Member and delivered to the respective offices of the Official Reporters of Debates (Room HT-60 or S-123 of the Capitol), Monday through Friday, between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. through Thursday, December 27. The final issue will be dated Friday, December 28, 2007, and will be delivered on Wednesday, January 2, 2008.

None of the material printed in the final issue of the *Congressional Record* may contain subject matter, or relate to any event that occurred after the sine die date.

Senators' statements should also be formatted according to the instructions at http://webster/secretary/cong_record.pdf, and submitted electronically, either on a disk to accompany the signed statement, or by e-mail to the Official Reporters of Debates at "Record@Sec.Senate.gov".

Members of the House of Representatives' statements may also be submitted electronically by e-mail, to accompany the signed statement, and formatted according to the instructions for the Extensions of Remarks template at <http://clerk.house.gov/forms>. The Official Reporters will transmit to GPO the template formatted electronic file only after receipt of, and authentication with, the hard copy, and signed manuscript. Deliver statements to the Official Reporters in Room HT-60.

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By order of the Joint Committee on Printing.

ROBERT A. BRADY, *Chairman.*

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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Every so often an individual comes along who leaves an indelible mark on his or her community and the people around them. In southern Maryland, two such individuals are Dr. Shah and his wife, Dr. Shah. Her name is Ila. Together they established their medical practice in southern Maryland roughly 30 years ago when the citizens there were greatly in need of medical services.

We had some good doctors, but we needed more. Since then Vinnie and Ila have built a medical practice that has literally changed the face of health care in our region, expanding to become the largest private medical practice in the State of Maryland.

Dr. Shah's service and the service of his family to southern Maryland as well as our Nation's dependence on foreign-born doctors, particularly in rural America, was recounted in a front-page story in the Washington Post on December 7, 2007.

As Richard Martin, who was the head of St. Mary's County Hospital when Dr. Shah arrived, told the Post, and I quote, "It was just like miracle workers had walked in. I told them, 'You are the answer to my prayers.'"

The Shahs epitomize family values. Vinod and Ila recruited family and friends, including Vinod's eight siblings, each of whom is a doctor or is married to one.

When I refer to the Shah family, let me just recite their names, all family, brothers or sisters, sons or daughters, giving service in this country to our people:

Dr. Vinod Shah.
His wife, Dr. Ila Shah.
Dr. Mamesh P. Shah.
Dr. Anil K. Shah.
Dr. Amish Shah, Dr. Shah's son.
Dr. Deepak K. Shah.
Dr. Arpana Shah, his daughter-in-law.
Dr. Umed K. Shah.
Dr. Naayan Shah.
Dr. Atul Shah.
Dr. Avani Shah.
Dr. Dhiren Shah.
Dr. Beena Shah.
Dr. Jyoti D. Shah.

It is an amazing list, and it doesn't end there, with his daughter doing her residency and her husband doing his residency. The Shahs epitomize family values. As I said, they are an extraordinary family.

Today, Shah Associates is a growing practice that includes 65 physicians in 10 locations, and which recently announced that it will partner with specialists from Georgetown University Hospital and the Washington Hospital Center in a planned 32,000 square-foot addition to his medical center.

Leslie Miller, who heads the cardiac program at both hospitals, told the Washington Post, referring to Shah Associates, "They are a model of health care of the future. These guys, on their own, using their own money, have put together this extraordinary system. We want to extend what they have done."

Madam Speaker, the manner in which Dr. Shah operates Shah Associates is an accurate reflection of this generous and good man and the values that he and his family hold and demonstrate to all of us daily. This medical practice is truly a family affair, as I have noted, and accepts all those who need care, regardless of their ability to pay. I have heard extraordinary stories from my constituents about the extent to which the Shah family has gone to help them, the care that they have extended.

I have known Dr. Shah for many years. He is my next-door neighbor. He is one of my closest friends. He, his wife, his son, his daughter, his son-in-law and daughter-in-law are all very close.

Without doubt, he is one of the most decent, honorable and honest men that I have ever met. His wife, Ila, reflects that same character, as do his children, their spouses and his extended family, his brothers and sisters, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. He is not only my friend and my neighbor, but he is a friend and neighbor to the entire community in southern Maryland. He has touched countless lives over the years, and the difference he has made, that his family have made, that Shah Associates have made, cannot be overstated.

Let me say, too, that Dr. Shah's success is a quintessential American story in which a husband and wife, both immigrants, both physicians, come to our Nation and through hard work, intelligence, merit and reputation become, quite literally, the backbone of the community. Gandhi once remarked, "Be the change you want to see in the world."

Vinod Shah, Ila Shah and their family have lived this philosophy to the fullest. They saw a dire need and, rather than turn their back or leave the problem to someone else, they embraced a great challenge and have made an immeasurable, positive, extraordinary contribution. They faced discrimination, rejection and challenge.

Their positive, unflagging, and extraordinary talented effort has resulted in their being embraced by their community, which they have served so well. They brought hope and care and service, and they have enriched the lives of all whom they have touched.

I want to thank Vinod and Ila as well as all the physicians and providers at Shah Associates for the incredible service that they have delivered to residents of St. Mary's County and to the entire southern Maryland area, and, indeed, a broader reach as well.

Dr. Vinod Shah is the vice president of the Association of Physicians of Indian Origin. I presume, in a short period of time, he will be their leader. He will be an extraordinary representative of an extraordinary group of people who, like so many immigrants before them, have responded to America's welcome and have made such an ex-

traordinary difference. We are all the better and healthier for it.

[From washingtonpost.com, Dec. 7, 2007]

BORN IN INDIA, TRANSFORMING RURAL MD.—
EXTENDED FAMILY OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS
HELPS ST. MARY'S THRIVE

(By Jenna Johnson)

St. Mary's County was once a place where no doctor wanted to settle. In the 1970s, the county hospital used decades-old equipment, struggled to make payroll and had no full-time specialists—not even an obstetrician, although more than 600 babies were born there each year.

Then came Vinod K. and Ila Shah, Bombay-educated and D.C.-trained husband-and-wife doctors who were eager to open a practice in the rural area. They had heard about St. Mary's from Vinod's younger brother and were enticed by the potential impact that even a small practice could have there.

"It was just like miracle workers walked in," said Richard Martin, 92, who was then head of the hospital. "I told them, 'You are the answer to my prayers.'"

The couple was soon joined by Vinod's younger brother, Umed K. Shah, a gastroenterologist. Next came two family friends. A few years later, another brother arrived, cardiologist Anil K. Shah, with his wife, Beena Shah, a neurologist.

In time, Vinod and Ila Shah recruited more friends and family, including the rest of Vinod's eight siblings, each of whom is a doctor or is married to one. They built the largest private specialty practice in Southern Maryland, Shah Associates, which has treated about 90,000 of St. Mary's 110,000 residents.

For many years, foreign-born doctors have been the unlikely medical backbone of rural America. In the 1970s, the United States actively recruited them, promoting the opportunities available in remote areas avoided by many U.S.-born physicians. Then, starting in the 1990s, a visa waiver program promised to fast-track doctors to a green card if they worked in a rural area for at least three years.

Today, at least 23 percent of practicing doctors in the United States attended a foreign medical school, and almost all of those practitioners were born overseas. But recent changes in visa policy have had the unintended consequence of slowing the flow of foreign-born doctors to rural areas, a trend that Shah is, in small ways, resisting.

Two generations of Shah doctors see patients who span several generations of Southern Maryland families. "We come here for everything," Navy retiree Paul Hailor said at their main office in Hollywood, Md. "My fiancée is down the hall waiting for a pulmonary appointment. Kids come here for MRIs, CAT scans."

Nurses and patients have a system for keeping all of the Shahs straight. They use initials for the four Shah brothers: Dr. V.K. the cardiologist; Dr. U.K. the gastroenterologist; Dr. D.K. the child psychiatrist; and Dr. A.K., another cardiologist. The other Shahs, especially the four with names beginning with 'A,' often go by their first name: Dr. Amish the cardiologist, also V.K.'s son; his wife, Dr. Arpana the dermatologist; Dr. Beena the neurologist; Dr. Jyoti the sleep specialist.

"Every once in a while, we get someone calling in wanting to talk to 'Dr. Shah,'" said Betsy Warren, a registered nurse who has worked for Shah Associates for 16 years. "You ask them, 'Which Dr. Shah?' And they say, 'The one with dark hair.'"

To Southern Maryland, the Shah family has imported distinctive aspects of Indian culture: colorful saris, lavish parties for hundreds stocked with huge trays of vegetarian

Indian food and recitals featuring classical Indian dances.

Family members say it took years to earn the trust of the community, but once they did, the practice quickly grew. Some local doctors who once viewed the Shahs as competition eventually joined the practice.

Each time the nearby Patuxent River Naval Base added employees, the practice received a wave of patients. The practice's offices, where employees had once been asked to park in front so business would appear brisk, were soon overflowing.

In 1995, V.K. Shah found an empty lot on Route 235 in Hollywood. Two years later, he opened the Philip J. Bean Medical Center, dedicating it to a late local physician who he said "delivered half the county."

"We said 'Let's name it after someone who means something to this community,'" Shah said. "I think people should feel good about this place—it should mean something to them."

But the facility that felt like a palace then is already too small, and the practice with 65 physicians in 10 locations, is scrambling to recruit more doctors. "Demand is so high across the board," said Shah, 66. "I can't retire."

Plans were announced last week for a 32,000-square-foot addition to the medical center. The extra space will allow specialists from Georgetown University Hospital and Washington Hospital Center to practice there as part of a new partnership.

Because Shah Associates provides so much of the medical care in the region, the partnership will allow the universities to study health patterns over generations, said Leslie Miller, head of the cardiac program at both hospitals.

Shah Associates has compiled its patients' medical records into a database that allows it to track the medical histories of families and look for early warning signs in younger generations. Such locally comprehensive databases might one day help researchers better understand such hereditary conditions as heart problems, he said.

"They are a model of the health care of the future," Miller said. "These guys, on their own, using their own money, have put together this extraordinary system. . . . We want to extend what they have done."

But in many areas that are more rural than Southern Maryland, as in many inner cities, the gap between medical needs and resources remains great, despite government efforts.

In 1994, Congress made foreign doctors who train in the United States while holding a so-called J-1 visa eligible to apply for a green card if they practiced for at least three years in underserved areas. The program, which exempts J-1 holders from a required return home for two years after their training is complete, has placed thousands of doctors in inner-city and rural communities, as well as in prisons.

They continue to flood the United States with residency applications, but each year the program receives fewer applications and fills fewer spots. Last year, only 900 of the 1,620 available waivers were issued.

Rural health experts attribute much of that drop to the popularity of another visa, the H-1B, which allows U.S. companies to temporarily sponsor highly skilled foreign workers in such fields as medicine, architecture and science.

In 2000, to make more H-1B visas available for technology companies, Congress exempted research institutions and universities, including their hospitals, from a cap on the hard-to-get visas. The popularity of the J-1 waiver program plummeted, and the pipeline that once channeled doctors to underserved areas narrowed.

Today, no medical facilities in Southern Maryland are eligible to sponsor physicians under the J-1 waiver program. A majority of the nearly 30 Maryland primary medical care centers designated as having a specialist shortage are in Baltimore. The District has 13 sites, including the D.C. jail. Virginia has nearly 120, two of which are in the Washington area.

With baby boomers beginning to retire, the American Medical Association says, the country could be short as many as 200,000 doctors before 2020—a shortage that is expected to hurt already-underserved areas the most.

V.K. Shah, who is also vice president of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, said a shortage could be prevented by drastically increasing the number of medical schools in the United States, relying more on nurses and nurse practitioners or by allowing more qualified international medical graduates to practice in the United States.

But to practice, foreign doctors must first complete training in a U.S. residency program, for which spots are scarce. Last year, 46 percent of foreign applicants received residencies, compared with 93 percent of American graduates, according to the National Resident Match Program, which facilitates the application process for more than 1,000 U.S. institutions.

Each year, Shah Associates hosts a handful of graduates from foreign medical schools, encouraging them to seek opportunities beyond big cities. This summer, four recent graduates of Mumbai medical schools traveled to Southern Maryland on tourist visas for an unpaid crash course in American medicine.

The graduates watched as the Shahs cracked jokes with their patients, reassured them about upcoming operations and gently recommended diet changes. Mitesh Lotia, 24, one of the graduates, said that the one-on-one interaction held great appeal.

"In India, we would see 100, 150 patients a day," he said. "There was no time to get to know patients. I want to practice here. I'll go anywhere."

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 9 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

□ 1000

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

In the beginning, at the leap of nothingness to material existence, You, the Almighty, acted.

In the desperation of human search for lasting truth, You spoke Your prophetic word.

In the tangled history of nations and faith, You established a new world.

Even in this century, You breathe forth in people the desire for salvation and lasting freedom.

Dear God, be with us today, that Your lasting values may take shape in this Nation. Make this government of the people Your instrument of stability and hope. Abide within Your people as equal justice and incarnate love, both now and forever.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

9/11 HEALTH AND COMPENSATION ACT

(Mrs. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, last night when Congress passed its year-end spending bill, our Nation took another step forward in caring for the heroes and heroines of 9/11.

By including \$108 million for the health needs of the World Trade Center first responders, residents, students, and others exposed to the deadly toxins at Ground Zero, we again show that we will not turn our backs on those who came to New York from every single State in our Nation to help in the aftermath of 9/11.

And in the new year, I look forward to continuing to build support for the bipartisan 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, which I introduced with my colleagues JERRY NADLER, VITO FOSSELLA, and GEORGE MILLER.

Caring for the heroes and heroines of 9/11 is our duty. They were there for us, we were there for them last night in our budget, and we need to be there in the future.

I thank my colleagues for their support, especially for the leadership of Mr. OBEY and Speaker PELOSI.

TAX RELIEF, NOT TAX INCREASES

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last week the majority forced a vote on a faulty fix to the alternative minimum tax, AMT, that raises taxes