

She is the Emergency Management Specialist for Flower Mound and has worked in emergency management for 5 years. Before then, she worked in the town's geographical information systems department, which designs the town's maps.

Prior to her work in north Texas, Ms. Skordinski worked with geographical information systems at Cape Canaveral, Florida, and was a geographical information systems contractor for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA.

Ms. Skordinski started Flower Mound's CERT program after learning about it from a Flower Mound firefighter. She felt that it was important to start this program in order to get the citizens of Flower Mound more involved in the Fire Department. In the years since Ms. Skordinski began the CERT program, numerous residents have received the training required to respond to emergency situations, making the community safer for all.

Madam Speaker, it is an honor today to rise in recognition of Ms. Skordinski's dedication to the safety and well-being of her fellow Flower Mound citizens. She is truly deserving of such an enormous honor. Flower Mound is now a safer city, and all those who recognize the contributions of Ms. Skordinski are truly grateful. She is an inspiration to all Americans devoted to community service.

RECOGNIZING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

SPEECH OF

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 4, 2008

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 845 to bring awareness and recognize the 60th anniversary of our beautiful and unique Everglades National Park.

The Everglades are truly a national treasure, an irreplaceable part of our national landscape with its vast wetland wilderness unlike any other in the world. The Everglades National Park is part of the south Florida ecosystem that includes over 3 million acres with subtropical wetland landscapes that stretch 220 miles from Orlando to Florida Bay. As President Truman noted when he dedicated the park in 1947, "To its natural abundance we owe the spectacular plant and animal life that distinguishes this place from all others in our country."

The Everglades National Parks constitutes the largest subtropical wilderness in the Nation featuring slow-moving waters and provides critical habitat to ecosystems for countless animals including rare and endangered species such as the American crocodile, Florida panther, Western Indian manatee and more than 350 species of birds, including the Great Egret, Wood Stork, Swallow-tailed Kite, Cape Sable seaside sparrow, and Roseate Spoonbill.

For good reason, it has been designated an International Biosphere Reserve, a World Heritage Site, and a Wetland of International Importance—in recognition of its significance to all people of the world.

Many people have had a great impact on the establishment and history of the Ever-

glades, including former Florida Governor Spessard Holland, who incidentally is a Bartow native. His work in the 1940s to secure thousands of acres needed for the creation of the park along with his 25 year Senate career in which he championed and ensured resources were made available for projects was instrumental. He was one of the first great champions of the Everglades and I am so grateful for his work, without which, we might not be here celebrating the Park's 50th anniversary.

Unfortunately, the Everglades have been negatively impacted by encroachment and disruption that has harmed wildlife and destroyed wetlands. I am pleased that Congress and the State of Florida have been working together through to restore and rehabilitate this treasure through the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, CERP. I join my colleagues in continued support and dedication to these efforts in the years to come to ensure and preserve the Everglades' majesty and beauty for future generations to enjoy.

PAUL WELLSTONE MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION EQUITY ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN

OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 5, 2008

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to praise the passage of the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act (H.R. 1424)—a bill that will fill the long-standing gaps in mental health care in this Nation and that will end the unfortunate disparate treatment that patients seeking mental health care currently receive.

Mr. Speaker, as a physician who practiced for more than two decades prior to coming to Congress, I have seen what happens to people who are afflicted with mental illnesses like bi-polar disorder, depression, and schizophrenia who do not receive appropriate, consistent care.

Studies confirm that mental health is integral to the holistic health and wellness of all people. Additionally, under-addressed mental health care issues are not just issues that affect the individuals who live with mental disorders; they also affect their friends, families, and communities. And, today, statistics show that 1 in 17 Americans suffer from a serious mental health disorder and that these disorders are the primary cause of disability in the United States among people 15 to 44 years of age—during their most productive life years.

Despite the enormous impact that mental illnesses can and do have on millions of Americans every day, good treatment works. But, of course, the treatment options available to patients comes with a cost and one that up until now has had to be borne largely by the consumer. It is important to recognize though that the cost of mental health problems—when they are un- and under-addressed—becomes staggering.

The good news is not only that over the past eight years, the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) has made "parity" coverage for mental health care available to

Members of Congress and 8.5 million other Federal employees, but that there has been no significant cost increase to this parity requirement in FEHBP. Based on this and further analysis, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated that H.R. 1424 would have a miniscule impact on premiums—just two-tenths of 1 percent.

For the sizeable proportion of Americans that suffer from more than one mental health disorder at a given time, this bill will be critical in improving mental health care access, options, and treatments available to patients seeking services.

Certainly, there is no better time than now to ensure that patients seeking treatment for mental illnesses are able to do so in a system that champions mental health parity, where care is accessible and not subject to reimbursement limitations by insurers or group health plans. This bill is exactly what is needed to finally bring equity and fairness into the mental health care system in this Nation and to finally make the health care that individuals can receive comprehensive.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I also want to add that as the chair of the CBC Health Braintrust, I have long been concerned by the racial and ethnic disparities in mental health and in mental health care that detrimentally affect the millions of innocent, hardworking Americans, and have long championed and supported legislation to reduce such disparities.

The Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act is a bill that will help reduce the disproportionate burden of mental health and mental health care disparities on African Americans and other people of color.

Mr. Speaker, the burden of mental illness on the health and productivity in the United States and throughout the world has long been underestimated. This is a situation that demands and needs immediate action, for all children and adults who live with mental illness. Enacting strong mental health parity legislation will improve the health status of individuals who suffer dire health consequences as a result of their mental illness and pushes us one step closer to achieving health equity.

I am pleased that the House passed H.R. 1424. Now we can move forward to eliminate all disparities in health care by passing H.R. 3014, the Healthcare Equity and Accountability Act.

RECOGNIZING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF JUAN ANTONIO "CHI-CHI" RODRIGUEZ IN PROFESSIONAL GOLF AND HIS WORK ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN

HON. LUIS V. GUTIERREZ

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 6, 2008

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to announce the introduction of my bill, a Resolution Recognizing the Accomplishments of Juan Antonio "Chi-Chi" Rodriguez in Professional Golf and His Work on Behalf of Children.

The bipartisan resolution I introduce today, congratulates and recognizes Juan Antonio "Chi-Chi" Rodriguez for his continued success on and off of the golf course, for his generosity and devotion to charity, and for his exemplary dedication to the intellectual and

moral growth of thousands of low income and disadvantaged youth in our country.

Madam Speaker, sports figures, through their perseverance, discipline, and good behavior, can serve as examples of excellence, dedication and devotion to our youth.

Chi-Chi Rodriguez was born in Rio Piedras, PR, on October 23, 1935, and rose from the most humble of circumstances as the fifth of six children of an agricultural laborer and a housekeeper. These hardships did not harden him, but motivated him to become a great sportsman, humanitarian and role model.

Chi-Chi joined the ranks of golf professionals at the age of 24, reportedly standing at 5'7" and weighing 117 pounds and has had a stellar career in the sport of golf, earning an impressive record of 38 professional wins, including 8 PGA Tour wins and 22 Senior PGA Tour wins. His Senior PGA Tour records for most consecutive victories, at four, and most consecutive birdies, at eight, still stand.

In 1979, Chi-Chi Rodriguez helped create the Chi-Chi Rodriguez Youth Foundation, and the Chi-Chi Rodriguez Academy in Clearwater, FL, which have collectively raised more than \$4 million to help thousands of low-income and disadvantaged youth reach their life potential through educational opportunities and support programs, including a public partnership school, a community service program, a nine-hole golf course and others, which has been recognized by receiving the 1986 National Golf Foundation Award for best Youth Program in the United States, becoming the 758th President Bush's Point of Light, and receiving the Robie Award for Humanitarianism presented by the Jackie Robinson Foundation, among others.

His devotion to others knows no bounds. In addition to all he already does, he also joined with the FBI Agents Association to lead the Chi-Chi Rodriguez G-Man Desert Shootout Tournament devoted to raising funds for College scholarships for the children of FBI agents killed in the line of duty.

In 1989, the United States Golf Association, founded in 1894, granted Chi-Chi Rodriguez its highest honor, the Bob Jones Award, in recognition for his distinguished sportsmanship in golf and in 1994, Chi-Chi was inducted to the first class of the World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame for "world class athletic ability," for being "a role model in his community" and for having "a strong record of humanitarian efforts."

In 1992, Chi-Chi Rodriguez was inducted to the World Golf Hall of Fame, "Golf highest honor" and in 1973, he was a member of the U.S. Team that won the Ryder Cup in Muirfield, Scotland.

Chi-Chi Rodriguez has received countless other distinguished awards and recognitions such as the 1974 Charlie Bartlett Award of the Golf Writers Association, the 1981 Richardson Award of the Golf Writers Association of America, the 1982 Father of the Year Award, the 1986 Card Walker Award (Outstanding Contribution to Junior Golf), the 1986 Salvation Army Gold Crest Award, the 12th Roberto Clemente Cup (1986), the 1986 Byron Nelson Award, the 1986 Hispanic Achievement Recognition Award, the 1987 Byron Nelson Award, the 1987 Senior Tour Arnold Palmer Award, the 1988 Fred Raphael Golf Achievement Award, the 1989 Old Tom Morris Award, the 1990 "Caring for Kids" Award, the 1991 Jackie Robinson Humanitarian Award, the

1993 Civilian Meritorious Service Medal presented by the Department of Defense, the 1997 International Network of Golf Award, the 1998 Ford Achievement Award, and the 2003 Paul Runyan Memorial Recognition Award, among others.

He is also a published author who has authored and co-authored several books and articles about golf, such as Chi Chi's Secrets of Power Golf in 1967, Everybody's Golf Book in 1975, Chi Chi's Power Pack, in 1982, Every Golfer's Guide to Lower Scores by Chi-Chi Rodriguez, in 1990, and Chi Chi's Golf Games You Gotta Play, in 2003, among others.

He is very proud of his philosophy on life, which can be summarized by his personal expressions "For me, satisfaction comes from knowing that I was put on this planet to leave it better" and "A man never stands taller than when he stoops to help a child."

Please join me in recognizing that Chi-Chi Rodriguez embodies the spirit of generosity and humanism of his fellow Puerto Rican, Roberto Clemente and that as a native of Puerto Rico, Chi-Chi has proven to be an important role model and source of pride for all Puerto Ricans, as well as all Latin Americans and all immigrants to the U.S. from across the globe.

My resolution congratulates and commends Chi-Chi Rodriguez: (1) for his successes in golf in the United States and throughout the world; (2) for his exemplary conduct as a private citizen; (3) for a life devoted to service to others, in particular, for his help to low income and underprivileged youth, and to the children of FBI agents killed in the line of duty; and (4) and in gratitude for his service as a role model and an inspiration for our youth, the people of Puerto Rico, and the United States.

Madam Speaker, let me conclude with this. One of the great honors of the Members of this House is to recognize our fellow citizens who stand out as exceptional individuals.

It is my great honor to present this legislation for consideration in the House of Representatives with the hope that the example of Chi-Chi Rodriguez can be known across our Nation and that he may serve as a role model for us all.

RECOGNIZING 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VALERO TEXAS CITY REFINERY

HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 6, 2008

Mr. LAMPSON. Madam Speaker, today we honor the 100th anniversary of the Valero Texas City Refinery. Over the past 100 years, Texas City, Texas, has established itself as a major center for our Nation's energy production. Texas City's history is a testament to hard work and the American Dream, in that such success has grown from the small refinery established by the Texas City Refining Company so long ago.

In 1908, J.C. Black, joined by more than 100 craftsmen, constructed a refinery consisting of just 11 stills, storage tanks, and a boiler house. In the beginning, the refinery had the capacity to process only 1,500 barrels of oil per day. Enduring a depression, technological revolutions, and the hardships all businesses experience, the Valero Texas City re-

finery now produces 243,000 barrels per day of ultra low sulfur gasoline and diesel.

Texas City matured with this refinery. When America entered World War I and then World War II, the refinery increased production to meet the Nation's petroleum demands, fueling America's victory. During this period the population of Texas City tripled as men and women answered the patriotic call to serve in the Nation's war efforts.

Today, the proud, hard working spirit is alive and well as the Valero Texas City refinery continues to play an integral role in the economic well-being of southeast Texas and the United States. I am proud to honor the thousands of men and women who have been working on our behalf throughout the past 100 years. Texas City's first refinery is indeed deserving of recognition from the United States House of Representatives upon its 100th anniversary.

INTRODUCTION OF THE "CREDIT CARD FAIR FEE ACT OF 2008"

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 6, 2008

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the "Credit Card Fair Fee Act of 2008," legislation that would help level the playing field for merchants and retailers negotiating with banks for the cost of certain fees, and ultimately reduce the costs of everyday goods for consumers. I am joined by Representatives CANNON, LOFGREN, SHUSTER, WEINER, DELAHUNT, PLATTS, WELCH, SULLIVAN, WILSON of South Carolina, GOHMERT, HALL of Texas, BOOZMAN, and PETERSON of Pennsylvania.

Every time a consumer uses a payment card—at the mall, at the grocery store, at a gas station, or on the Internet—the merchant is charged a fee. This fee gets divided up three ways—between the merchant's bank, the consumer's bank, and the credit card company. It covers processing fees, fraud protection, billing statements, and other expenses such as system innovations.

Almost 90 percent of this fee comprises a so-called "interchange fee," which is the payment made by the merchant's bank to the consumer's bank. The percentage is set by the credit card companies, generally Visa or MasterCard, and averages 1.75 percent of the total purchase. In 2006, interchange fees totaled approximately \$36 billion, an increase of 117 percent since 2001. In 2007, the fees amounted to \$42 billion, about 17 percent since 2006. These fees are ultimately passed on to all consumers in the form of higher prices for goods and services, whether the consumers purchase these items by credit card, check or cash.

These interchange fees are set by the credit card companies. The two largest, Visa and Mastercard, are associations composed of financial institutions and are owned and controlled by their bank member-owners. Together, Visa and MasterCard control over 73 percent of the volume of transactions on general purpose cards in the United States and approximately 85 percent of the cards issued. Banks that are members of the Visa association are often also members of the MasterCard association.