

If anyone has another viable plan to address our entitlement tsunami, we are anxious to hear it. But it has to be able to pass. Doing nothing is not acceptable.

And just like the base-closing process, the SAFE Commission Act would require and up-or-down vote on the Commission's proposal—ensuring that Congress finally considered a comprehensive solution to this great challenge.

So far, Rep. Cooper and I have reached out to every Member of Congress, the President and his potential successors, Fortune 500 leaders, small business owners, think tanks, thought leaders, and the religious community.

And today I'm reaching out to you—our science, technology, engineering, manufacturing and workforce development leaders.

I ask for your support in this endeavor so that it may put us back on track financially, just as the "Gathering Storm" report spurred us to fix our nation's education and competitiveness programs.

William Wilberforce, who, in his first speech in the British Parliament in 1789 describing the evils of the slave trade, concluded by telling his colleagues,

"Having heard all this you may choose to look the other way, but you can never again say that you did not know."

Not one of us can say we do not know about the nation's long-term financial outlook.

We know, and it's on our watch to fix.

This must also be a part of this year's presidential debate. We need to make the next president understand that entitlement reform.

And the media needs to do a better job covering it. We should insist on a presidential debate devoted to these issues.

I am confident that, with your support, we will succeed and it may well lead to a renaissance in America—a renaissance in innovation, education, and economic development.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO STEPHANIE TAVARES

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to rise today to honor Stephanie Tavares by entering her name in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, the official record of the proceedings and debates of the United States Congress since 1873. Today I pay tribute to Stephanie Tavares, reporter for In Business Las Vegas for her achievements in reporting on various small business legal issues within the Southern Nevada community.

Stephanie grew up in a small town that did not have access to many big-city newspapers, but while she was still in high school, she strongly identified with a local television news anchor inspiring her to pursue a career in journalism.

She worked as a news clerk for her college newspaper, which helped to launch her love for writing, editing, and the news. For the past three years, Stephanie has reported on small business issues for In Business Las Vegas. She is credited with not only covering business issues, but with being an advocate for small business as well, learning different perspectives, policies, and the needs of the small business community. She also reports on utilities and environmental issues for the magazine.

In addition to her professional work, Stephanie donates much of her time and talent to several professional and community organizations. She is involved with the National Association of Business Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, and the International Studies Association. Additionally, she recently served on a panel of the 2007 Women of Color Conference. On the local level, Stephanie is a supporter of Adoption Exchange, Henderson Libraries, and Henderson Parks and Recreation.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor Stephanie Tavares for her achievements in journalism for small businesses within the Las Vegas community. I would also like to congratulate her on receiving the Small Business Journalist of the Year at the 2008 Small Business Awards.

TRIBUTE TO AMANDA VEEN

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. LATHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Cadet Lieutenant Amanda Veen of Perry, Iowa for being named Cadet of the Year by the Iowa Wing of the Civil Air Patrol.

Amanda, who is currently a sophomore at Liberty Home School, also received the Billy Mitchell Award and served as Color Guard Commander in the North Central Region Cadet Competition last year for the Des Moines Metro Cadet Squadron.

The Cadet of the Year award honors Amanda's dedication and commitment during her participation in the Civil Air Patrol's Cadet Programs. The Iowa Wing of the Civil Air Patrol, which is the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, is a nonprofit organization with more than 390 officers and cadets in Iowa. The Civil Air Patrol's Cadet Programs provide youth opportunities to reach their full potential as they study four subject areas: aerospace education, physical training, leadership, and moral and ethical values.

I know that my colleagues in the U.S. Congress join me in commending Cadet Lieutenant Amanda Veen for her leadership and dedication to representing the Iowa Civil Air Patrol. I consider it an honor to represent Amanda and her family in Congress, and I wish her the best in her future endeavors.

COMMENDING THE HARD WORK OF OUR NATION'S NURSES ON THIS, NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to applaud the incredible efforts our nurses pour into their grueling workdays, carrying out their duties to the great benefit of this country's health and medical care system. Together, nurses represent the largest share of health care professionals in the field, boasting numbers eclipsing 2,500,000—but that's becoming increasingly not enough. Facing a shortage that demands a million new nurses

by 2016, the current crop of professionals have shouldered, and will continue to shoulder, the extra work and hours of properly caring for our elderly and infirmed. For this, and so much more, nurses deserve a generous helping of our gratitude and the highest of reverence, not just this next week dubbed "National Nurses Week," but all year round.

We can show them that we care by paying tribute to those nurses serving in Iraq and Afghanistan—by bringing them and our heroic troops home after a job well done. We can show them that we care by outfitting them with a health care system that is affordable, universal, and driven less by profits and more by compassion and humanitarianism. We can show them that we care by investing in the research, techniques, and technologies that promise to one day cure age-old, debilitating diseases that plague millions—and not play politics when our citizens' livelihoods are at stake.

The Harlem Hospital Center serves my district as a powerful force for social progress, catering to the community's health needs and training the next generation's minority and female physicians. The nurses there fight the good fight, day in and day out, not often enough rewarded with the credit that they deserve. I am honored to praise their achievements—and those of their colleagues all across America—this week.

VIETNAM HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 2007

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker, as you may know, I have the privilege of representing the Vietnamese community in Orange County—one of the largest outside of Vietnam.

Human rights is an important issue to me and my Vietnamese constituents. Today, I want to highlight the importance of continuing to work for freedom and democracy in Vietnam, and to commend the advocates that are committed to this cause.

This year marks the 14th anniversary of the House-Senate Joint Resolution designating May 11th as Vietnam Human Rights Day. As we prepare to observe Vietnam Human Rights Day, it is clear that the struggle is far from over.

Human rights violations in Vietnam have only gotten worse since Vietnam was granted Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) status, removed from the State Department's list of Countries of Particular Concern, added to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and allowed to be a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

In my eyes, these policies, endorsed by the Bush Administration, have been rewards for a government that has made no real effort to improve its human rights record.

The Government of Vietnam claimed that it had improved its human rights record, and that it would continue to make progress on the issue of human rights. However, their record speaks for itself.

The Government of Vietnam has harassed, arrested and sentenced democracy advocates many of whom were not afforded a trial. That

list includes: Father Nguyen Van Ly, Nguyen Phong, Nguyen Binh Thanh, Nguyen Bac Truyen, and Nguyen Van Dai, lawyer—just to name a few. But the list doesn't stop there.

Since 2006 the Government of Vietnam has detained six American citizens—all falsely accused and harassed. One of those cases includes Dr. Nguyen Quoc Quan who has been incarcerated in Vietnam since November for promoting peace and non-violence.

Since his detainment in Vietnam, I have called for his immediate release and authored letters to both Secretary Rice and Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung urging his safe return to the United States. I have met with his wife Mai Huong and have seen the anguish this injustice has caused their family—a family that has not been able to communicate with their loved one since last year.

Dr. Nguyen Quan now awaits a trial scheduled for May 13 along with fellow democracy activists: Mr. Nguyen The Vu and Mr. Somsak Khunmi. I call on the Government of Vietnam to afford Dr. Quan and the other democracy advocates a fair and just trial. It is my greatest hope that his trial will be handled in a fair manner, unlike that of Father Ly, who was gagged, unable to speak at his own defense, and sentenced to 8 years in prison.

So today I join the Vietnamese community in commemorating Vietnam Human Rights Day and urging support for the continuing advocacy efforts that are fighting for the most basic freedoms that we in the U.S. enjoy—freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion. These freedoms do not exist in Vietnam.

I will continue working with my colleagues in the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam and the Congressional Human Rights Caucus to advance human rights for the people of Vietnam. And as a cosponsor of H.R. 3096, the Vietnam Human Rights Act of 2007, I will continue to advocate for its passage with my colleagues in the Senate. I am pleased that Senator BARBARA BOXER held a hearing on this legislation last March.

It is my hope that H.R. 3096 will be brought to the Senate floor for a vote. This would be a clear message that Congress wants to see the Government of Vietnam get serious about improving human rights conditions

CONGRESSIONAL TRIBUTE HONORING THE SAN ANTONIO FIRE DEPARTMENT

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. GONZALEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend Fire Chief Charles N. Hood and the brave men and women of the San Antonio Fire Department. On Tuesday, May 7th, a four-alarm fire swept through the historic Main Building at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas.

Our Lady of the Lake University was founded in 1895 and was the first San Antonio institution of higher education to receive regional accreditation. A beacon of hope and opportunity, Our Lady of the Lake has provided countless minority and underprivileged students the means to a higher education.

In their valiant efforts to fight this destructive fire, San Antonio Fire Department firefighters

went from room to room in the 100 year-old main building, ensuring that students, faculty and staff were safely evacuated. Because of their courageous efforts, not one life was lost and amazingly there were no serious injuries reported. While the fire was ripping through the third and fourth floors, firefighters worked quickly to save the University's mainframe computer and important records so that these items were not damaged by the thousands of gallons of water being used to fight the fire.

More than 100 firefighters fought late into the night and were on hand to make sure that the Our Lady of the Lake University community was safe. I ask my colleagues to join me in commending the efforts of the San Antonio Fire Department and offering support for the entire Our Lady of the Lake University community as they recover from this devastating fire.

RECOGNIZING NU HIGH SCHOOL BOYS BASKETBALL TEAM

HON. BRUCE L. BRALEY

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding results achieved by the NU High School Boys Basketball team at the Iowa State Boys Basketball tournament in Des Moines this past winter.

The last quarter would see five lead changes with the last lead change coming with two minutes left in the game. Travis Ellerbroek hit an NBA range three-pointer to take the lead for the final time and win the class 1A State boys basketball title.

I congratulate the Panthers for winning the Iowa Class 1A State championship. This exciting victory is the first for Coach Paul Elser who wrapped up his first season with the Panthers.

Madam Speaker, I am extremely proud of the accomplishments of the Panther boys basketball team, both on and off court, and I am proud to serve them in Congress.

85TH JUBILEE OF THE AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENT HEYDAR ALIYEV

HON. VIRGINIA FOXX

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, on May 10, we commemorate the 85th Jubilee of the late Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev. Heydar Aliyev was a strong leader at a critical time. When political strife and economic uncertainty engulfed the region, he emerged in 1993 as President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

He steered his country through regional power struggles and global changes. He negotiated a cease-fire in the war with Armenia. He deepened Azerbaijan's relationship with the United States, Turkey, Israel, as well as countries in Western Europe. He also cultivated the nation's relations with multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, NATO, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE. He oversaw economic reforms that opened the door for foreign investment.

In September 1994, the "Contract of the Century" was signed between American and Western companies and Azerbaijan. The Contract was designed to allow Azerbaijan to develop its energy resources in order to diversify Western energy supplies. The two early oil pipelines were from Azerbaijan through Russia to the port of Novorossiysk on the Black Sea and from Azerbaijan through Georgia to Supsa. But his real dream was the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which, despite strong opposition, was supported by both the Clinton and Bush Administrations, and is now pumping one million barrels of oil a day.

President Heydar Aliyev always valued his country's relations with the United States. The United States was one of the first countries to recognize Azerbaijan's independence. His goal was to elevate relations to a strategic level, and we can say that he has been successful.

After we experienced the worst terrorist attack on United States soil on September 11, President Heydar Aliyev was one of the first in the world to offer the unconditional support of his country in the fight against terrorism. Soon after, Azerbaijan had troops in Afghanistan and was the first country with a predominantly Muslim population to send troops to Iraq.

President Aliyev was instrumental in shaping Azerbaijan's Western-leaning policies and relationship building practices. Azerbaijan joined NATO's Partnership for Peace Program in 1994. It is also a 2001 charter member of the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development which works to promote democratic values, ensure stable development, enhance international and regional security, and step up European integration. Azerbaijan has consistently integrated into the Euro-Atlantic security architecture, further deepening U.S.-Azerbaijani military to military cooperation.

Following his passing in 2003, Azerbaijan has continued its course first established by President Heydar Aliyev toward the greater democratic and economic development. Due to his efforts and the will and character of the people of Azerbaijan, there is no doubt about the viability of this nation or about its capability as an effective leader in the region.

The United States looks forward to furthering its partnership with Azerbaijan in the region and on global issues of mutual concern.

RECOGNIZING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF LT. EVAN SCAGGS

HON. TOM COLE

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. Madam Speaker, it is my privilege today to rise in recognition of an outstanding young naval aviator from my district, Lt. Evan Scaggs of Sulphur, Oklahoma. As a dedicated member of the U.S. Navy, Lt. Scaggs was an integral part of one of the highest elevation rescue missions ever to occur in Iraq. Honored by his hometown newspaper, the Sulphur Times-Democrat, I felt that his story was so compelling and his commitment so sincere, that telling his story before you today would be but one small way of honoring such an outstanding young man.

Madam Speaker, when a group of American schoolteachers with Teachers Without Borders