

VIOLENT CRIMES

Violent crimes in Houston increased less than 1 percent in 2008 compared with 2007.

Homicides dropped by 16 percent.

The number of homicides dropped from 353 in 2007 to 295 last year.

Sexual assaults increased more than 8 percent from 2007.

Aggravated assaults increased at 9.1 percent.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Of the 1,092 additional aggravated assault cases in 2008, more than half were reports of domestic violence.

NONVIOLENT CRIMES

Nonviolent crimes declined more than 10 percent in 2008.

Property dropped by more than 10 percent.

Auto thefts decreased last year, dropping more than 21 percent to 15,214, down from 19,465 in 2007.

The bills that I authored are intended to make America a better, fairer place, and are intended to assist families and the incarcerated. They are smart bills that are aimed at making America a safer place and are aimed at lessening the expense of warehousing prisoners and the indiscriminate locking up of prisoners. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution and the bills that I sponsored.

EXTENDING CERTAIN
IMMIGRATION PROGRAMS

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 4, 2009

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, the House's consideration of H.R. 1127, legislation to extend certain visas for religious workers and doctors serving in underserved areas highlights our broken immigration and visa system.

While R-1 visas and the Conrad 30 J waivers are noble programs there are many small businesses in my congressional district that face critical shortages of workers because Congress has failed to address the H-2B temporary worker visa program.

Without prompt action by Congress to extend H-2B visa cap relief, employers who rely on temporary and seasonal employees face severe worker shortages and the looming possibility of business closures in 2009.

Workers with H-2B visas provide necessary labor for the seafood, tourism, hospitality, and landscape industries, as well as many other temporary and non-agricultural jobs in this country. Due to the seasonal nature of the work and the structure of the cap, employers often face uncertainty and employment shortages during their busiest season.

I urge you to take action to quickly pass the Save Our Small and Seasonal Business Act of 2009. H.R. 1136 would address this important issue impacting many businesses in my district and across the country. Your leadership in this matter is critical in assuring that small and seasonal business will be able to successfully navigate the challenging times facing our economy.

HELPING FAMILIES SAVE THEIR
HOMES ACT OF 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 26, 2009

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1106) to prevent mortgage foreclosures and enhance mortgage credit availability:

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of H.R. 1106, the "Helping Families Save Their Homes Act of 2009." We are in the midst of the gravest recession in recent memory and hear daily of countless foreclosures across the Nation, particularly in my home state of Michigan. As President Obama mentioned during his address to the Congress last week, the federal government can and must pursue measures to mitigate the effects of this terrible economic blight upon the Nation's citizens.

With the painful memories of the Great Depression still clearly in mind, I offer my wholehearted praise and support for the President's call to action. Additionally, as the representative of a congressional district with one of the Nation's highest foreclosure rates and most dramatic decline in housing values, I feel it imperative that we move swiftly to stabilize the housing market to keep people in their homes.

H.R. 1106's provisions will do much toward achieving this goal. Its improvements to the Hope for Homeowners program and provision for a safe harbor to mortgage servicers that elect to participate in mortgage modifications will help stem the tide of foreclosures sweeping across the country. The bill's provision to make permanent the increase in federal deposit insurance from \$100,000 to \$250,000 will give Americans greater faith in the safety of their savings at a time of continued bank failures.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to my colleagues, Representatives LOFGREN, TAUSCHER, and CARDOZA, for their work to narrow the authority in this bill afforded to bankruptcy judges to modify the terms of a loan for primary residences. I believe that in keeping with the President's housing plan, we should adopt a targeted effort at stemming foreclosures to address the housing crisis.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I MUST SAVE MY CHILD

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 5, 2009

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Madam Speaker, I submit the following for the RECORD.

[From Parade, Feb. 15, 2009]

I MUST SAVE MY CHILD

(By Melissa Fay Greene)

WHEN SUSAN AXELROD tells the story of her daughter, she begins like most parents of children with epilepsy: The baby was adorable, healthy, perfect. Lauren arrived in June 1981, a treasured first-born. Susan Landau had married David Axelrod in 1979, and

they lived in Chicago, where Susan pursued an MBA at the University of Chicago and David worked as a political reporter for the Chicago Tribune. (He later would become chief strategist for Barack Obama's Presidential campaign and now is a senior White House adviser.) They were busy and happy. Susan attended classes while her mother babysat. Then, when Lauren was 7 months old, their lives changed overnight.

"She had a cold," Susan tells me as we huddle in the warmth of a coffee shop in Washington, D.C., on a day of sleet and rain. Susan is 55, fine-boned, lovely, and fit. She has light-blue eyes, a runner's tan, and a casual fall of silver and ash-blond hair. When her voice trembles or tears threaten, she lifts her chin and pushes on.

"The baby was so congested, it was impossible for her to sleep. Our pediatrician said to give her one-quarter of an adult dose of a cold medication, and it knocked her out immediately. I didn't hear from Lauren the rest of the night. In the morning, I found her gray and limp in her crib. I thought she was dead.

"In shock, I picked her up, and she went into a seizure—arms extended, eyes rolling back in her head. I realized she'd most likely been having seizures all night long. I phoned my mother and cried, 'This is normal, right? Babies do this?' She said, 'No, they don't'."

The Axelrods raced Lauren to the hospital. They stayed for a month, entering a parallel universe of sleeplessness and despair under fluorescent lights. No medicine relieved the baby. She interacted with her parents one moment, bright-eyed and friendly, only to be grabbed away from them the next, shaken by inner storms, starting and stiffening, hands clenched and eyes rolling. Unable to stop Lauren's seizures, doctors sent the family home.

The Axelrods didn't know anything about epilepsy. They didn't know that seizures were the body's manifestation of abnormal electrical activity in the brain or that the excessive neuronal activity could cause brain damage. They didn't know that two-thirds of those diagnosed with epilepsy had seizures defined as "idiopathic," of unexplained origin, as would be the case with Lauren. They didn't know that a person could, on rare occasions, die from a seizure. They didn't know that, for about half of sufferers, no drugs could halt the seizures or that, if they did, the side effects were often brutal. This mysterious disorder attacked 50 million people worldwide yet attracted little public attention or research funding. No one spoke to the Axelrods of the remotest chance of a cure.

AT HOME, LIFE SHAKILY returned to a new normal, interrupted by Lauren's convulsions and hospitalizations. Exhausted, Susan fought on toward her MBA; David became a political consultant. Money was tight and medical bills stacked up, but the Axelrods had hope. Wouldn't the doctors find the right drugs or procedures? "We thought maybe it was a passing thing," David says. "We didn't realize that this would define her whole life, that she would have thousands of these afterward, that they would eat away at her brain."

"I had a class one night, I was late, there was an important test," Susan recalls. "I'd been sitting by Lauren at the hospital. When she fell asleep, I left to run to class. I got as far as the double doors into the parking lot when it hit me: 'What are you doing?'" She returned to her baby's bedside. From then on, though she would continue to build her family (the Axelrods also have two sons) and support her husband's career, Susan's chief role in life would be to keep Lauren alive and functioning.

THE LITTLE GIRL WAS AT RISK OF falling, of drowning in the bathtub, of dying of

a seizure. Despite dozens of drug trials, special diets, and experimental therapies, Lauren suffered as many as 25 seizures a day. In between them, she would cry, "Mommy, make it stop!"

While some of Lauren's cognitive skills were nearly on target, she lagged in abstract thinking and interpersonal skills. Her childhood was nearly friendless. The drugs Lauren took made her by turns hyperactive, listless, irritable, dazed, even physically aggressive. "We hardly knew who she was," Susan says. When she acted out in public, the family felt the judgment of onlookers. "Sometimes," Susan says, "I wished I could put a sign on her back that said: 'Epilepsy. Heavily Medicated'"

At 17, Lauren underwent what her mother describes as "a horrific surgical procedure." Holes were drilled in her skull, electrodes implanted, and seizures provoked in an attempt to isolate their location in the brain. It was a failure. "We brought home a 17-year-old girl who had been shaved and scalped, drilled, put on steroids, and given two black eyes," Susan says quietly. "We put her through hell without result. I wept for 24 hours."

The failure of surgery proved another turning point for Susan. "Finally, I thought, 'Well, I can cry forever, or I can try to make a change.'"

Susan began to meet other parents living through similar hells. They agreed that no federal agency or private foundation was acting with the sense of urgency they felt, leaving 3 million American families to suffer in near-silence. In 1998, Susan and a few other mothers founded a nonprofit organization to increase public awareness of the realities of epilepsy and to raise money for research. They named it after the one thing no one offered them: CURE—Citizens United for Research in Epilepsy.

"Epilepsy is not benign and far too often is not treatable," Susan says. "We wanted the public to be aware of the death and destruction. We wanted the brightest minds to engage with the search for a cure."

Then-First Lady Hillary Clinton signed on to help; so did other politicians and celebrities. Later, veterans back from Iraq with seizures caused by traumatic brain injuries demanded answers, too. In its first decade, CURE raised \$9 million, funded about 75 research projects, and inspired a change in the scientific dialogue about epilepsy.

"CURE evolved from a small group of concerned parents into a major force in our research and clinical communities," says Dr. Frances E. Jensen, a professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School. "It becomes more and more evident that it won't be just the doctors, researchers, and scientists pushing the field forward. There's an active role for parents and patients. They tell us when the drugs aren't working."

The future holds promise for unlocking the mysteries of what some experts now call Epilepsy Spectrum Disorder. "Basic neuroscience, electrophysiological studies, gene studies, and new brain-imaging technologies are generating a huge body of knowledge," Dr. Jensen says.

Lauren Axelrod, now 27, is cute and petite, with short black hair and her mother's pale eyes. She speaks slowly, with evident impairment but a strong Chicago accent. "Things would be better for me if I wouldn't have seizures," she says. "They make me have problems with reading and math. They make me hard with everything."

By 2000, the savagery and relentlessness of Lauren's seizures seemed unstoppable. "I thought we were about to lose her," Susan says. "Her doctor said, 'I don't know what else we can do.'" Then, through CURE, Susan learned of a new anti-convulsant drug

called Keppra and obtained a sample. "The first day we started her on the medication," Susan says, "her seizures subsided. It's been almost nine years, and she hasn't had a seizure since. It won't work for everyone, but it has been a magic bullet for Lauren. She is blooming."

Susan and David see their daughter regaining some lost ground: social intuition, emotional responses, humor. "It's like little areas of her brain are waking up," Susan says. "She never has a harsh word for anyone, though she did think the Presidential campaign went on a little too long. The Thanksgiving before last, she asked David, 'When is this running-for-President thing going to be finished?'"

CURE is run by parents. Susan has worked for more than a decade without pay, pushing back at the monster robbing Lauren of a normal life. "Nothing can match the anguish of the mom of a chronically ill child," David says, "but Susan turned that anguish into action. She's devoted her life to saving other kids and families from the pain Lauren and our family have known. What she's done is amazing."

"Complete seizure freedom without side effects is what we want," Susan says. "It's too late for us, so we've committed ourselves to the hope that we can protect future generations from having their lives defined and devastated by this disorder."

TRIBUTE TO DR. MONA BETHEL JACKSON

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 5, 2009

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to Dr. Mona Bethel Jackson on the occasion of her retirement from the Miami-Dade County Public School System (MDCPS) with nearly 39 years of service and dedication.

Dr. Jackson, a native Miamian, was born to Charles Edward Bethel and Olga Goodman Bethel Williams. After graduating from George Washington Carver High School, she furthered her education at Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University. She then obtained her master's degree in guidance and counseling from Florida Atlantic University and her doctorate in educational administration and supervision from Florida International University. She also attended Principal Institutes at Fordham University and Harvard University, and was the first African-American woman to serve as president of the Florida Counseling Association.

She began her professional career as a science teacher at Charles R. Drew Junior High School. She served as principal of Richmond Heights Middle School for the past 11 years and is currently serving as mentor principal at Miami Edison Senior High School. Moreover, she is also the first African-American to serve as principal of Redland Middle School. She previously served as lead principal of Miami Southridge Senior High School feeder pattern. In 1999, Richmond Heights Middle School was named a semifinalist for the National Alliance of Black School Educators Award. The school earned a grade of B in 2006 and A in 2008 on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). It is quite clear that Dr. Jackson has been successful at meeting the challenge of educating the needs of her community's young people.

Additionally, Dr. Jackson complimented her educational achievements with her involvement in various organizations such as Delta Sigma Theta Sorority's National, Collegiate and Alumnae Chapters; Jack and Jill of America, Incorporated; Haitian Refugee Center Board of Directors; Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, Incorporated, Dade County Chapter; National Council of Jewish Women's Teen Violence Intervention Program Board and life member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Council of Negro Women; and Red Hat Society. In her spare time, she enjoys reading and organizing activities.

This public servant is married to Herman Jackson, and has two children, Keane Sean (Kelsey) and Herman, II (Cassie), and five grandchildren. She has been a diligent and dedicated member at Christ Episcopal Church where she currently serves as a teller and president of the Episcopal Church Women.

Madam Speaker, it is an honor to have the privilege of honoring Dr. Jackson, a valued educator of the Miami-Dade County community and beyond. She can look back on a proud career of service and distinction in education and community leadership. Now, in retirement, she embarks upon new challenges in life and I am certain her legacy of greatness will only grow and develop as she enters this new phase of life. I invite my colleagues to join me in wishing Dr. Mona Bethel Jackson every happiness and many years of continued success.

TRIBUTE TO RETIRING MISSOURI ADJUTANT GENERAL KING SIDWELL

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 5, 2009

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, let me take this moment to recognize the career of Missouri Adjutant General King E. Sidwell. General Sidwell retired in late February after serving four years as Adjutant General of the Missouri National Guard.

General Sidwell was born in Sikeston, Missouri, on July 13, 1950. He resides with his wife Cindy Sidwell in Sikeston. They have two sons, William Mitchell Sidwell II and Trent Easterby Sidwell.

In 1972, General Sidwell earned his Bachelor of Science degree from the Georgia Institute of Technology. In 1975, he received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Missouri-Columbia and, in 2000, he received a Military and Strategic Studies degree from the United States Army War College.

General Sidwell has served in the military since 1972. He was commissioned as an officer in 1974 through the State Officer Candidate School at the Missouri Military Academy. Prior to his serving as Adjutant General, Sidwell served in many assignments of increasing responsibility, culminating with his command of the Engineer Brigade, 35th Infantry Division. Upon completion of this command, he assumed the position of Assistant Corps Engineer, 35th Engineer Brigade until being transferred to the Retired Reserve. It was from the Retired Reserve that Sidwell was appointed to the position of Adjutant General.