

But, again, this is a disease that can end up ultimately as bad as something like Lou Gehrig's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. It doesn't often progress to that extreme degree, but I indeed had a first cousin about my age who died from Lou Gehrig's disease, so I am very much aware of this condition and very supportive of this resolution regarding multiple sclerosis.

MS and other chronic diseases like it, they change lives, and it presents significant challenges for those who suffer, for them and for their families, as BARBARA LEE mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, MS is a chronic disease that attacks the central nervous system. Essentially MS heavily impairs and prevents nerve cells in the brain and in the spinal cord from communicating with each other. They just can't make that connection. So those symptoms that she described, from numbness in the limbs, loss of vision, and, yes, even eventually paralysis in some cases, are very unpredictable, and, of course, it can vary from person to person.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately for the 400,000 Americans living with MS, the cause of the disease, as I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, remains unknown. But I want to recognize and applaud the work currently underway at NIH, the National Institutes of Health, and other medical research institutions across the country to improve the lives of people with multiple sclerosis. There is little doubt that our collective resolve to find a cure remains undeterred, as demonstrated by this great resolution.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CAPPs. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the co-Chair of the Multiple Sclerosis Caucus, our colleague, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CARNAHAN).

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlelady from California for her leadership and work on this. I am very proud and honored to be co-Chair of the Congressional MS Caucus with my colleague Dr. MICHAEL BURGESS. This is truly a bipartisan effort and one that just had tremendous resources and support from around the country to help raise this awareness. I encourage everyone to show their commitment and support of Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week and the MS movement with really simple actions throughout this week, MS Awareness Week, March 2 through 8.

MS Awareness Week was created by the MS Coalition to raise national awareness about the disease and to recognize those who have dedicated their time and talent to promoting MS research and programs.

In order to raise awareness, I am very pleased that Representative BARBARA LEE has taken the lead to introduce H. Con. Res. 14, recognizing and supporting the goals and ideals of MS Awareness Week, encouraging the President, State and local governments

to issue proclamations designating MS Awareness Week, and encouraging the media to help educate the public about MS. Today, I ask for all of my colleagues' support.

I want to give a special thanks to the MS Society back in St. Louis, Missouri, my home, that has been so active and been so helpful to me in this effort, and also want to remember my first cousin, Betty Carnahan, who we lost years ago and who first helped me learn about this disease.

Because of small gestures by everyday people, my colleagues in this body, and cutting edge research by our Nation's finest, each day people living with MS have a better and a brighter future to look forward to.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve my time.

Mrs. CAPPs. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I wish to speak on H. Con. Res. 14 by rising in support of it, as I do, in recognition and support of the goals and ideals of Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week, and I do so on behalf of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of the Central Coast of California, which does such great work in raising awareness of the issue and raising funds to support their work and the work of the Society across the country, and also in providing vital services to those afflicted with multiple sclerosis who are my constituents.

This week of awareness and recognition takes place from March 2nd to March 8th, and it is an honor to speak on behalf of this awareness, commending as I do my colleague from California, Ms. BARBARA LEE, whom we heard, who introduced this resolution along with the cochairs of the Multiple Sclerosis Caucus, Mr. CARNAHAN and Mr. BURGESS.

□ 1345

Many of us have very special people in our lives who live every day with MS. I know I do, and I'm thinking right now particularly of one young friend.

Multiple sclerosis, as we have been discussing, is a chronic and unpredictable disease of the central nervous system. Four hundred thousand people throughout the United States and 2½ million around the world are suffering today from multiple sclerosis. It's thought to be an autoimmune disorder where the immune system incorrectly attacks healthy nerve fibers of the central nervous system, interfering with transmission of nerve signals throughout the body.

People with MS, as we know, experience a range of symptoms that can be either permanent or intermittent, depending on the type of disease that they have. These symptoms can include blurred vision, loss of balance, poor coordination, slurred speech, tremors, numbness, extreme fatigue, problems with memory and concentration, paralysis, blindness and more. And as we have heard from Barbara

Lee's sister's story, it's very hard to diagnose, and often takes years to do that. And it afflicts people, often women, between the ages of 20 to 50.

There is no actual diagnostic laboratory test for multiple sclerosis, and so many questions about it. It's quite commonly misdiagnosed.

Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week was created by the Multiple Sclerosis Coalition, a group of affiliated organizations, to help raise awareness and to leverage additional resources to fight this disease.

The resolution we are considering today will support the work of this coalition by urging States, localities and the media to participate in MS Awareness Week, and by encouraging people, including Members of Congress, to educate themselves about the disease.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. CAPPs. I yield back the balance of my time, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPs) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 14.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mrs. CAPPs. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE MONTH

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 45) raising awareness and promoting education on the criminal justice system by establishing March as "National Criminal Justice Month".

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 45

Whereas there are approximately three million Americans employed within the justice system;

Whereas approximately seven million adults are on probation, parole, or are incarcerated;

Whereas millions of Americans have been victims of crime and, consequently, lost income, incurred medical expenses, and suffered emotionally;

Whereas the cost of crime to individuals, communities, businesses, and the various

levels of government exceeds the billions of dollars spent each year in administering the criminal justice system;

Whereas, in 2006, fifty percent of Americans admitted they fear that their home would be burglarized when they are not home; thirty-four percent of American women feared that they would be sexually assaulted; and forty-four percent of Americans feared they would be a victim of a terrorist attack;

Whereas approximately thirty-five percent of Americans have very little or no confidence in the criminal justice system and the negative effects of crime in regard to confidence in governmental agencies and overall social stability are immeasurable;

Whereas crime rates have dropped since the early 1990s, but most Americans believe that the rate of crime is increasing;

Whereas Federal, State, and local governments increased their spending for police protection, corrections, judicial, and legal activities in fiscal year 2005 by 5.5 percent or \$204 billion; and

Whereas there is a need to educate Americans and to promote awareness within American society as to the causes and consequences of crime, as well as the strategies and developments for preventing and responding to crime: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(A) National Criminal Justice Month provides an opportunity to educate Americans on the criminal justice system; and

(B) Americans should be aware of the causes and consequences of crime, how to prevent crime, and how to respond to crime; and

(2) the House of Representatives urges policymakers, criminal justice officials, educators, victim service providers, nonprofits, community leaders, and others to promote awareness of how to prevent and respond to crime through National Criminal Justice Month.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend Congressman TED POE of Texas for introducing this legislation.

Establishing March 2009 as National Criminal Justice Month will help increase awareness of the harmful effects of crime, not only on the immediate victims, but on our society as a whole. It will also help bring public focus on the need to make our criminal justice system as effective as possible, not only in responding to crime, but in helping to reduce its incidence.

Millions of Americans have been victimized by crime. Millions more are on

parole, on probation, or incarcerated. And our Nation spends billions of dollars each year on efforts to address crime. And yet too many Americans say they have little confidence in the criminal justice system.

There are a number of steps we can take to address this lack of confidence. For one, we could invest more resources in education. Educated Americans not only have more opportunities, they also have a greater appreciation of the effects they have on the world around them, and they certainly have a much dramatically lower incidence of criminal behavior.

By failing to invest in education, we have allowed a cradle-to-prison pipeline to develop. What we should be building is a cradle-to-college pipeline instead. And we see the unfortunate results on any given day, over 2½ million incarcerated in our prisons, almost all of them poor, almost two-thirds of them African American or Latino.

There's another thing we need to do, and that's to focus beyond the step of incarceration and to think about rehabilitation, keeping first-time offenders from becoming repeat offenders. That requires investing meaningfully in vocational training, education, counseling and other skills development that prisoners need in order to re-enter society and become productive citizens.

Congress took an important step in that direction last year when it passed the Second Chance Act. Now we need to follow through with adequate funding to make its promises take hold.

Third, I think it's time we acknowledge the failure of the so-called War on Drugs as our government has fought it over the last few decades. Increasingly stiffer and stiffer sentences for non-violent drug offenses hasn't worked, not to significantly reduce illegal drug use or the criminal enterprise that has grown up to feed it. It's worked only to swell the prison population.

It's time that we brought more of the focus on intervention, treatment and yes, fact-based education to come to grips with the drug problem. The Drug Courts program has been more successful in curtailing recidivism because of its focus on treatment. Studies show that those sent to Drug Court have a 1-year recidivism rate, only one-sixth as high as those sent to prison for a similar offense.

I believe making this month National Criminal Justice Month can help the many in our communities who are dedicating themselves to reducing crime bring greater awareness to their efforts.

I encourage my colleagues to support H. Res. 45 as well.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of this resolution, House Resolution 45. The goal of this resolution is to raise awareness and promote education of our criminal

justice system by establishing March 2009 as National Criminal Justice Month.

It's important to educate Americans about our criminal justice system and encourage discussion on how to prevent and respond to criminal conduct. That's why this legislation has been introduced.

As a former prosecutor and judge, I've been involved in the criminal justice system for a long time, 8 years as a prosecutor and 22 years as a criminal court judge in Houston, Texas. And this resolution will encourage communities to discuss the causes, consequences and long-term effects of criminal conduct in our country.

It is important for us to talk about why guilty defendants should receive appropriate punishment for their acts, but we should also do everything in our power to make sure victims receive the assistance that they need. After all, long after the crime is committed, a victim still has to face devastating consequences. Sometimes victims are sentenced to a life of misery because of the crime that was committed against them.

We have the responsibility to protect the lives of the innocent, and to advocate on behalf of crime victims. That is why I've established the bipartisan Victims' Rights Caucus, along with my friend, JIM COSTA from California. The mission of the Caucus is to ensure that victims and law enforcement have a voice in Congress.

Every year, millions of Americans become victims of crime. Those crimes range from robbery to homicide. Unfortunately, these people don't choose to become victims of crime, but they are picked by someone else in our community as prey. And suddenly they are thrust into the criminal justice system without having a say.

Victims of crime have no high-dollar lobbyist in Washington, D.C. They look to Members of Congress to advocate on their behalf. And the purpose of the system is to provide justice for victims and defendants, because the same Constitution that protects defendants of crime protects crime victims as well. People who commit crimes against the rule of law, which is our society's rule of law, should be held accountable for their actions.

In addition, by establishing March 2009 as National Criminal Justice Month, this resolution will also recognize and applaud the efforts of law enforcement officials, judges, court staff, and the many probation officers throughout the country who work with offenders to help them reintegrate into our community.

Throughout my years of service, I've been impressed with the professionalism and dedication of the public servants who work in the criminal justice system. These brave and dedicated Americans work every day to make our communities a better and safer community, and they work with defendants to help them turn their lives around.

I urge all my colleagues to support this resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. I have no additional speakers, so I would continue to reserve if the gentleman has speakers.

Mr. POE of Texas. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, according to the Bureau of Justice statistics, 35 percent of Americans have little or no confidence in our criminal justice system. It is unfortunate that one-third of the people in this country feel that way. And we shouldn't be surprised because that's all that they hear when they turn on their local news at night is crime and violence. It's mostly bad news about crimes being committed in their communities and across the Nation.

But the reality is that crime rates have dropped dramatically since the 1990s. However, because of what people hear and see on the news, most Americans believe the crime rate is actually increasing. It is important to recognize the gains we have made in combating crime across the country, and Americans should have more confidence in this criminal justice system.

Mr. Speaker, I've traveled to multiple countries and observed the way their criminal justice system operates. I've been in China, and back in the 1980s I was in the former Soviet Union. I would say that neither one of those countries has a justice system. They just have a system. And our criminal justice system is the best in the world. Not only is it unmatched in its ability to determine the guilt of an individual, but also in the way it assures the rights of defendants and victims in a court of law.

This resolution will encourage people across America to talk about the ways to prevent and respond to criminal conduct. And in doing that, it will help restore people's faith in the best justice system in the world, and that's the one that we have in this country because, Mr. Speaker, justice is what we do in this country.

And that's just the way it is.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I once again commend the gentleman for introducing this legislation. I urge its passage. I share his enthusiasm for our system of justice, that preserves the rights of the defendant but also elevates the needs of the victims for justice.

We honor those who work in our system, be they judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, police officers, and I would say, yes, also drug treatment people who are trying to prevent crime from recurring. So this month celebrates those in our community who serve in the criminal justice system. They deserve our thanks.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) that the House suspend

the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 45.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

EXTENDING CERTAIN IMMIGRATION PROGRAMS

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1127) to extend certain immigration programs.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1127

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SPECIAL IMMIGRANT NONMINISTER RELIGIOUS WORKER PROGRAM.

Subclauses (II) and (III) of section 101(a)(27)(C)(ii) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(27)(C)(ii)) are amended by striking "March 6, 2009," each place such term appears and inserting "September 30, 2009,".

SEC. 2. WAIVER OF FOREIGN COUNTRY RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT WITH RESPECT TO INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GRADUATES.

Section 220(c) of the Immigration and Nationality Technical Corrections Act of 1994 (8 U.S.C. 1182 note) is amended by striking "March 6, 2009" and inserting "September 30, 2009".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

□ 1400

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1127 extends two immigration programs, one for religious workers and one for doctors who serve in medically underserved areas, through the end of this fiscal year. If we do not extend these programs, they will sunset on March 6, 2009, just 3 days from today. These programs are too important to let expire.

The Special Immigrant Non-Minister Religious Worker Program allows reli-

gious workers to enter the United States to do important work. The 5,000 religious workers eligible for these visas each year are called to a vocation or are in traditional religious occupations with bona fide nonprofit religious organizations. They are missionaries, counselors, instructors, and pastoral care providers. Considering the current economic crisis we are experiencing and the degree to which Americans are turning to religious organizations for help, these religious workers are needed now more than ever.

The other program is the so-called Conrad "J Waiver," a critically important immigration program that helps medically underserved communities attract highly skilled physicians. This program is crucial to the States as it helps them attract doctors who have received their medical training in the United States to work in areas that desperately need doctors.

Its importance was demonstrated again a year and a half ago when a tornado utterly destroyed the town of Greensburg, Kansas. Without this program, that town would not have had any doctors. They were of tremendous help in keeping casualties to a minimum. We need to keep this program going so that States can attract medical talent and can keep the doors of small town clinics open.

Both of these programs have strong bipartisan support, and this bill would extend the programs through the end of the fiscal year when the issue can be revisited, hopefully, in a much broader context.

I commend committee Ranking Member LAMAR SMITH for his work in making this a bipartisan measure. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POE of Texas. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the gentlewoman from California for introducing this very important legislation, this commonsense legislation, to help the medical community but, more importantly, to help those who are medically ill throughout the United States and the rest of the world. So I support H.R. 1127, which reauthorizes two deserving programs through the end of this fiscal year.

Foreign citizens who participate in medical residencies in the United States on what is called the "J" visa exchange program must generally leave the United States at the conclusion of their residencies and reside abroad for 2 years before they can be allowed to return to this country. The intent is to encourage American-trained foreign doctors to go home to improve health conditions and advance the medical profession in their native countries.

In 1994, Congress created a waiver of this 2-year foreign residence requirement, and this waiver was available, if requested, by the State departments of public health for foreign doctors who