meeting the needs of veterans of previous wars, and to providing a fitting welcome home to those who are now serving. All too many of our veterans are left without the help and support they need to transition from the horrors they bravely face on the front lines of battle to successful civilian life.

H.R. 1171, ''Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Reauthorization Act of 2009,'' reauthorizes, through FY2014, the Department of Veterans Affairs homeless veterans reintegration programs such as job training, counseling, and placement services to expedite the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force. Furthermore, this bill directs the Secretary of Labor to make grants to programs and facilities that provide dedicated services for homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with children, and requires grant funds to be used to provide job training, counseling, placement services, and child care services to expedite the reintegration of such veterans into the labor force.

Veterans are some of America's most valued members of society. These are people who served our Nation in a time of need, people who risked their lives to protect our own. Yet, many of these same veterans who fought so bravely and risked so much in lands far abroad have come back to their Nation and are now homeless. The problem of homeless veterans is far more prevalent than we would like to believe. About one-third of the entire adult homeless population has served their country in the Armed Services. On any given day, as many as 250,000 veterans, both male and female, are living on the streets or in shelters, and perhaps twice as many experience homelessness at some point during the course of a year. There are approximately 16,000 homeless veterans spread across the state of Texas.

Many other veterans are considered near homeless or at risk because of their poverty, lack of support from family and friends, and dismal living conditions in cheap hotels or in overcrowded or substandard housing.

This legislation is necessary not only because this problem is so devastating and prevalent, but also because homeless veterans have special needs that are unique from those faced by the rest of the homeless population. Almost all homeless veterans are male, with three percent being female, the vast majority are single, and most come from poor, disadvantaged backgrounds. Homeless veterans tend to be older and more educated than homeless non-veterans. But similar to the general population of homeless adult males, about 45% of homeless veterans suffer from mental illness and slightly more than 70% suffer from alcohol or other drug abuse problems. Roughly 56% are African American or Hispanic.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 1171 helps to address the homeless veteran population by increasing and extending through FY 2014 the authorization of appropriations for homeless assistance to veterans furnished through the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 gives authority to the Department of Veterans Affairs through FY 2014 to make grants to furnish assistance to homeless veterans through: outreach; rehabilitative services; vocational counseling and training; and transitional housing. I hope we will all take the time to show appreciation to those who have answered the call to duty. As Winston Churchill famously stated, ''Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.''

I urge my colleagues to support the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 because this comprehensive program is needed if we are to fight this scourge that is a blight upon our Nation. Our Nation's veterans did not risk their lives abroad so that they could come home and feel a cold shoulder. We must all have outrage that so many of our Nation's veterans live this way, only then can we find a way to correct this injustice.

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF PEDRO ZAMORA, WORLD RENOWNED HIV/AIDS EDUCATOR AND ACTIVIST

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution that pays tribute to Pedro Zamora, a world renowned educator and activist who moved millions to confront their fears and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community.

Pedro Pablo Zamora y Díaz was born on February 29, 1972, in the outskirts of Havana, Cuba, the eighth and youngest child of a tight-knit family. Like countless others, the Zamora family left Cuba's shores for a better life. And on May 30, 1980, Pedro, his brother, sister, and parents boarded a crowded boat and began the 25-hour treacherous voyage to Hialeah, Florida, a suburb of Miami. Pedro was eight years old.

Five years later, tragedy struck the Zamora family when Pedro lost his beloved mother to skin cancer. The precocious teenager responded by immersing himself in academics and extracurricular activities, becoming an honor student, president of the science club and captain of the cross-country team, and was voted ''most intellectual'' and ''most all around'' by his peers.

However, it was Pedro's actions outside of school which changed the course of his life. Struggling with being gay and seeking to fill the void that was created by his mother's death, the 14-year-old honor student began having unprotected sex with multiple men.

Unbeknown to Pedro, the first Surgeon General's report on HIV/AIDS was issued around the same time. At the height of the Reagan era and the ''War on Drugs'' another war was being waged against a new disease that was killing an alarming number of people in the gay community and beyond.

Ironically, the Surgeon General's report stated that comprehensive sex education was the most powerful weapon against HIV/AIDS and should begin at the lowest grade possible. The report also mentioned the importance of teaching children about healthy heterosexual and homosexual relationships, and acknowledged that HIV/AIDS had a disproportionate effect among Latinos and blacks.

And yet, this lifesaving message failed to trickle down into many classrooms across the country. The sex education that Pedro Zamora received within his Miami school stigmatized HIV/AIDS, portrayed homosexuality as shameful, and failed to provide him and other students with a relevant, factual and thorough understanding of HIV/AIDS.

On November 9, 1989, Pedro Zamora received confirmation that he had contracted the HIV virus. He was 17 years old.

Refusing to let the devastating news dampen his spirit, Zamora joined a Miami-based HIV/AIDS resource center called Body Positive, where he met others who were living with HIV/AIDS. A new desire to educate others about AIDS was ignited, and Pedro decided to devote his talents as a thinker and communicator to a career in AIDS education.

Pedro began raising awareness about HIV/AIDS within the Latino community in South Florida. He lectured at schools from the primary to collegial level, churches, community centers, and other venues around the country. He spoke about the need for evidence-based education for preventing and managing HIV/AIDS, forming healthy relationships, de-stigmatizing HIV/AIDS and combating homophobia.

In mid-1993, Pedro Zamora sent his audition tape to the producers of MTV's television reality series The Real World. Out of more than 25,000 applicants, he was chosen to live in front of the camera along with six other cast-mates in San Francisco for over four months.

In the following year, Zamora made history on The Real World as one of the first openly gay men living with HIV/AIDS featured on a television series in the United States. Pedro's activism, charisma, struggles with HIV/AIDS and relationships were captured on film—including a blossoming romance with Sean Sasser, another man of color living with HIV/AIDS. In another historical first, the two pledged their love to each other in a commitment ceremony on the show.

Soon, Pedro's story and efforts received national attention from The Wall Street Journal, Geraldo, and Oprah Winfrey. But, Pedro had his sights set on Washington, D.C. In 1993, Zamora spoke about living with AIDS as a gay man of color at a Capitol Hill reception, and in 1994, he testified during a Congressional hearing on HIV/AIDS prevention. In the following months, President Bill Clinton and Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala personally recognized and thanked Pedro Zamora for his leadership and work on the AIDS Action Council Board and for humanizing and personalizing those living with HIV/AIDS.

However, this gifted and courageous young man, like many others, was uninsured. And his lack of insurance proved to be as deadly as the virus that was plaguing his body. In August 1994, Pedro Zamora checked into St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City and was diagnosed with a rare and fatal viral inflammation of the brain resulting from a severely suppressed immune system. At the age of 22, Pedro was told that he had three to four months to live.

On November 11, 1994, Pedro Zamora died in the company of his family, partner Sean, and friends. He was buried two days later in Miami Lakes, Florida. Numerous memorial funds and fellowships have been established in Pedro's memory, and in 2008, a film that dramatized his life and legacy was completed.

Madam Speaker, 15 years after Pedro's death, HIV/AIDS has become one of the most

serious global health concerns in modern history and has spread to every continent, infecting and affecting people across the lines of race, class, religion, and sexual orientation. Sadly, a quarter of HIV/AIDS infected persons are unaware of their status and less than 30% of HIV-infected persons receive anti-retroviral treatment. Latinos and blacks are still disproportionately contracting and dying from AIDS. My home state of Florida has consistently ranked third in the nation in the number of cases of HIV/AIDS. And, the majority of infected persons reside in South Florida, which also has the highest concentration of uninsured people in the state.

In the absence of a cure, prevention, education, and antiretroviral drugs still remain our best weapons against HIV/AIDS. Culturally competent and age appropriate education about sex, sexually transmitted infections (STI), and treatment and prevention options must be available in our nation's schools, prisons and communities. And, the de-stigmatization of HIV/AIDS, sexual behavior, and sexuality remain no less important today than it was a decade and a half ago.

During his testimony before Congress, 22-year-old Pedro Zamora said, ''What we need is the collective will to care about young people and about people with different backgrounds and make sure that one day people grow up in a world without AIDS.'' His words are timeless, and challenge us to be diligent in our efforts to stop HIV/AIDS, and the disease of intolerance in this country. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution commemorating the life, sacrifices, and grace of a remarkable man and teacher who has left an enduring memory and legacy that will inspire generations to come.

WOMEN ARE IMPORTANT TO OUR ECONOMIC RECOVERY

HON. RUSS CARNAHAN

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Mr. CARNAHAN. Madam Speaker, today, as Women's History Month comes to a close it is a good time to reflect on the many accomplishments women have been part of and to address what needs to be done further to fully carry out equality for all and get our economy back on track.

As we experience the most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression we will need the leadership of all Americans including strong leaders like Speaker NANCY PELOSI who was the first woman chosen as Speaker by her colleagues and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who ran an historic campaign for the presidency. Both who have broken and shattered the glass ceiling have demonstrated remarkable accomplishment the nation can be confident in during these tough times.

This nation has faced multiple challenges that we have faced with the help of strong women. And today many women face challenges of succeeding in the workplace, caring for their family including their aging parents. I am proud of the work this Congress has done in a short amount of time for American working women.

It is telling that President Barack Obama's first bill signed into law was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act that reverses a Supreme Court ruling that made it more difficult for Americans to pursue pay discrimination claims. At a time when too many workers are seeing their jobs and wages slashed, we've got to make sure that all Americans are paid fairly for their hard work.

Congress has also passed significant tax cuts for working women and major investments in health care. To help get us out of this economic mess we also created thousands of jobs where women have new opportunities including contracting opportunities and the availability of small business loans.

Speaker PELOSI said it best: ''Women want what men want: an equal opportunity to succeed, a safe and prosperous America, good paying jobs, better access to affordable health care, and the best possible education for our children.''

President Obama and this Congress have made progress with all those issues in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and will continue to build upon those accomplishments with the passage of the President's budget blueprint, which makes investments in health care, energy and education—all intended to create jobs.

EARMARK DECLARATION

HON. STEVE BUYER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, consistent with the Republican Leadership's policy on earmarks, I hereby certify that my Substitute Amendment to H.R. 1256 does not contain any earmarks.

BEST BUDDIES EMPOWERMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES ACT OF 2009

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, I am proud to introduce this bill supporting Best Buddies, an organization dedicated to the social integration of children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Founded in 1989 by Anthony Kennedy Shriver, Best Buddies is the first social and recreational program of its kind in the United States; it has already reached hundreds of thousands of Americans, both with and without disabilities, a total that is set to reach half a million by 2010. Best Buddies fosters and supports friendships and mentorships between participants from kindergarteners to adult professionals, sponsoring more than one thousand volunteer-led chapters at schools and workplaces. Not only do volunteers gain valuable leadership training—they learn first-hand about the important contributions made by their fellow-citizens with intellectual disabilities. And participants with disabilities learn that they are valuable members of our communities, capable of forming a wide range of real and lasting friendships.

This legislation authorizes a total of $10 million for grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements to be distributed to Best Buddies by the Department of Education in Fiscal Year 2010, along with such sums as may be necessary for each of the four succeeding fiscal years. These funds will enable this important organization to reach hundreds of thousands more potential volunteers and participants, promoting the crucial values of shared participation in community and social equality. I want to thank Congressman BLUNT for co-sponsoring this bill, and I urge my colleagues to pass it as soon as possible.

HONORING CELIA CRUZ

HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and work of Celia Cruz, an icon of Latin culture and Cuban music. Despite her passing in 2003, Celia's contributions continue to shape music and inspire others. She lives on as one of the most successful Cuban performers of the 20th century.

Known around the world as the Queen of Salsa, Celia Cruz dedicated her life to music and the arts. Her 50 year career included 70 albums, countless gold and platinum records, hundreds of awards from prestigious institutions worldwide and three Grammy Awards and four Latin Grammy Awards.

Born in Havana, Cuba, she enrolled in the National Music Conservatory at a young age and studied musical theory, voice and piano. In the 1950s she joined the legendary group La Sonora Matancera and wrote many songs that have come to define Afrocuban music. In 1960 she left Cuba in search of freedom and in 1961 came to the U.S. By then she was recognized worldwide and the Salsa phenomenon soon spread across the U.S. and Europe.

In 1987, Celia Cruz was given a star in the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and years later Miami's famed ''Calle Ocho'' was named ''Celia Cruz Way.'' Among other honors, including Lifetime Achievement Awards, Celia was invited to the White House in 1994 by President Bill Clinton and awarded the National Medal of the Arts, the highest honor our country bestows upon an artist. Most recently, her life and work were featured in ¡Azucar! The Life and Music of Celia Cruz, an exhibit at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in D.C.

Celia Cruz is remembered for many things, including her distinct voice and unique style, but her trademark remains the popular word she often chanted: Azucar, Spanish for sugar. Celia added sugar, spice and Latin flare to everything she did in life and never failed to surprise her audience. Despite her many professional accomplishments, many consider her marriage to lifelong partner and husband, Pedro Knight, her biggest success.

Celia Cruz's death on July 16, 2003 brought to an end a life filled with a love for art, culture and music, but her legacy lives on each time her music is played. She has undoubtedly left a footprint on Latin music and her influence will forever be felt through the work of artists around the world. As we celebrate Women's History Month, I ask you to join me in honoring the life, work and music of Celia Cruz,