

a regulatory structure that protects workers, consumers, and the environment, but not in a way that is arbitrary or capricious.

Second, we need to ensure that small business remains the catalyst for the American economy. Capitalism, by its very nature, is highly competitive, and most new businesses fail. While government cannot change that central truth about a market economy, we can foster a climate that makes it easier to succeed by ensuring access to capital, targeted tax incentives, by creating a supportive infrastructure, and devising a regulatory framework that offers American business the best chance of success.

Third, we're in a global war for talent, and we must reorient our immigration structure to attract the most promising people from around the world. It is no longer a given that a young Indian or Chinese entrepreneur will want to move to the U.S. if given the chance. Combined with the disquieting trend that American universities are not producing enough home-grown talent in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, we face a daunting challenge. In coming days, I'll be introducing legislation that will make it easier for foreign-born graduates in select STEM fields to stay in this country by starting a new business here and hiring American workers.

Fourth, America cannot compete with the developing world in terms of wages, but a highly skilled work force, buttressed by a revitalized world class infrastructure that reduces the time and expense of getting goods to market and fosters innovation, will keep us competitive. That's why I support investments in infrastructure and education that will lay the groundwork for a newly competitive America while addressing the current unemployment problem acting as a drag on our economy.

Working together on these objectives, we can restore the middle class dream that hard work and perseverance will give the average American the chance to live comfortably. As President Clinton once observed, there's nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America.

NATIONAL ADOPTION WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, thank you for the time to talk about something near and dear to my heart, families.

This week is National Adoption Week, and as adoptive parents of two wonderful boys, my wife, Cathy, and I know how blessed an adoptive family is. Will, our 13-year old, and Sean, who will tell you he's almost 10, are the light of our lives. They're the gifts that give our lives a purpose and a joy we never knew before.

It's a privilege for me to serve the people of the Eighth District of Texas, but it is my highest privilege to be called Dad because two women in two difficult circumstances in two different States made the difficult but life-changing choice to give Cathy and I the greatest gift of all, a family.

This weekend marks the 12th annual National Adoption Day, where judges will open their courts for very special cases, and tens of thousands of children become a part of these forever families.

In my home State of Texas, there are nearly 30,000 children in foster care, and half of them could be adopted tomorrow. I hope that every American who has ever thought about sharing their blessings with a child thinks about these children who just want a seat at a Thanksgiving table they can call their own.

I ask every American, do you have room for one more at your table? If just 1 in 500 of the Americans who were polled recently and said they'd be open to adopting a foster child did so, no foster child would only have dreams of a forever family; they would have that seat at the Thanksgiving Day table.

Right now the average wait for a foster child to find a forever family is over 2½ years. To a child, that seems like forever. And thousands age out of the system every year, never having found a home. In the greatest Nation on God's green earth, we can do better by these kids, one by one, town by town.

A loving, forever family and home not only makes a powerful difference in the lives of these children, I can promise you the joy and love you'll get back will change your family. Being an adoptive parent is a gift. Every day is a present. The love you share comes back to you because adoptions make families. It made mine. Maybe it can make yours as well.

HOME BIRTH CONSENSUS SUMMIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize an event of critical importance to all current and future childbearing families in this country.

For 3 days in October, a national summit of maternity care stakeholders met in Warrenton, Virginia, to discuss the status of home birth within the greater context of maternity care in the United States. That meeting marked the first time a multidisciplinary group of maternity care providers, consumers, and industry leaders came together to determine what the U.S. maternity care system could do to make home birth the safest and most positive experience possible for moms and babies.

Given the significant controversy over the appropriateness of home birth within the groups represented at the summit, the fact that this conversa-

tion took place at all is historic. The goal of the meeting was not to debate the rightness or wrongness of home birth, but rather to discuss the support, care, consultation, collaboration, and referrals necessary to protect moms and babies in all birth settings.

According to CDC's most recent figures, in 2008, approximately 28,500 home births took place in the United States. While this number represents less than 1 percent of all births in our country, the last available statistics tell us that between 2004 and 2008, the number of women giving birth at home increased by 22 percent.

□ 1050

Without compromising quality of care, women want and expect to have choices for childbirth, including birth setting. Women and families are ill-served when maternity care professionals allow conflict between disciplines to supersede collaboration. The safety of birth in all settings must be the utmost priority.

The delegates who met in Virginia were charged with finding common ground to move the issue of safe home birth beyond professional differences and toward consensus building. The result of their effort was a consensus document released on November 1 of this year. This important document sets out nine essential statements of agreement about the ideal system to promote the safest and most positive birth outcomes across all birth settings.

While I will be submitting the entire document into the RECORD, I want to highlight the following key points agreed upon by all of the delegates at the summit:

First, all childbearing women in all maternity care settings should receive respectful, women-centered care, including opportunities for shared decisionmaking to help each woman make the choices that are right for her;

Second, physiological birth is valuable for women, babies, families, and society, and appropriate intervention should be based on the best available evidence to achieve optimal outcomes for mothers and babies;

Third, collaboration within an integrated maternity care system is essential for optimal outcomes, and when necessary, all women and families planning a birth center or home birth have a right to a respectful, safe, and seamless consultation, referral, transport, and transfer of care;

Fourth, all health professionals who provide maternity care in all settings should have a license that is based on national certification that includes defined competencies and standards for education and practice; and

Fifth, in order to foster effective communication and collaboration across all maternity disciplines, all students and practitioners involved in maternity and newborn care must learn about each other's disciplines and maternity care in all settings.

Additionally, the consensus document calls for medical liability system

reform, a compulsory process with collection of patient data in all birth settings, the elimination of disparities of care, and increased consumer participation.

The Home Birth Consensus Summit document is an important first step in protecting and supporting all childbearing families across all birth settings, but the discussion must not stop there. I encourage all professional organizations representing providers of maternity care and newborn care and all childbirth advocacy groups to affirm the consensus statement and commit to working together toward its realization. Mothers and babies in this country deserve nothing less.

HOME BIRTH CONSENSUS SUMMIT
OCTOBER 20–22, 2011

COMMON GROUND STATEMENTS

The following statements reflect the areas of consensus that were achieved by the individuals who participated in the Home Birth Consensus Summit at Airlie Center in Warrenton, Virginia, from October 20–22, 2011. These statements do not represent the position of any organization or institution affiliated with those individuals.

STATEMENT 1

We uphold the autonomy of all childbearing women. All childbearing women, in all maternity care settings, should receive respectful, woman-centered care. This care should include opportunities for a shared decision-making process to help each woman make the choices that are right for her. Shared decision making includes mutual sharing of information about benefits and harms of the range of care options, respect for the woman's autonomy to make decisions in accordance with her values and preferences, and freedom from coercion or punishment for her choices.

STATEMENT 2

We believe that collaboration within an integrated maternity care system is essential for optimal mother-baby outcomes. All women and families planning a home or birth center birth have a right to respectful, safe, and seamless consultation, referral, transport and transfer of care when necessary. When ongoing inter-professional dialogue and cooperation occur, everyone benefits.

STATEMENT 3

We are committed to an equitable maternity care system without disparities in access, delivery of care, or outcomes. This system provides culturally appropriate and affordable care in all settings, in a manner that is acceptable to all communities.

We are committed to an equitable educational system without disparities in access to affordable, culturally appropriate, and acceptable maternity care provider education for all communities.

STATEMENT 4

It is our goal that all health professionals who provide maternity care in home and birth center settings have a license that is based on national certification that includes defined competencies and standards for education and practice.

We believe that guidelines should allow for independent practice, facilitate communication between providers and across care settings, encourage professional responsibility and accountability, and include mechanisms for risk assessment.

STATEMENT 5

We believe that increased participation by consumers in multi-stakeholder initiatives

is essential to improving maternity care, including the development of high quality home birth services within an integrated maternity care system.

STATEMENT 6

Effective communication and collaboration across all disciplines caring for mothers and babies are essential for optimal outcomes across all settings.

To achieve this, we believe that all health professional students and practitioners who are involved in maternity and newborn care must learn about each other's disciplines, and about maternity and health care in all settings.

STATEMENT 7

We are committed to improving the current medical liability system, which fails to justly serve society, families, and health care providers and contributes to: inadequate resources to support birth injured children and mothers; unsustainable health care and litigation costs paid by all; a hostile health care work environment; inadequate access to home birth and birth center birth within an integrated health care system; and, restricted choices in pregnancy and birth.

STATEMENT 8

We envision a compulsory process for the collection of patient (individual) level data on key process and outcome measures in all birth settings. These data would be linked to other data systems, used to inform quality improvement, and would thus enhance the evidence basis for care.

STATEMENT 9

We recognize and affirm the value of physiologic birth for women, babies, families and society and the value of appropriate interventions based on the best available evidence to achieve optimal outcomes for mothers and babies.

TRIBUTE TO MEL HANCOCK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a great American who passed away last week, my friend, Mel Hancock.

Mel served in this body from 1989 to 1997. He could have easily been re-elected, but he had pledged to serve only 8 years, and he kept his word.

Mel served the people of southwest Missouri with great honor and distinction. He was one of the most down-to-earth people ever to sit in Congress, and I can assure everyone that Washington never changed Mel Hancock one bit. He was one of the most conservative Members here, and if everyone had voted as he did, we certainly would not be in the astounding hole we are in today.

Mel was a very successful small business man. Early in his career, he was a salesman for International Harvester and actually lived in my hometown of Knoxville for a year and a half in 1954 and 1955. I told him once I was glad he moved back to Missouri so I could be in Congress. Of course, it was 33 years later when we both first ran.

Mel was 59 when first elected and was the oldest freshman of those who were elected in 1988. All of the new Members very quickly grew to respect and look up to him.

In Missouri, Mel had started a business installing security cameras in banks. He started with very little, worked very long hours, and saw the American Dream come true in his own life. He saw that as government grew bigger and bigger, it took away more and more of our freedom and really hurt the middle class and those in small business. He believed that Big Government really helped only those who worked for the government and very wealthy Big Government contractors.

So he took on the establishment in Missouri with what came to be called the "Hancock Amendment." This was an amendment to limit property taxes, and he really just started out as one man taking on the government and its contractors. But he won, and Missouri was a better place for it. The people had more control over their own money.

One quick story. I doubt that Mel hardly ever went to a movie, but one night he and I were invited to the world premier of "Air Force One," a movie starring Harrison Ford. It was a Hollywood-type opening with bright lights and a long red carpet. Most people came in tuxedos and long dresses, many in limousines. At that time, because I did not drive long distances in Washington, I drove a very cheap chocolate brown K-car that I had bought used from a rental company. The passenger door made a horrible, very loud sound when it opened. I do not believe I ever saw Mel laugh as hard as when the attendant opened his door of that little brown car, making the loud noise, so Mel and I could walk in our very ordinary suits down that long red carpet. He loved the fact that we were among the very few who had not come in tuxedos and limousines.

There's an old saying about "being country before country was cool." That was Mel. Mel was possibly the first Tea Party person in the best sense of those words many years before there was the Tea Party of today. Mel ran for Congress on the slogan of "Give 'em Mel." When he won, he became a gift to this Nation and to his people.

Mel was assigned to the very prestigious Ways and Means Committee. Most former members of that committee become lobbyists or highly paid consultants. But it was no surprise to me that, when he left, he went home to be with his family and the people of Missouri and never came back. He was a kind, honest, hardworking American who helped thousands of people.

Mel Hancock loved his wife, Shug, and his children, and he loved his country. He made this Nation a better place by all that he did in his good life.

HIRING HEROES ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, America continues to be the land of