

I also would like to thank members of my staff who worked on this issue including Christine Kojac and Mike Ringer of the Science-State-Justice-Commerce appropriations subcommittee, and Janet Shaffron and Samantha Stockman of my personal staff. A special thanks goes to my chief of staff, Dan Scandling, who accompanied me on my trips to Iraq and served as photographer and writer for the trip reports.

HONORING THE LIFE OF ARNOLD
"RED" AUERBACH

SPEECH OF

HON. TIMOTHY V. JOHNSON

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Arnold "Red" Auerbach, the legendary coach, general manager, and president of the Boston Celtics. Red was the architect and mastermind of one of the most dominant franchises in professional sports history.

He coached the Celtics from 1950 to 1966, and during his tenure the franchise won nine NBA titles, including eight straight from 1959 to 1966—the longest string of championships in the history of North American professional sports. His historic coaching career ended in 1966 with 938 regular season victories, a record that stood until Lenny Wilkins broke it in the 1994–95 season and 9 championship rings, an amount only matched by the current Los Angeles Lakers coach Phil Jackson.

Auerbach was revered for his unique ability to scout and recognize talent. Throughout his time as a coach and in the front office he engineered some of the most historic trades and draft selections in NBA history. One of the most notable was in the 1956 NBA Draft when the franchise traded up to the second pick in the draft and selected Future Hall of Famer Bill Russell from the University of San Francisco. Also, while in the Celtic's front office, Auerbach assembled arguably the greatest front line in NBA history when he drafted Larry Bird in 1978 as a "junior eligible" selection and then in 1980 worked out a deal that brought Robert Parish to the team and allowed the franchise to draft Kevin McHale out of the University of Minnesota. All three players are now members of the NBA Hall of Fame and became the nucleus that led the Celtics to 3 world Championships in the 1980's.

Auerbach's influence on the game went beyond the numerous victories and championships; he also was a pioneer in advancing race equality within the NBA. In 1950, the Celtics franchise selected Chuck Cooper of Duquesne University in the second round as the first black player to ever be selected in the NBA Draft. In addition during the 1963–64 season, Auerbach's starting line up of Bill Russell, K.C. Jones, Sam Jones, Tom Sanders, and Willie Naulls became the first all black starting line up in NBA history. And finally upon his retirement in 1966, Auerbach chose Bill Russell to succeed him as the coach of the Boston Celtics becoming the first African American to coach an American professional sports team.

Please join me in recognizing this American legend, his contributions to both the game of

basketball and the nation will be forever remembered.

THE SACRAMENTO RIVER NATIONAL RECREATION AREA ESTABLISHMENT ACT OF 2006

HON. WALLY HERGER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2006

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Sacramento River National Recreation Area Establishment Act of 2006.

This bill was drafted with the direct input and involvement of locally elected leaders in Tehama County, California. It is the product of a citizen-led initiative. Written exchanges, phone calls, meetings, and an on-site visit were all part of the process that has led up to today.

On two separate occasions the Tehama County Board of Supervisors endorsed the concept of creating a National Recreation Area at the Sacramento River Bend, including, most recently, a unanimous endorsement of this specific legislation, which was passed on December 6, 2006. The Shasta County Board of Supervisors and the City of Redding, California both have formally expressed support for the creation of a recreation area at the Bend Area. Various constituents and organizations have done so as well.

Local officials expressed support for a national designation that focused on recreation and respected the nearby communities' goals and priorities. They wanted a designation to build on existing popular outdoors opportunities, such as horseback riding, hunting, fishing, and hiking. They wanted management of the land to attract tourists to the area in order to help the local economy. And they wanted to make sure that neighboring landowners and land uses were protected in the process. It was argued that a national designation for the Bend Area should be a "win-win" for everyone in the community. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that this legislation accomplishes this important priority.

In carrying out the wishes of local officials, the Sacramento River National Recreation Area Establishment Act of 2006 focuses on three important local priorities: recreation, community involvement, and landowner protection.

The bill directs the BLM to manage the Bend Area in a manner that encourages and promotes public recreation. The bill lists, at a minimum, sixteen separate recreational activities that are to occur and be enhanced for public enjoyment of the recreation area and, in turn, help create new economic opportunities for local businesses. Specific language is also included to ensure that this popular destination point for deer, wild turkey, dove, and pheasant hunting, and trophy-sized rainbow trout and salmon fishing remain open and accessible to the public.

The bill also authorizes the Secretary to develop recreation related facilities, such as new trails, restrooms, parking areas, and campgrounds, all of which will help make experiencing the Bend Area more enjoyable for Northstate families. Additionally, the bill clearly states that no fees for same-day use or access to the recreation area may be charged

by the BLM unless significant recreation services are provided. This provision will help the public access the Bend Area free of charge for activities like an afternoon hike or bike ride. Any modest fees that could be charged at the Bend Area would be developed in consultation with the public and proceeds would be reinvested in local recreation and safety facilities.

Local involvement and participation is also required in the bill. The legislation would establish an "Advisory Council" to ensure that the ideas and concerns of local citizens are incorporated into a management plan for the area. The Advisory Council would be appointed by locally elected officials, and would consist of concerned citizens representing diverse backgrounds and viewpoints. And to ensure that everyone in the community has a chance to participate in the drafting of the management plan for the Bend Area, each meeting of the Advisory Council will be open to public observation and involvement. This important provision will ensure transparency without the unnecessary paperwork burdens and expense associated with the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this bill protects private property rights. Local officials carefully drew the recreation area boundaries so as not to include private land. In addition, language was developed to ensure that landowners adjacent to the new recreation area are guaranteed full access to their property, and that efforts to improve or enhance such access are not limited in any way by this legislation. Existing water rights holders are also protected under this bill, as it plainly denies authority to the federal government to acquire water rights to further the purposes and needs of the recreation area. Lastly, livestock grazing, which is very important to the area I represent, is protected in this bill. Local officials supporting the legislation were clear: the right to continue to graze cattle in this area needs to be preserved.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a great pleasure for me to work with local officials and concerned citizens to develop this legislation. But our work is not over. In my view, you can never have too much local participation. Initiatives like this one succeed not because they were created in Congress or by national interest groups. They succeed because they are the product of an on-the-ground effort, led by those who live near and are the most familiar with this special area. I look forward to continuing to work with my constituents who have been involved in this legislation to this point, and urge anyone else with an interest to participate to do so.

This legislation is introduced in the spirit of local involvement and cooperation. It has been carefully written based on local needs and is worthy of the consideration and support of my colleagues in the House.

TRIBUTE TO GONZALES FAMILY

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2006

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of a family recently devastated by a tragic drunk driving accident. On Saturday, November 11, Paul Gonzales, Renee Collins-Gonzales, and their

daughters, Alisha Garcia, Jacquelynn Gonzalez, and Selena Gonzales were killed in a horrific accident. Arissa Garcia, Renee's daughter, survived the terrible crash.

Paul was the co-owner of a small family-owned business in Las Vegas, New Mexico, a town he had lived in his whole life. Paul was well-known throughout his home town, especially as a strong supporter of youth sports and academics. A graduate of Robertson High School, he was continually involved in fund-raising events for the high schools in the area. He was extremely active with the Robertson band and football team, even designing the 2006 District Championship t-shirts for the school. Extremely civic-minded, Paul was a member of the Las Vegas Fiesta Council and spent some of his spare time helping to restore historical buildings.

Renee, Paul's wife, was also a lifelong resident of Las Vegas. Renee spent her life caring for others, as a nurse at the hospital and in the West Las Vegas School System. Looking to increase her education, she was finishing her master's degree in nursing and was working towards becoming a nurse practitioner. Renee was extremely devoted to her family and always found the time to spend with each one of them.

Alisha, seventeen years old, was Renee's daughter and Paul's stepdaughter. She was a senior at West Las Vegas High School, and was scheduled to graduate in May 2007. Like her mother, she also was extremely dedicated to her family and enjoyed her role as the eldest sister, often putting the needs of her sisters ahead of her own. Alisha was continually active, participating in several sports and music programs, and also learning sign language.

Jacquelynn, the daughter of Paul and Renee, was eleven years old. A fifth grader, Jacquelynn enjoyed participating in her school's basketball and soccer teams, and also enjoyed other sports, camping, and fishing. She was thoughtful and giving, and enjoyed spending time with her family.

Selena, also the daughter of Paul and Renee, had celebrated her tenth birthday only three days before the tragic accident took her life. In fourth grade, Selena enjoyed school and was an honor student. She also enjoyed participating in sports and was known to be daring and to live life to the fullest. Like the rest of her family, she was considerate, thoughtful, and brought joy to all those around her.

While we remember these five extraordinary people, we must also show our support for Arissa, who was the only survivor of the accident. Arissa, who is fifteen, sustained injuries in the accident, but is slowly recuperating and is already back in school.

The members of this family have touched the lives of all members of the community, as was evident by the thousands of people who attended their services. I want to recognize the entire community for coming together to show their support to Arissa and her family. I also want to acknowledge the pledge that students, staff, teachers, friends, and other members of the community have made—that they will never drink and drive, that they will not let a friend drink and drive, and that they will not get into a vehicle with someone who is intoxicated. If more people were to take this pledge and stick with it, the number of drunk driving tragedies surely would decrease.

In recent years, New Mexico has taken many strides to curb drunk driving accidents throughout the State. In fact, recent figures have shown an 11 percent decrease in drunk driving accidents in the past year. However, this tragedy shows that even one drunk driver is one too many.

We all have our own horror stories of how our constituents have been affected by drunk driving accidents. Let's commit ourselves today to taking the necessary steps to truly attack this problem. I intend to work with local, State, and federal officials, as well as the families of the victims of this horrific crash and others that have been impacted by drunk driving to continue to attack this problem. We can only defeat this problem if we all work together.

PROPOSED RULE REGARDING THE
MEDICARE PROGRAM AND REVI-
SIONS TO PAYMENT POLICIES

HON. LUIS FORTUÑO

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2006

Mr. FORTUÑO. Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my concern over the proposed rule put forth earlier this year by the Department of Health and Human Services regarding the Medicare Program and revisions to payment policies under the physician fee schedule for calendar year 2007. This rule, as written, would have a negative impact on Puerto Rican doctors and their patients. While I fully support the overall objective of the changes—to ensure that HHS payment systems are updated to reflect changes in medical practice and the relative value of services—I am confident that can be achieved without inflicting another harmful financial burden on Puerto Rico. I would support legislative activity that would prevent further cuts from taking place.

First, it must be understood that the cost of living in Puerto Rico is at least the same, if not higher than in the U.S. mainland. As a matter of fact, the costs of transportation, water, electric power and housing are all notably higher on the Island. These cost differentials were not adequately considered in the proposed rule.

Under the proposed rule, Puerto Rico would be forced to assume two large losses. The first is on the elimination of the payment floor with slightly over a 2 percent cut, plus the cuts in each of the specialties. Radiology would suffer the most, with an average cut of 16 percent. This is an issue that affects doctors, patients and ultimately the quality of care that can be provided to those most in need. I strongly recommend that these proposed reductions be suspended for calendar year 2007, and that the impact of any further floor reductions be considered thoroughly before implementation.

As you know, Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens and pay the same Medicare payroll taxes and deductibles as their fellow citizens in the 50 States. Thus, we must ensure that Medicare recipients in Puerto Rico have the same access to quality health care as those in the 50 States, and that health care providers on the Island receive satisfactory reimbursements for their services.

RECOGNIZING TAFT COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S "TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM" FOR YOUNG AUTISTIC ADULTS

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2006

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, as a Member of this House who has long voiced concerns about the lack of concerted federal action to deal with the growing epidemic of autism in this country, I was very encouraged by yesterday's passage of the "Combating Autism Act."

Although I believe that we missed an opportunity in this bill to resolve the problem of mercury in vaccines and its connection to autism, there is no denying that the Combating Autism Act represents a long overdue and significant expansion of the federal government's response to the autism epidemic. The bill commits an unprecedented \$945 million in federal funds over five years to combating autism through research, screening, better interventions and education efforts.

But we should be under no illusion that the job is finished. Autism is a condition that has no known cure, which means that this is a crisis that is simply not going to "go away." What we have done is realistically only a small down payment on the vast resources that we must invest in order to deal with this terrible scourge. For example, in my own State of Indiana we experienced a 923 percent cumulative growth rate for autism from 1992–2003. The annual growth rate of autism in Indiana averaged 27 percent compared to an average of 7 percent for the growth rate of all disabilities. And Indiana's experience is by no means unique. In fact, as a Nation we have gone from roughly 1 case of autism for every 10,000 births in the 1980's to 1 in every 166 today.

What this means in practical terms is that we are now at the beginning of what can be considered a "bubble" of older children who have been diagnosed and treated for autism, who now must face the challenges of their disease in a post-secondary environment and beyond. The "No Child Left Behind Act" has given our schools the tools to do an excellent job of providing additional teachers, curriculum and individual educational programs for our students with autism. But this assistance is largely confined to the K–12 years and for the most part our schools are only just beginning to effectively meet the growing learning needs of that age group. We are therefore still woefully ill prepared for the unique problems our post-secondary young autistic adults will face as they transition from a relatively protected learning environment to the demands of our modern life. We must recognize the plight of these older children with autism and commit ourselves to providing the additional resources necessary to deal with their unique problems as we have done for younger children with autism.

Recently, I was privileged to meet with officials from Taft Community College, located in Kern County, California. Taft, I am told is one of only two institutions throughout the country currently exploring ways to dealing with this impending crisis. I understand that for the last