

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 fundraising 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.

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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

ten years Taft has pioneered a "Transition to Independent Living Program" (TIL) which provides a structured environment for post-secondary special needs students to successfully meet the demands of our modern world. According to the statistics compiled by Taft Community College President, Dr. Roe Darnell, the achievements of these students and graduates are truly remarkable. I understand that fully 81 percent of the program's graduates are employed and 94 percent live independently. When you consider that the national employment average for all classes of people with a disability is only 37 percent, these results are noteworthy.

According to Dr. Darbell, other "Snapshots of Success" include: 93 percent of graduates receive no financial help; 90 percent of graduates use public transportation; 95 percent have a checking account; 80 percent have a savings account.

The Taft Community College curriculum teaches life skills and independent living strategies to its students, with TIL students receiving vocational training, ethics training and assistance in developing sound work habits. A moderately size dormitory in the middle of campus is utilized by Taft Community College as a "laboratory" to practice life skills, and Taft officials believe that one of the keys to the success of their TIL program is its emphasis on residential living.

Now I understand that the Taft program handles high functioning adults with autism, which means that the techniques and skills taught to these students may not be completely applicable to young adults, who are more severely autistic, but the pioneering efforts and achievements of President Darnell, his teachers, students and TIL program graduates should be applauded.

Programs like those at Taft will not solve the whole problem of how to deal with the impending boom of autistic adults, but I think it is certainly possible that they are a part of the solution. I sincerely hope that many of the approximately 2,000 community colleges around the country will also begin to recognize the growing educational needs of this underserved population and explore the idea of adopting programs like Taft's TIL, if appropriate, and if not, push the boundaries of what is possible for these victims of autism.

SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE: MOVING FROM ETHNIC CLEANSING AND GENOCIDE TO EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION

**HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 7, 2006*

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, when I was appointed chairman of the Helsinki Commission in early 1995, Mr. Speaker, the U.S. foreign policy establishment and its European counterparts were seized by a genocidal conflict of aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina. Many here in the Congress were already deeply involved in bipartisan efforts to end the conflict by urging a decisive, international response under U.S. leadership. I can still recall the sense of horror, outrage, and shame when the Srebrenica massacre occurred and nothing was done to stop it and

other atrocities committed against civilians. Slobodan Milosevic, meanwhile, was comfortably entrenched as Serbia's leader, with Kosovo under his repressive thumb. The situation was truly bleak.

Today, relative calm prevails throughout the Balkans region, though simmering tensions and other serious problems could lead to renewed crisis and conflict, if left unchecked. Overcoming the legacy of the past and restoring dignity and ensuring justice for the victims will require sustained engagement and vigilance. Integrating the countries of the region into European institutions can advance this process.

Slovenia has become a full-fledged member of both NATO and the European Union. Croatia is well on its way to similar membership, and Macedonia and Albania are making steady progress in the right direction. In a welcome development, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the epicenter of bloody carnage and mass displacement in the mid-1990s, was invited last week to participate in NATO's Partnership for Peace Program, along with Serbia and the newly independent state of Montenegro.

As a longstanding member and leader of the Helsinki Commission, I want to highlight some of the numerous initiatives we have undertaken in an attempt to draw attention to developments in the Balkans and to influence related policy. Since 1995, we have convened more than 20 hearings on specific aspects of the region as well as related briefings, legislation, letters, statements and meetings. These efforts have been undertaken with an uncommon degree of bipartisanship. In this regard, I particularly want to thank the Commission's outgoing ranking member, Mr. CARDIN of Maryland, for helping to make this a reality.

Among the Commission's most noteworthy accomplishments, I would include garnering the strong support that contributed to the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and pressing countries to cooperate in bringing those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide to justice. I would include the change in U.S. policy from relying on Milosevic to implement the Dayton agreement to supporting democracy in Serbia as the long-term and genuine partner in building regional peace and stability.

We have maintained a significant focus on elections, encouraging all the countries in the region to strive to meet international standards for free and fair elections as well as referenda. There has been tremendous progress in this regard.

The Commission's support for the OSCE, I believe, has helped the organization's field activities in southeastern Europe to be more successful in promoting respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all the people, regardless of ethnicity. Finally, on the more controversial policy of NATO's action against Serbia in 1999, the Commission served as a forum to air differing views on the policy response while finding common ground in addressing the humanitarian crises, documenting human rights abuses and holding human rights violators to account.

Mr. Speaker, while welcoming this progress in southeastern Europe, I would caution against complacency as the region faces significant challenges. Maintaining positive momentum will require much from actors in the region as well as the international community, including the United States.

First and foremost is the situation in Kosovo. The pending decisions that will be made on Kosovo's status give rise to growing expectation as well as apprehension and concern. Despite the many debates on larger issues of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and self-determination, these decisions should and will ultimately be judged by whether or not they lead to improved respect for human rights, especially the rights of those people belonging to the Serb, Roma and other minority communities in Kosovo. The members of the minority communities deserve to be treated as people, not as pawns in a fight over territory and power. They should be allowed to integrate rather than remain isolated, and they should not be discouraged from integration when opportunities arise. I remain deeply concerned that these issues are not being given the attention they deserve. Whatever Kosovo becomes, OSCE and other international human rights standards must apply.

Similarly, there is a need to ensure that justice is vigorously pursued for the victims of horrendous human rights violations. Conditionality on assistance to Serbia, as well as on that country's integration, must remain firmly in place until Belgrade cooperates fully in locating at-large indicted war criminals and facilitating their transfer to the ICTY in The Hague. It is an outrage that Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic remain at large. After refusing to take meaningful action on these cases, Serbia can not be let off the hook now, but should be pressed to comply with its international obligations.

A related issue is that of missing persons. Ten years after Dayton, additional mass graves continued to be uncovered, and the identification of the remains of relatives and loved ones is important for the survivors of past atrocities and their societies. The Commission recently held a briefing on identifying remains found in mass graves in Bosnia, and I hope that support for determining the fate of missing persons can be further strengthened.

While some progress has been made in combating trafficking in persons in the region, all countries there need to intensify their efforts to end this modern-day form of slavery. Political will and adequate resources will be required, including through enhanced efforts by law enforcement and more vigorous prosecution of traffickers while providing protection for their victims.

Religious freedoms also remain a cause for concern. Various laws in the region allegedly providing for religious freedom do more to restrict this fundamental right by establishing thresholds for registration, by discriminating against small or new religious groups through tiers of recognition with associated privileges for traditional faiths, and by precluding the sharing of creeds or limiting free speech. These restrictions are particularly burdensome to smaller religious groups and can lead to stigmatization, harassment, and discrimination against their members. For instance, Kosovo's new religion law singles out certain communities for special status while failing to address how other religious groups can obtain juridical personality as a religious organization, thereby creating a significant legal void from the start. I urge Kosovo authorities to follow the progressive Albanian system and create a neutral registration system of general applicability. Macedonia is considering a draft law now, and I hope authorities will fully adopt the recommendations of the OSCE Panel of Experts