conventional loans, can only get loans from finance companies that charge much higher interest rates—anywhere from three to four percentage points higher than conventional loans.

''Fannie Mae has expanded home ownership for millions of families in the 1990's by reducing down payment requirements,'' said Franklin D. Raines, Fannie Mae's chairman and chief executive officer. ''Yet there remain too many borrowers whose credit is just a notch below what our underwriting has required who have been relegated to paying significantly higher mortgage rates in the so-called subprime market.''

Demographic information on these borrowers is sketchy. But at least one study indicates that 18 percent of the loans in the subprime market went to black borrowers, compared to 5 per cent of loans in the conventional loan market.

In moving, even tentatively, into this new area of lending, Fannie Mae is taking on significantly more risk, which may not pose any difficulties during flush economic times. But the government-subsidized corporation may run into trouble in an economic downturn, prompting a government rescue similar to that of the savings and loan industry in the 1980's.

''From the perspective of many people, including me, this is another thrift industry growing up around us,'' said Peter Wallison a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. ''If they fail, the government will have to step up and bail them out the way it stepped up and bailed out the thrift industry.''

Under Fannie Mae's pilot program, consumers who qualify can secure a mortgage with an interest rate one percentage point above that of a conventional, 30-year fixed rate mortgage of less than $240,000—a rate that currently averages about 7.76 per cent. If the borrower makes his or her monthly payments on time for two years, the one percentage point premium is dropped.

Fannie Mae, the nation's biggest underwriter of home mortgages, does not lend money directly to consumers. Instead, it purchases loans that banks make on what is called the secondary market. By expanding the type of loans that it will buy, Fannie Mae is hoping to spur banks to make more loans to people with less-than-stellar credit ratings.

Fannie Mae officials stress that the new mortgages will be extended to all potential borrowers who can qualify for a mortgage. But they add that the move is intended in part to increase the number of minority and low income home owners who tend to have worse credit ratings than non-Hispanic whites.

Home ownership has, in fact, exploded among minorities during the economic boom of the 1990's. The number of mortgages extended to Hispanic applicants jumped by 87.2 per cent from 1993 to 1998, according to Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies. During that same period the number of African Americans who got mortgages to buy a home increased by 71.9 per cent and the number of Asian Americans by 46.3 per cent.

In contrast, the number of non-Hispanic whites who received loans for homes increased by 31.2 per cent.

Despite these gains, home ownership rates for minorities continue to lag behind non-Hispanic whites, in part because blacks and Hispanics in particular tend to have on average worse credit ratings.

In July, the Department of Housing and Urban Development proposed that by the year 2001, 50 percent of Fannie Mae's and Freddie Mac's portfolio be made up of loans to low and moderate-income borrowers. Last year, 44 percent of the loans Fannie Mae purchased were from these groups.

The change in policy also comes at the same time that HUD is investigating allegations of racial discrimination in the automated underwriting systems used by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to determine the credit-worthiness of credit applicants.

HONORING MAJOR GENERAL RITA ARAGON

HON. MARY FALLIN

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, September 27, 2008

Ms. FALLIN. Madam Speaker, today I rise to commend and congratulate retired Major General Rita Aragon, who has been named Woman of the Year by the Journal Record business newspaper in Oklahoma City.

Rita Aragon's story is an inspiration to all women. As a single mother working as public school teacher, she joined the Oklahoma Air National Guard more than 30 years ago. In 1989 she became the first unit commander in the Guard, and by 2003 she had risen to the rank of Brigadier General. As a major General she served on active duty as assistant to the commander of air education and training and later as assistant to the chief of Staff Manpower and Personnel in the Pentagon. Since her retirement she has returned to education as director of advance programs at the College of Continuing Education at the University of Oklahoma.

Throughout her career, Rita Aragon has given her time and talent to many community organizations and served on the boards of many of those groups. During Oklahoma's response to the 1995 federal building bombing in Oklahoma City she helped lead the military contingent at ground zero. I am honored to recognize Rita Aragon's life of service to her Nation, state and city.

JOB CREATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2008

Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Job Creation and Unemployment Relief Act and congratulate Speaker PELOSI and Chairman OBEY for providing important relief to American families struggling under current economic conditions.

At a time when taxpayers are being asked to rescue Wall Street, it is imperative that Congress also recognize the challenges facing Main Street. Our economy has lost jobs for eight straight months with 605,000 American jobs lost this year. This summer Minnesota's unemployment rate reached its highest level in 22 years. Putting Americans back to work is critical to the recovery of our economy and to the health and safety of families.

H.R. 7110 invests in families by creating good-paying jobs through new infrastructure projects. These investments have an immediate effect on the economy by putting people to work and will have a long term effect with improvements to our roads, bridges and schools.

Other jobs will be created through new energy technologies. New loans to the auto industry and investment in new renewable energy technologies will both put people in good paying, stable jobs but will also move this country towards energy independence.

For those hit hardest by economic conditions, this legislation provides an extension of unemployment benefits for those still searching for a job, including 20,000 Minnesotans. It also includes additional food assistance to help deal with rising food prices and a temporary increase in Medicaid payments for states so they can continue to provide health care coverage for children and families. To address the cost of fuel and growing demand for public transportation, this bill invests in transit to improve access and afford ability of buses and trains.

It is absolutely unacceptable for members to find the political will to bail out Wall Street at a cost of $700 billion to taxpayers and at the same time claim that we do not have the resources to invest one-tenth of that in American families. This is a prudent, targeted package and it is critical to our economic recovery. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 7110.

UNITED STATES-INDIA NUCLEAR COOPERATION APPROVAL AND NONPROLIFERATION ENHANCEMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2008

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation. India is the world's largest and most diverse democracy and a strong ally and friend of the United States. As a member of the India Caucus, I recognize the benefits of increased economic, security, and cultural cooperation between India and the United States, and am proud that in recent years the relationship between our two countries has made rapid advances in so many areas.

Because of the growing importance of that relationship, it made sense for the Bush administration to consider expanding the U.S.-India strategic partnership to include civilian nuclear energy development. In the context of our friendship with India, I support the concept of civilian nuclear cooperation, and I will support this legislation today.

U.S. law prohibits nuclear cooperation with countries that have not pledged under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty—like India—to forgo nuclear weapons. The U.S.-India agreement carves out an exception for India to allow it to gain access to long-denied civilian nuclear technology in exchange for opening 14 out of 22 of its nuclear facilities to inspections under the International Atomic Energy Agency. Importantly, India and the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, have negotiated a safeguards agreement and the 45-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group has approved an exemption for India, requirements that needed to be met before Congress could vote on the final cooperation agreement.

Under existing law, Congress would have 60 days to consider the agreement, an important provision given that the agreement before us is complex and requires time for hearings and debate. But because there is little time left on the legislative calendar, we're forced to vote to waive the consultation period and consider the agreement today without the benefit of sufficient review. The bill is also being considered under suspension of the rules, which provides for only limited debate and no amendments.

Mr. Speaker, I am uncomfortable with this process. I am also disappointed that the legislation does not resolve what appear to be conflicting interpretations between U.S. officials and Indian officials about key points of the agreement. But I do believe that ultimately this agreement will help bring India closer to the global nonproliferation regime—a better outcome than if we leave it on the outside. And fo that reason, I will support this legislation today.

In exchange for getting access to sensitive nuclear technology and fuel supplies, India has committed to continue its moratorium on nuclear weapons testing; separate its civilian and military nuclear programs; place all current and future civil nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards; implement a strong national export control system; work with the U.S. to conclude a multilateral Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty; and not transfer nuclear technologies to states that do not already possess them. Although the agreement does not specifically require the U.S. to cut off nuclear cooperation if India tests another weapon or violates the IAEA safeguards, Secretary Rice has promised that the "deal . . . would at that point be off." I have no doubt that an Obama or McCain administration would follow that same course. I have confidence that as a strong democracy and a responsible actor on the world stage, India will abide by its commitments—but I also take comfort in the agreement's stipulations that we can terminate the agreement and seek the return of any transferred materials and technology should circumstances require such a step.

So in conclusion, I believe this agreement strikes the right balance between strengthening our relationship with India and also maintaining our robust and time-tested international nuclear nonproliferation regime. I will support the bill today, but I plan to carefully scrutinize the agreement's implementation to ensure that India is abiding by its commitments.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE JERRY WELLER AND THE HONORABLE RAY LAHOOD

SPEECH OF

HON. JERRY F. COSTELLO

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 25, 2008

Mr. COSTELLO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the distinguished career of JERRY WELLER, who will be retiring at the end of the 110th Congress. I wish to express my appreciation for his service to our country and the state of Illinois.

JERRY was elected to Congress in 1994 as the representative of the 11th District of Illinois. He began his public service career working as a Congressional and Administration aide, followed by three terms in the Illinois General Assembly. He has used his seat on the Ways and Means Committee to make a strong, positive difference for families in Illinois and throughout the United States.

JERRY has worked on a number of initiatives important to Illinois' families, including his efforts to enhance Illinois' infrastructure, establish and expand veterans' outpatient clinics, and protect children from on-line predators. JERRY was instrumental in passing legislation to redevelop the Joliet Arsenal in 1995, which created thousands of union jobs by establishing North America's largest intermodal truck, rail, and freight facility. He is a tireless advocate for the needs of his constituents and his country.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in an expression of appreciation to Congressman WELLER for his years of dedicated service to this body and to the people of Illinois. I wish JERRY and his family the very best in the future.

SUPPORTING RESTITUTION FOR PROPERTY CONFISCATED BY NAZI AND COMMUNIST REGIMES

SPEECH OF

HON. ELIOT L. ENGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 23, 2008

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 371 which strongly supports and immediate and just restitution of, or compensation for, property illegally confiscated during the last century by Nazi and Communist regimes. As a cosponsor of this important resolution, I believe that while we must recognize steps forward, countries in central and eastern Europe that have not already done so must return confiscated properties to their rightful owners or, where restitution is not possible, pay equitable compensation.

In that vein, I would like to draw the attention of the House to one particular situation in Hungary. Since the end of the Cold War, Hungary has developed into a vibrant democracy, a member of the European Union, an important NATO ally, and a key friend of the United States.

Yet, even with this great progress, Hungary's record on restitution for Holocaust victims is mixed, at best. Take the case of Martha Nierenberg, an 84-year-old U.S. citizen who lives in New York State. Her grandfather amassed one of the preeminent art collections in Hungary, consisting of some 2,500 paintings. After the Nazis occupied Hungary, some of those paintings were personally seized by Adolf Eichmann, the infamous implementer of the Final Solution, for shipment to Nazi Germany. Others were taken by the Hungarian government in collaboration with the Nazis and wound up after World War II in state owned museums in Budapest.

Mrs. Nierenberg's mother began asking Hungary for the return of some of the paintings in 1996 and upon her mother's death, Mrs. Nierenberg began to request their return, as well. Hungary refused to return the paintings, even though there has been no question that the paintings belonged to Mrs. Nierenberg's grandfather and to her mother after his death. As a result, Mrs. Nierenberg was forced to sue in Hungary for the return of 12 paintings. She won initially in the lower court (which returned one painting to her), but the Hungarian government challenged the ruling, requiring her to endure 7 years of appeals. She finally lost the final court case earlier this year, on technical grounds.

The Washington Principles adopted in 1998, and supported by the Hungarian government, require governments holding Holocaust property, such as Hungary, to arrive at a fair and equitable resolution of claims to the property. But, Hungary has not followed those principles and has not tried to reach a fair and equitable resolution of Mrs. Nierenberg's claims.

The appearance, sadly, is that the Hungarian government wants to "run the clock" on Mrs. Nierenberg, hoping that she will give up or die. But she will not give up, and Mrs. Nierenberg's children are as determined as she is to recover what is rightfully theirs.

What is most shocking to me about this case is how quickly countries are able to disassociate their war-time complicity in the Nazi Holocaust from their holding of the war-time booty. During World War II, Hungary expelled 440,000 Jews, most of whom perished in Auschwitz. Ironically, Adolph Eichmann, who stole some of the Nierenberg paintings, was chief of the team of "deportation experts" that helped the Hungarian authorities send their country's Jewish population to its demise.

Madam Speaker, Hungary has no moral claim to Mrs. Nierenberg's paintings and, should, at long last, do what is right. Therefore, as a cosponsor of H. Con. Res. 371, I urge the Hungarian government to return the paintings, at once, or work out a just resolution of this case with Mrs. Nierenberg in accordance with the Washington Principles.

BREAST CANCER PATIENT PROTECTION ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 23, 2008

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, H.R. 758, the "Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act", would require that insurance companies cover a stay of at least 48 hours in the hospital for women undergoing mastectomy and other procedures when the physician, in consultation with the patient, deem them to be medically necessary.

This section of the bill was largely written to parallel section 2704 of the Public Health Service Act, Standards Relating to Benefits for Mothers and Newborns, which prevents drive through deliveries. Certain superfluous and unnecessary provisions, however, were deleted from H.R. 758 as reported by the Committee on Energy and Commerce on September 23, 2008, because the protections already exist in law.