

her. Respected by her colleagues, Judge Kettles' involvement in our community has improved the quality of life in my district. We will miss her as she steps down from the bench.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying special tribute to Judge Margaret Kettles. Our communities are served well by having such honorable and giving citizens, like Margaret, who care about their well being and stability. We wish Margaret, her husband, Miles, and their family all the best as we pay tribute to one of our state's finest citizens.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DAVE WELDON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 31, 2003

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I missed two votes on Monday, January 27 due to my attendance at the funeral for Florida State Senator Howard Futch. Had I been present for rollcall votes 13 and 14 I would have voted in favor of both resolutions.

HONORING CHINESE LUNAR NEW YEAR

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 31, 2003

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the start of the Chinese Lunar New Year in New York City.

The Year of the Ram is being celebrated on the first day of February, 2003, as the people of New York join the Asian American community in marking the start of a New Year.

The Ram signifies harmony, reconciliation and peacemaking—both politically and person-

ally. This is the year for reconciliation, diplomacy and the healing of rifts.

Since the Ram is also patron of the arts, this year will bring out individual creativity, and an increased interest in music and theater.

After last year's quick pace of the Year of the Horse, the Year of the Ram will be a time for quiet introspection. In taking to a slower pace of life, this year will be dedicated to spending quality time with those closest to us.

In celebration of the Year of the Ram, our great City will come alive with many lively festivals, colorful processions and cultural performances. Several neighborhoods in the City will host the traditional lion and dragon parades. Streets will be adorned with red paper lanterns for the Lantern Festival, and bright decorations and lights will hang across storefronts and sidewalks.

The beginning of the Lunar New Year is a special occasion for Asian Americans. It is a time for reflection, for making future plans, and for honoring the past. It is an opportunity to share old, treasured traditions with friends and family. It is a time for all New Yorkers of various ethnic backgrounds to join the Asian American community as they look forward to a year of peace, prosperity and good will among all people.

I hereby join the City of New York and the Asian American community in celebration of Lunar New Year's Day on February 1, 2003, to mark the start of the Year of the Ram.

INTRODUCING THE S-CHIP ALLOTMENT EXTENSION AVAILABILITY ACT OF 2003

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 31, 2003

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation that is vitally im-

portant to ensure that states can provide quality health care to uninsured children.

On October 1st of last year, states with unspent federal funding allocation were forced to return those amounts back to the U.S. Treasury. These funds are from the early years of the CHIP program, and were unspent because it took many states several years to develop and implement their CHIP programs.

Unfortunately, we are cutting these funds at a time when they will be needed most. Under the Balanced Budget Act, CHIP funding was reduced by \$1 billion, or 26 percent in fiscal year 2002, and is slated to remain at this reduced level until fiscal year 2004. States that had been able to draw on unspent funds in order to avert cutbacks will now have to start eliminating services. As a result of this problem, the Office of Management and Budget estimates that 900,000 children will lose their CHIP coverage.

This is a particular problem in my home state of Texas. Even though Texas has enrolled and provides coverage to over 500,000 children, the state was forced to return \$285 million at the end of fiscal year 2002. This is especially problematic, as the state is facing a budget shortfall of approximately \$5 billion.

The legislation I am introducing would restore \$1.2 billion in unspent funds under the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). This is a necessary move to ensure that our children have access to the health care they need. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting this bill.