

I hope and pray we can unite with our African neighbors to bring an end to the AIDS crisis. It is no longer just their problem—it is particularly ours as well.

THE ASTHMA OBESITY LINKAGE

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 7, 2003

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, in honor of National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Week, I am today introducing the "Medicaid Obesity Treatment Act of 2003" to elevate the visibility of a national health epidemic that is wreaking havoc upon our Nation. Scientific evidence demonstrates a strong correlation between obesity and asthma, particularly among children.

This bill, which is similar to legislation I introduced last year with Congressman JAMES GREENWOOD, will provide Medicaid coverage for medically necessary treatments for chronically obese beneficiaries. With this legislation, I hope to raise the level of attention to this devastating illness and to provide medically necessary treatments to millions of overweight children who suffer from obesity comorbidities such as asthma. If the Congress passes this legislation, The Medicaid Obesity Treatment Act will be the first legislation ever enacted to address the need to ensure access for all Americans to drug therapies designed to treat obesity and its related comorbidities, and I am proud to be its sponsor.

According to the Surgeon General, the prevalence of overweight and obesity has almost doubled among America's children and adolescents since 1980. It is estimated that one out of five children is obese. The epidemic growth in obesity acquired during childhood or adolescence is particularly threatening to the national health because it often persists into adulthood and increases the risk for some chronic diseases, such as asthma, later in life.

Obesity has truly become a national health care crisis. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that 60 percent of Americans over 20 years of age are overweight or clinically obese. Weight-related conditions represent the second leading cause of death in the United States, and result in approximately 300,000 preventable deaths each year.

Researchers from Cincinnati Children's Hospital recently discovered a new gene involved in asthma that may provide a link between the development of asthma and obesity. The study, released at the 60th anniversary meeting of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology, examined the gene which belongs to a family of similar proteins that have been found to cause insulin resistance and obesity in mice. Another recent study by the Harvard School of Medicine of 16,862 children, ages 9 to 14, found that those who were the most overweight were two to three times as likely to have asthma as the least overweight subjects.

Whether obesity is caused by genetics, environment, lifestyle, diet or a combination of these elements, its effect is devastating for all persons who suffer from it. However, science has made great strides in recent years to combat it. Several new drugs offer great promise in the fight to prevent and treat obesity and its related comorbidities.

My bill will revisit a thirteen year old provision that allows states to exclude Medicaid coverage for weight loss drugs, even in cases where these drugs have the potential to save obese patients' lives or to improve their related conditions like asthma. The notion that obesity is merely a lifestyle choice and not a disease is no longer valid scientifically, and must be stricken from the law. Medically necessary medicine for the treatment of chronic obesity and its related illnesses should be covered under Medicaid like any other medically necessary drug. This is the purpose and goal of my bill.

Although this expansion in Medicaid coverage might incur some marginal cost to the overall program, requiring states to cover proven obesity medication may actually reduce Medicaid expenditures as a result of decreases in the costs associated with treating asthma and other obesity-related comorbidities. Given the numerous benefits of reducing obesity, we should be providing access to life saving anti-obesity treatments, just as we provide medications for other life threatening diseases.

Obesity and asthma represent related growing health crises that must be addressed with more than just words. This bill offers an important first step towards eliminating obesity, and I encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

HONORING DON HILL

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 7, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Don Hill of La Junta, Colorado for his contributions to historical preservation and our National Park Service. Don is retiring, having served with the National Park Service in Colorado for thirty-three years, and today I would like to thank him for his service before this body of Congress and this nation.

After beginning a career with the National Park Service at Curecanti National Recreation Area and Black Canyon of the Gunnison and Colorado National Monuments, Don came to Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site in 1986 as the site's superintendent. Don has worked hard to make Bent's Fort an integral part of the Southeastern Colorado Community. He served as president of the Southeast Colorado Tourism Council, and in 1993 he coordinated the Santa Fe Trail Association's National Symposium, bringing over 500 tourists to the area. Additionally Don is an active member of the local Rotary Club and the La Junta Chamber of Commerce. Among other accomplishments, in 1993 Don worked with the Cheyenne and Arapahoe tribes of Oklahoma to repatriate Native American remains discovered during archaeological work at the fort.

Mr. Speaker, Don Hill has served as a steward of this country's natural treasures for over thirty years and has played an integral role in the development of Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site. Today I stand before this body of Congress and this nation to recognize one of the National Park Service's best. Don's dedication is a credit to himself and to Colorado, and I thank him for his service.

HONORING ANN MILLER AND TED MALIARIS

HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 7, 2003

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker. I would like to honor two great Americans, Ann Miller and Ted Maliaris, for their patriotic commitment to this nation.

Ann Miller has written "A Tribute to America—A 21st Century Anthem," which highlights the greatness of America and its ability to overcome recent tragedies. Her son, Ted Maliaris, delivers this anthem with an unparalleled sense of patriotism.

America was founded on principles of freedom and democracy that stand as the very foundation of our society today. While our troops are abroad, we must never forget the importance of the very principles that make this nation great. "A Tribute to America—A 21st Century Anthem" clearly illustrates the power of freedom that America represents. Its patriotic message highlights the very strength that has served as the foundation of the American spirit since the tragedies of September 11.

I would like to thank Ann Miller and Ted Maliaris for their dedication to America and their commitment to spreading their important message across the Nation.

I proudly insert the following lyrics of "A Tribute to America—A 21st Century Anthem" in the RECORD:

Our tears may fall and our hearts may be shattered, but deep down in our souls we are strong, we are proud, we are bold.

We have freedom in our land, we will fight for our rights, we will stand up for the brotherhood of man. America America America you're Grand.

We have strength, we have the power, no terrorist could ever withstand. We will not hide, we will not cower, we will stand up for the rights of our land.

We're America, America
Strong, Proud, Brave, Bold
We're America, America
Strong, Proud, Brave, Bold
America red, white, and blue
America, this song we sing for you.

In time of need, compassion fills our hearts,
in times of dismay we are strong.

We're a land of freedom, a land of peace, and
no one can take this away.

We're America, America
America you're Grand
No one can destroy us through thick or thin,
we're a nation that was built to survive.

No terrorist's plight can destroy our sight or
the strength of this motherland.

We're America, America, America
America you're Grand.

God extended his hand and has given us
faith, for we will stand tall and proud.
We're a land of freedom, a land of peace, a
land like no other land.

We're America, America
Strong, Proud, Brave, Bold
We're America, America
Strong, Proud, Brave, Bold
America, America you're Grand
America, America you're Grand
America!