

life in the United States through their participation in every sector of our society including business, the arts, sports, government, medicine and education. Of particular significance during these trying times, is the rich history of patriotism and sacrifice that the Latino community has made by serving proudly and with distinction in every major U.S. military conflict and in all branches of our armed services.

From the minutemen of the American Revolution to today's enlisted men and women in Iraq, the Latino community has a deep-rooted tradition of service in the U.S. military. Today there are 109,487 Latinos on active duty, representing approximately 9.5% of all active duty personnel. Latinos represent 9.7 percent of the Army, 10.5 percent of the Navy, 13.9 percent of the Marine Corps, and 3.4 percent of the Air Force.

Latinos have been recognized for their valor and bravery in some of this country's most important military confrontations. One of the greatest sources of pride among the Latino community is the 39 Medals of Honor awarded to Latinos in recognition of their valor. They are the largest single ethnic group, in proportion to the number who served, to earn this prestigious award.

During the American Revolution, soldiers from Spain, Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic fought alongside the colonists for independence. Cuban women donated their jewelry to aid the colonists, helping to finance the Yorktown Campaign.

In World War One, Latino soldiers were decorated with the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, the French Croix de Guerre, the Victory Medal with three bars, and the Purple Heart. During the Second World War, up to 500,000 Latinos served bravely—eleven receiving the Medal of Honor. Of particular mention is the story of Marine PFC Guy "Gabby" Gabaldon who single-handedly captured over 1,000 enemy soldiers in the summer of 1944, more than anyone else has in the history of military conflicts.

During the Korean War, the 65th Infantry Regiment—a Puerto Rican regiment—was given special recognition for participating in nine major campaigns, capturing 2,086 enemy soldiers, and killing 5,095 enemy combatants. Individual members of this regiment were awarded four Distinguished Service Crosses and 124 Silver Stars. My family and I had personal acquaintance with a Korean War hero from my neighborhood in Boyle Heights when I was growing up in Los Angeles. Private First Class Eugene Obregon was awarded the Medal of Honor for sacrificing his life to save that of a wounded comrade.

Fourteen Hispanics were awarded the Medal of Honor for bravery during the Vietnam War. Navy Lt. Everett Alvarez became the first American prisoner of war (POW), and remained so for over 8 years, the longest confirmed POW in American history. The last American to leave Vietnam was Senior Master Sergeant Juan J. Valdez, who served at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon and departed by helicopter on April 30, 1975.

When Iran held 52 American hostages in 1980, the Ayatollah offered to release all minorities. Marine Corporals Lopez and Gallegos refused, instead stating, "I am an American—I am a U.S. Marine, I will be the last one to leave," invoking the spirit of American patriotism above all else.

Today, as we wage the war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Latino community con-

tinues to prove its commitment to America by serving proudly and with honor. They remind all of us, that there is no better way to demonstrate devotion to your country than the willingness to make sacrifices for it. Through their service in the armed forces thousands of brave individuals in the Latino community have proven their love and dedication to our American values of liberty and freedom for all.

As we recognize the Latino community during National Hispanic Heritage Month, I want to thank the service men and women, both past and present, for their commitment and sacrifices to our country. They truly embody the spirit of pride and community that Hispanic Heritage Month is designed to celebrate.

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RECOGNIZING THE COLORADO  
PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH  
GROUP

**HON. MARK UDALL**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 15, 2003*

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Colorado Public Interest Research Group (CoPIRG) on the celebration of its 30th anniversary of operation in Colorado. This outstanding nonprofit organization has been recognized as one of the state's strongest grassroots groups devoted to advocacy, action and results.

In an effort to advocate for Colorado's citizens, CoPIRG's current programs focus on affordable health care, consumer protection, environmental advocacy, and the strengthening of our democracy.

The cost of health care and prescription drugs are soaring and senior citizens and the uninsured are paying a disproportionate share of their incomes for their basic health care needs. CoPIRG, through its surveys, is advocating for Congressional reforms and urging our state government to develop buying pools to benefit those on fixed incomes and without employment most impacted by these spiraling costs.

Coloradans have many areas where they need more personal and consumer protection. Through comprehensive reports each year prior to the holiday-giving season, Public Interest Groups across the nation have targeted unsafe toys in retail stores and on the Internet. For the past 17 years, these reports have led to over 100 recalls and prompted the passage of a federal toy labeling law in 1994.

Investor protections were highlighted last year when CoPIRG advocated for consumer privacy laws to protect credit card numbers from theft. This year, CoPIRG is working to strengthen laws governing the accounting industry in Colorado and increase funds for investigations and other reforms.

Targeting corporate fraud, a CoPIRG backed law helped create an independent oversight system to ensure that audit firms aren't subject to conflicts of interest. Through a research report, consumers can reduce their banking fees through better knowledge of industry charges. In 2001, predatory lending practices were exposed through CoPIRG's research, leading Colorado's Attorney General to file civil suits against offenders, the first such action in the nation. In another national first, Colorado passed a law to provide con-

sumers with free annual credit reports upon request.

On the front lines of environmental and public health protection, CoPIRG has fought to strengthen air standards, reduce pollutants that cause global warming, smog and increase respiratory diseases such as asthma. In a campaign to keep our water clean and safe for drinking and recreation, PIRGs nationally are working to enforce toxic regulations on corporate violators.

In an effort to protect our nation's coastlines, Public Research Interest Groups across the nation are advocating to leave wilderness areas free from oil and gas drilling. As one of the country's largest source of pollution, fossil fuels continue to be harmful to the nation. PIRGs across the country are working to support the use of renewable sources of energy through education and advocacy. With the motto, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle, CoPIRG and other affiliates are building environmentally sound alternatives to keep our nation clean and safe for all its citizens.

Fighting for Colorado's citizens, CoPIRG has partnered with Colorado Common Cause, the League of Women Voters of Colorado, the Colorado Environmental Coalition and other advocacy organizations to direct a county by county effort to expand voter participation through Colorado Citizens' Voice. Using training workshops, the coalition supports citizen involvement in government decisions and works for meaningful reform on critical issues.

Through comprehensive reports and releases, CoPIRG keeps voters informed of campaign contributions, compiles statistics on campaign financing trends and continuously advocates for campaign finance reform and the protection of initiative process in Colorado.

For the past thirty years, Colorado and the Rocky Mountain West has been the proud home of Colorado Public Interest Research Group. For their many accomplishments on behalf of its citizens, we commend their service and wish them many years of future success.

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RECOGNIZING AUGUSTINE  
GALLEGO DURING HISPANIC  
HERITAGE MONTH

**HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 15, 2003*

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, which commemorates the numerous contributions that Latinos make to our country. It is my privilege today to recognize an extraordinary individual who shapes the future every day through his valuable work, San Diego Community College District Chancellor Augustine Gallego.

In his 14 years as Chancellor, Augustine "Augie" Gallego has earned a reputation as a national leader in higher education. He is the immediate past chair of the American Council on Education (ACE). Change Magazine recently named him as one of the 21 most influential higher education senior leaders in the United States. Locally, he is known for bringing together business leaders, community members, and politicians to find solutions for challenges within the educational system.