

Improved access to emergency contraception (EC) can further reduce the staggering rates of unintended pregnancy and abortion in this country. EC prevents pregnancy after unprotected sex or a contraceptive failure. The Alan Guttmacher Institute estimates that increased use of EC accounted for up to 43 percent of the total decline in abortion rates between 1994 and 2000. In addition, EC is often the only contraceptive option for the 300,000 women who are reported to be raped each year. Unfortunately, many women do not know about EC and many face insurmountable barriers in accessing this important product. The Prevention First Act mandates that the Secretary of Health and Human Services implement an education campaign about EC and requires that hospitals receiving Federal funds provide victims of sexual assault with information and access to EC.

Contraceptives have a proven track record of enhancing the health of women and children, preventing unintended pregnancy, and reducing the need for abortion. However far too many insurance policies exclude this vital coverage. While most employment-related insurance policies in the United States cover prescription drugs in general, the many do not include equitable coverage for prescription contraceptive drugs and devices. Although 21 States now have laws in place requiring insurers to provide contraceptive coverage if they cover other prescription drugs, 29 states still do not have any laws. Out of pocket expenses for contraception can be costly. Women of reproductive age currently spend 68 percent more in out-of-pocket health care costs than men, much of which is due to reproductive health-related supplies and services. The Prevention First Act requires that private health plans to cover FDA-approved prescription contraceptives and related medical services.

Teens face additional barriers regarding access to services and information. Sixty percent of teens have sex before graduating high school. Efforts by conservatives to restrict access to family planning services and promote abstinence-only education programs that are prohibited from discussing the benefits of contraception, actually jeopardize adolescent health and run counter to the views of many mainstream medical groups.

Nearly 50 percent of new cases of STDs occur among people ages 15 to 24, even though this age bracket makes up just a quarter of the sexually active population. Clearly, teens have the most to lose when faced with an unintended pregnancy or an STD infection.

Moreover, 1 in 3 girls becomes pregnant before the age of 20, and 80 percent of these pregnancies are unintended. Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school. Furthermore, children of teenage mothers have lower birth weights, are more likely to perform poorly in school, and are at greater risk of abuse and neglect. Improving access to contraceptive services and information does not cause non-sexually active teens to start having sex. Instead, teens need information to help them both postpone sexual activity and to protect themselves, if they become sexually active. The Prevention First Act provides funding to public and private entities to establish or expand their teenage pregnancy prevention programs, and my bill requires federally funded programs that provide information on the use of contraceptives to ensure that the information is medically accurate and includes health benefits and failure rates.

Reducing unintended pregnancy and infection with STDs are important public health goals. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention included family planning in their published list of the "Ten Great Public Health Achievements in the 20th Century." My bill, the Prevention First Act, will improve access to family planning services for all women in need and will go a long way in fulfilling the promise of this important public health achievement.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to cosponsor my bill today.

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RECOGNIZING GRACEMOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND "OPERATION BUBBLE GUM BUDDIES"

**HON. SAM GRAVES**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 20, 2005*

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize the students at Gracemor Elementary School's S.A.G.E. program. S.A.G.E. is the acronym for Students in Academically Gifted Education, and the S.A.G.E. students at Gracemor have been participating in a great program to support our troops called "Operation Bubble Gum Buddies."

The S.A.G.E. students at Gracemor have been supporting our brave soldiers and their important mission by collecting bubble gum and other items to send to our troops currently serving in Iraq. Our brave soldiers will not only enjoy these gifts themselves, but they will also share the bubble gum with the children of Iraq. This small, selfless gesture spreads goodwill and establishes an important bond between the future leaders of America—like the students at Gracemor—and the future leaders of a free and democratic Iraq.

It was also an inspiration to learn that each student in the program included a personal note along with the bubble gum in each individual care package. I know that the soldiers greatly appreciate hearing from the students, and I would encourage the students to continue with this important task; it is a true testament to the patriotic spirit of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in thanking the students of Gracemor Elementary who have been participating in "Operation Bubble Gum Buddies." Their dedication to our troops and the children of Iraq are a credit to our Nation, and I am proud to represent them in the United States Congress.

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HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF HECTOR BOLAÑOS CALZADO

**HON. HENRY CUELLAR**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 20, 2005*

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the accomplished career of Hector Bolaños Calzado, Junior Achievement of Laredo Business Hall of Fame Laureate.

Mr. Bolaños Calzado has had a tremendously successful career as a customs broker. He is the first customs broker from Nuevo Laredo to receive this award, and the first award

recipient to operate offices on both sides of the border.

In 1953, Mr. Bolaños Calzado joined his family's brokerage firm at the age of 22. The firm was founded in 1928 by Don Fulgencio Bolanos Garcia, who saw tremendous potential for growth in the border region. The Bolaños firm persevered through a period of great change in Laredo, and has adapted to new technology, new laws and regulations, and the new economic situation created by the growth in trade between Mexico and the United States.

Under Mr. Bolaños Calzado's care, the business has grown by almost 80 percent. He has expanded operations into Laredo, beginning with a 12,000 square-foot warehouse in 1964. He has become involved in the local banking industry, and has served on the board of directors for the International Bank of Commerce for the last 35 years.

Mr. Bolaños Calzado's continues to be a major force for growth and trade in the Laredo region. His work has helped bring prosperity to his native city, and I am proud to have the opportunity to recognize him here today.

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ROSE BARGAS MYERS

**HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 20, 2005*

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, today to honor a constituent who lived in my district and has overcome incredible obstacles to grasp the opportunities America holds, Rose Bargas Myers.

She came to the U.S. as an infant accompanied by her mother. Her biological father had died and her mother later abandoned her to be raised by her grandparents.

This individual was nurtured in the loving home of Alberto and Pauline Bargas who understood all too well the cost of America's freedom. A deep love of country ran deep with her grandparents who were immigrants themselves.

In addition, her grandfather served in the Army during WWII, the Korean War and in Vietnam. He was a Prisoner of War survivor having lived through what is called the "Death March of Bataan." This Death March has been described as one of the most tragic and irresponsible episodes in the entire war, for which her grandfather simply commented, "Thank God, I survive."

Life was spent growing up in Killeen, Texas and believing that her grandparents were her birth parents until she was legally adopted in 1973.

She also believed that she was a United States Citizen because the adoption judge had declared her a citizen. It was only last year that she discovered the judge did not have authority to grant her citizenship.

Today, I want to recognize Rose Bargas Myers and present to her an American Flag that has waved in her honor over the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. and to be among the first to congratulate and welcome her into the family of Americans.