

fighting for the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Program without any cuts to the program. In conjunction with the Community Food Resource Center, Veronica spearheaded an innovative pilot project to help 500 Local 372 members take advantage of their eligibility for Earned Income Tax Credit.

Madam Speaker, Veronica Montgomery-Costa was unanimously elected for three consecutive terms as President of the 125,000-member District Council 37 by the Council's delegates and also serving in her second term as a member of the Steering Committee of the Municipal Labor Committee. It is an honor to pay tribute to her exceptional leadership on behalf of working men and women. She is most deserving of our recognition today.

ELSIE LEE

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 13, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Elsie Lee of Kansas City, Missouri. Elsie is a very special young woman who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Girl Scouts of America, and earning the most prestigious award of Girl Scout Gold Award.

Elsie has been very active with her troop, participating in many scout activities. In order to receive the prestigious Gold Award, Elsie has completed all seven requirements that promote community service, personal and spiritual growth, positive values and leadership skills.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Elsie Lee for her accomplishments with the Girl Scouts of America and for her efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Girl Scout Gold Award.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF GREECE AND CELEBRATING GREEK AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

SPEECH OF

HON. ZACHARY T. SPACE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

Mr. SPACE. Madam Speaker, I wish to acknowledge Tuesday's consideration and passage of H. Res. 1024, a bill recognizing the 187th anniversary of the independence of Greece and celebrating Greek and American democracy.

I am honored to support a bill whose significance is so extensive and which has such enormous personal meaning to me. I am immensely proud of my Greek heritage, and the profound influence this legacy has had not only on American democracy but on governments around the world.

Early on, America's Founding Fathers looked to the ancient Greeks and their enlightened society for inspiration in forming a new government. As we know, American representative democracy is rooted in the philosophy and ethos of Greek government.

It is this example of freedom and representation that so many governments strive to emulate today. And now, more than ever, it is imperative for that message to be heard.

The Greek American community continues to work admirably to connect Greek culture and heritage with the global society of today. They have grown that symbiotic relationship into an extensive Greek-American legacy.

This legacy is made of the contributions of millions of Greek-Americans, such as my paternal grandfather who emigrated from Greece in the early 20th century and earned his citizenship in his new country by fighting in World War I. My father, Socrates, continued the Space family's patriotic tradition by serving in the Marines during the Korean War. After the war, my father attended Ohio State's law school, thanks to the GI Bill, thereby paving the way for his future family—for me.

The opportunities afforded to my father and my grandfather in America were—in my opinion—a result of the democratic by-products of freedom and liberty that Americans enjoy, thanks to the Greeks.

Today, as we celebrate the anniversary of this wonderful nation's independence, it's important that we continue to recognize the significance of Greek contributions to the global society. Needless to say, as a Greek-American, I very much support H. Res. 1024.

HONORING SAN MARCOS HIGH SCHOOL MADRIGAL SINGERS

HON. LOIS CAPPS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 13, 2008

Mrs. CAPPS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate an exceptional high school choir in my district, the San Marcos High School Madrigal Singers of Santa Barbara, CA, which was chosen to perform at New York City's legendary Carnegie Hall on March 10, 2008.

The San Marcos high School Madrigal Singers were selected out of dozens of high school choirs across the country for this performance. The concert featured 200 students from four states, and is the capstone of Carnegie Hall's yearlong National High School Choral Festival. The concert was conducted by Dr. Craig Jessop, esteemed Music Director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, who has been working with the choirs and their conductors throughout the year. Apart from their world-renowned performances, Carnegie Hall brings innovative music education programs to students across the Nation. I am delighted that these young people have been given this opportunity.

Led by Carolyn Teraoka-Brady. The Madrigal Singers, one of 5 choral groups at San Marcos High School, performs a varied repertoire of choral literature, Renaissance to contemporary, for the community and at festivals. In the last 4 years, the group has consistently received superior ratings at State and regional festivals in CA. In 2006, the group received a first place score at the invitational "National Festival of Gold" in New York City, featuring some of the country's finest ensembles. In addition to choral activities, these students are also leaders in the school's theatre productions, student government, Mock Trial, school newspaper, and CIF sports. The Mad-

rigal Singers have performed for Donald Brinegar, Lynne Gackle, Anton Armstrong, André Thomas, and Weston Noble.

I am honored to have one of the 4 schools in the Nation chosen for the Carnegie Hall National High School Choral Festival come from my California district. The Madrigal Singers should be proud not only of their musical achievement, but their embodiment of the quality musical education the State of California provides. I commend these students and their leaders for their success.

PAUL WELLSTONE MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION EQUITY ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 5, 2008

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, the time has come to enact the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act. We need to end discrimination against those with mental illness and substance use disorders, just as we have worked to end discrimination more broadly. I regret that I could not be here to vote on its passage out of the House.

If you cannot be moved by a sense of compassion to support this important legislation, then maybe you can be moved by the statistics. More than 57.7 million Americans suffer from mental disorders. That's one in five Americans—people in our families, our friends, and coworkers. Mental disorders and addictions affect us all—regardless of race, gender or socioeconomic status. H.R. 1424 ensures that health insurers and group health plans treat mental disorders and addiction no differently than any other disease.

This is not a mandate. The Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act simply says that if plans choose to offer mental health coverage, then that coverage must not be subject to different standards than the coverage for treatments of physical disease. Parity will ensure that treatment for mental disorders and addictions will be no more restrictive than treatment limits applied to comparable medical and surgical benefits.

Opponents of true parity claim that H.R. 1424 could result in decreased access to employer provided health insurance. That is merely a scare tactic designed to undermine the broad-based support for the bill. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has estimated that the impact on premiums is just two-tenths of one percent. Statistics show us that depressed workers lose 5.6 hours a week of productive work time. This translates into tens of billions of dollars annually in lost productivity for employers.

We also know that every dollar spent in treatment saves up to \$12 in health care and criminal justice costs alone. Do the math, and you'll see that treating mental health and addiction disorders is a wise investment. No one in this day and age should lose years of their lives in the fog of mental illness and addiction when help is available. We would never think of denying diabetes patients insulin. Yet, it seems to be acceptable to erect financial barriers or take other steps that ultimately deny patients with physical and chemical imbalances treatment for their mental illness. That

is wrong, and this legislation would end these discriminatory practices. I look forward to negotiating a strong compromise with our Senate colleagues.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CHILD
PROTECTION IMPROVEMENTS
ACT OF 2008

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 13, 2008

Mr. SCHIFF. Madam Speaker, I rise to speak about the introduction of the Child Protection Improvements Act of 2008. I introduced this bill today with my colleague Congressman MIKE RODGERS of Michigan to allow youth-serving organizations to perform Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) fingerprint-based background checks on prospective volunteers. We are joined by Senator JOSEPH BIDEN, Senator ARLEN SPECTER, and Senator ORRIN HATCH, who are introducing identical legislation in the Senate.

A positive, stable influence can make an incredible difference in a child's life, and we are lucky to have millions of Americans eager to serve their community. In 1986, as a young lawyer, I volunteered as a Big Brother and was paired with a wonderful seven year-old named "David." That relationship has been one of the most rewarding and enduring in my life. It also taught me first hand the trust that we place in the adult in a mentoring situation. Groups like Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the Girl Scouts, and thousands of agencies, large and small, are doing amazing work for children across America. This bill is about giving them the tools they need to protect children and to accomplish their mission.

The Child protection Improvements Act will allow organizations that pair volunteers with children, whether as mentors, Little League coaches, or Scout Masters, to perform quick and accurate background checks through the FBI's fingerprint-based system. It will be simple for organizations to request a check, it will cost non-profits a maximum of 525, and they will receive a result in less than a week.

This legislation arose from the lessons we learned from a 2003 pilot program established in the PROTECT Act. The pilot gave certain mentoring and youth agencies the ability to submit fingerprints directly to the FBI to receive a determination if the volunteers criminal record made them unfit for the role. In 2003, and earlier, state law enforcement agencies have been able to access the FBI system, but as of today only one-third of states have the infrastructure in place for a mentoring agency to get an FBI background check in an affordable and timely manner.

The PROTECT ACT pilot demonstrated the need for background checks to protect children from predators. Six percent of checks conducted came back with serious criminal records, in many cases records that would not have turned up through a search of a state database or through a name-based, commercial search. There are cases around the nation in which applicants were sex offenders, repeat felons, and child abusers. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) reviewed tiles in which an applicant had a criminal record in four states, including a con-

viction for murder, which they didn't reveal when they applied to be a volunteer.

The pilot also taught us that youth serving organizations want to watch out for children and they want access to affordable, accurate, and prompt background checks. And that was exactly what the pilot provided, returning a fitness determination in an average of three to five days for less than \$20.

The Child Protection Improvements Act also protects the privacy rights of volunteers. No criminal records will be transmitted to anyone other than NCMEC without the consent of the volunteer, so their right to privacy will be protected. If they believe their record contains errors, or if they disagree with the determination of NCMEC, they can challenge the completeness of the record or request its full release.

There is a clear and compelling need for this legislation. By passing the Child Protection Improvements Act, Congress will take an important step forward in protecting children and supporting the service of thousands of community-based youth serving organizations around the country.

20TH ANNIVERSARY OF SADDAM
HUSSEIN'S ATTACK ON
HALABJA, IRAQ

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 13, 2008

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I rise today to call the attention of the House to the 20th anniversary of Saddam Hussein's attack on the city of Halabja with chemical and biological weapons. On March 16, 1988, these weapons killed some 5,000 Kurdish men, women and children, as part of Hussein's Al-Anfal campaign to kill and displace the Kurdish population in northern Iraq.

According to a comprehensive study by Human Rights Watch, the 1988 Al-Anfal campaign consisted of approximately 40 gas attacks and resulted in the deaths of at least 50,000 and perhaps as many as 100,000 Iraqi Kurds. The worst in this series of attacks was on Halabja.

The attack in 1988 has left behind a cruel and persistent legacy on the village of Halabja, where inhabitants experience a high instance of life threatening medical conditions due to the persistence of noxious poisons in the food and water supply. I ask that our colleagues remember this day, which exemplifies the legacy of brutality and human rights abuses that characterized the regime of the late Saddam Hussein.

HONORING LOUVENIA POINTER

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 13, 2008

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Louvinia G. Pointer who enjoyed a successful career on the Broadway stage. When Noel Coward heard Louvinia's voice, he wrote a part for her to sing in his musical, "Set To Music," starring Beatrice Lillie. After that, she appeared with Alfred Lunt and Lynne

Fontaine on Broadway in "The Pirate." Highly esteemed among her peers as a singer, teacher and choral conductor, her fulfilling career includes work with some of the country's outstanding teachers including Rosalie Miller, Samuel Margolis, Sarah Lee, Modena Scoval, and her long-time friend, coach and accompanist, the late Sylvia Olden Lee.

Louvinia's exceptional work as choral director of the National Youth Administration Radio Workshop won praise from notables such as Harry T. Burleigh, Fritz Mahler, Robert Hufstader, Hall Johnson, Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary McLeod Bethune. Mrs. Pointer took her love of music to the New York City School system, where for many years, she was privileged to share her love of music and teaching gifts with the children of New York City. She taught in Public School 21, Lefferts Junior High School, Girls High and Tilden High Schools. During her 26 years teaching, she received numerous awards for her outstanding work.

Now retired, Mrs. Pointer is committed to the revival and preservation of the "Nego Spiritual." Her dream of establishing an organization to preserve the Negro Spiritual became a reality in 1987 when the Great Day Chorale was formed. Now in its twentieth season, the group, through the positive messages of these songs, has been an inspiration to listeners everywhere.

In 1994, Mrs. Pointer was chosen to take part in the Crown Heights Project, which was a collaboration of the Brooklyn Children's Museum, the Historical Society and the Society for the Preservation of Weeksville and Bedford-Stuyvesant History. Among her many awards, she received citations from the Honorable Howard Golden, former Borough President and the present Borough President, Marty Markowitz. Louvinia has been awarded for her work with Brooklyn-based arts organizations, including Celebrate Brooklyn, BACA, Welcome Back to Brooklyn, the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra, and as a member of the board of the Brooklyn Music School.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to honor Louvinia G. Pointer for her remarkable achievements and luminous career in the musical arts. She has directed two albums and even arranged the song, "In the Garden" by Bob Dylan on his album "Gotta Serve Somebody."

STEPHANIE HULL

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 13, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Stephanie Hull of Liberty, Missouri. Stephanie is a very special young woman who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Girl Scouts of America, and earning the most prestigious award of Girl Scout Gold Award.

Stephanie has been very active with her troop, participating in many scout activities. In order to receive the prestigious Gold Award, Stephanie has completed all seven requirements that promote community service, personal and spiritual growth, positive values and leadership skills.