in California, which has the second highest foreclosure rate in the Nation. One in every 78 families is now facing foreclosure in my State. This legislation makes many important reforms to address the current crisis, and I would like to highlight two provisions which I believe are particularly critical for Californians.

First, the measure will expand the FHA program so that homeowners at risk of facing foreclosure can refinance into viable mortgages that are government-backed. Many of my constituents are facing ballooning payments on their mortgages which now far exceed the actual value of their homes. This measure will give them the opportunity to get their finances back on track and keep their homes.

Second, and perhaps most helpful to addressing the crisis in my home State, the legislation makes permanent the FHA loan limit and GSE conforming loan limits temporarily increased by the Economic Stimulus Act. The previous GSE conforming loan limit of $417,000 and the FHA-insurable loan limit of $362,000 simply were not high enough to be effective for high cost regions such as California, where the average cost of a home greatly exceeds the national average.

GSE and FHA backing of mortgages are key to ensuring access to affordable mortgages for many home buyers and homeowners. Permanently increasing loan limits is perhaps the single most important thing we can do to ensure that Californians can benefit from congressional efforts to address the mortgage crisis and have access to affordable, fixed-rate mortgages.

I urge my colleagues to do the right thing and vote in support of this legislation so that we can help our neighbors keep their homes and begin to revitalize our communities.

A TRIBUTE TO DR. ALFREDO QUIÑONES-HINOJOSA

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 16, 2008

Ms. ESHOO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and accomplishments of an extraordinary neurosurgeon, professor, mentor and hope-giver, Dr. Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa.

The New York Times, May 13, 2008, carried a story which described Dr. Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa's incredible journey from Mexicali, Mexico, to the world-renowned halls of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. His story is the story of America and what immigrants in every chapter of our history contribute to our Nation.

Below is the full text of the article:

A CONVERSATION WITH ALFREDO QUIÑONES-HINOJOSA: A SURGEON'S PATH FROM MIGRANT FIELDS TO OPERATING ROOM

(By Claudia Dreifus)

At the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa has four positions. He is a neurosurgeon who teaches oncology and neurosurgery, directs a neurosurgery clinic and heads a laboratory studying brain tumors. He also performs nearly 250 brain operations a year. Twenty years ago, Dr. Quiñones-Hinojosa, now 40, was an illegal immigrant working in the vegetable fields of the Central Valley in California. He became a citizen in 1997 while at Harvard.

Q. Where did you grow up?

A. Mexicali. My father had a small gas station. The family's stability vanished when there was a devaluation of the Mexican peso in the 1980s. My father lost the gas station, and we bad no money for food. For a while, I sold hot dogs on the corner to help. As the economic crisis deepened, there seemed no possibility for any future in Mexico. I had big dreams and I wanted more education. So in 1987, when I was 19, I went up to the border between Mexicali and the United States and hopped the fence.

Some years later, I was sitting at a lunch table with colleagues at Harvard Medical School. Someone asked how I'd come to Harvard. ''I hopped the fence,'' I said. Everyone laughed. They thought I was joking.

Q. After you crossed the border, what kind of work did you find?

A. I was a farm laborer in the San Joaquin Valley, seven days a week, sunup to sundown. I lived in this little trailer I paid $300 a month for. It didn't take long to see that farm work was a dead end.

After a year of it, I moved to Stockton, where I found a job loading sulfur and fish lard onto railroad freight cars. My eyes burned from the sulfur, and my clothes smelled from fish lard, but it paid me enough so that I was able to go to night classes at San Joaquin Delta Community College. There, I met this wonderful human being, Norm Nichols, the speech and debate coach. He took me into his family and mentored me. Norm helped me apply for and get accepted to the University of California, Berkeley.

Once at Berkeley, I took a lot of math and science classes to up my G.P.A. Science and math are their own language. You didn't need to write in perfect English to do well in them. I pulled straight A's in science. In my senior year, someone told me to go see this guy, Hugo Mora, who helped Hispanics with science talent. I brought him my transcript and he said: ''Wow! With grades like these, you should be at Harvard Medical School.'' That's how I got to Harvard. All along, I had much luck with mentors.

Q. Did you find Harvard tough?

A. Not really. Compared to working in the fields, it was easy. The question was what kind of doctor should I become? For a while, I thought I'd be a pediatric oncologist, because I wanted to help children. But then I thought, I'm good with my hands. Maybe I should do surgery.

One day, I was waltzing through Brigham and Women's Hospital and I saw Dr. Peter Black, the chairman of neurosurgery. I introduced myself, and he invited me that day to come to watch him do an operation. As it happened, he was doing an ''awake'' surgery, where the patient's brain is exposed and the patient is awake so that the surgeon can ask questions. As I watched that, I fell in love with brain surgery.

Q. What about it spoke to you?

A. Imagine, the most beautiful organ of our body, the one that we know least about, the one that makes us who we are, and it was in Dr. Black's hand. It was in front of me. It was pulsating! I realized I could work with my hands and touch this incredible organ, which is what I do now. I cannot conceive of a much more intimate relationship than that. A patient grants you the gift of trusting you with their lives, and there is no room for mistakes.

Dr. Peter Black, he was a very humble person. And he took me under his wing. So here again, I was very fortunate with mentorship.

Q. I'm told that you do something that not all surgeons do: you spend a lot of time with patients before an operation. Why?

A. I meet them several times, and their families. They don't know if they are going to wake up after the operation. Not all the time am I successful. I do about 230 to 240 brain tumor operations a year. The majority make it. Some have complications. And some—2 to 3 percent—it takes a while for the patients to wake up. I need to meet everyone so that they know the risks. But getting to know these patients, it's the most painful part.

I was at a funeral yesterday. This was a 21-year-old man with a young wife, pregnant. Three surgeries, and the tumor kept growing and growing. And he told me, ''There's no possible way I'll give up.'' He fought so hard. He trusted me with his life. Not once, several times. I owed him my presence.

Q. How do you handle such losses?

A. One of the ways I work it out is through research, the laboratory. I'm trying to learn about the causes of these recurring tumors. The patients, they can donate tissue, which we will examine.

My hypothesis is—and there are quite a few scientists who believe this—there are within these brain tumors a small subset of cells that can keep growing, even when you think you've taken them all out. We call them brain stem cells. They can keep making themselves, and they can make ''daughter cells'' that can become anything else in the brain. They have the ability to go to sleep for a little bit and then wake up and do it again. So we're trying to identify this small subset of cells we may be leaving behind when we make these beautiful surgeries.

Q. Have you actually found them?

A. Yes, but only in the laboratory. When we've found them, they may be a product of the experimental conditions of the laboratory. We haven't found them yet in live patients. The next challenge is to see if they truly exist in the human brain while the patient is alive.

Q. When you hear anti-immigrant expressions on talk radio and cable television, how do you feel?

A. It bothers me. Because I know what it was that drove me to jump the fence. It was poverty and frustration with a system that would have never allowed me to be who I am today.

As long as there is poverty in the rest of the world and we export our culture through movies and television, people who are hungry are going to come here. There's no way to stop it.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2419, FOOD, CONSERVATION, AND ENERGY ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Conference Report on the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, and I would like to commend my colleague from Minnesota, Chairman PETERSON, for his tireless efforts. He is a champion for rural American and his leadership was essential for the success of this legislation.

The conference report—while not perfect—is a step in the right direction. This farm bill makes unprecedented investments in nutrition and conservation programs while also helping to address our Nation's energy crisis. In addition, this farm bill begins to scale back the commodity program by reducing spending on farmers who do not need the help.