

and for lovers of freedom around the globe.

The people of Lithuania endured 51 years of oppressive foreign occupation. Operating under cover of the infamous Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, Soviet troops marched into Lithuania, beginning an occupation characterized by communist dictatorship and cultural genocide.

Even in the face of this oppression, the Lithuanian people were not defeated. They resisted their oppressors and kept their culture, their faith and their dream of independence very much alive even during the hardest times.

The people of Lithuania were even able to mobilize and sustain a non-violent movement for social and political change, a movement which came to be known as Sajudis. This people's movement helped guarantee a peaceful transition to independence through full participation in democratic elections on February 24, 1990.

Unfortunately, as is so often the case, peace and freedom had to be purchased again and again. In January of 1991, ten months after restoration of independence, the people and government of Lithuania faced a bloody assault by foreign troops intent on overthrowing their democratic institutions. Lithuanians withstood this assault, maintaining their independence and their democracy. Their successful use of non-violent resistance to an oppressive regime is an inspiration to all.

Lithuania's integration into the international community has been swift and sure. On September 17, 1991, the reborn nation became a member of the United Nations and is a signatory to a number of its organizations and other international agreements. It also is a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and the Council of Europe.

Lithuania is an associate member of the European Union, has applied for NATO membership and is currently negotiating for membership in the WTO, OECD and other Western organizations.

The United States established diplomatic relations with Lithuania on July 28, 1992. But our nation never really broke with the government and people of Lithuania. The United States never recognized the forcible incorporation of Lithuania into the U.S.S.R., and views the present Government of Lithuania as a legal continuation of the inter-war republic. Indeed, for over fifty years the United States maintained a bipartisan consensus that our nation would refuse to recognize the forcible incorporation of Lithuania into the former Soviet Union.

America's relations with Lithuania continue to be strong, friendly and mutually beneficial. Lithuania has enjoyed most-favored-nation (MFN) treatment with the United States since December, 1991. Through 1996, the United States has committed over \$100 million to Lithuania's economic and

political transformation and to address humanitarian needs. In 1994, the United States and Lithuania signed an agreement of bilateral trade and intellectual property protection, and in 1997 a bilateral investment treaty.

In 1998 the United States and Lithuania signed the Baltic Charter Partnership. That charter recalls the history of American relations with the area and underscores our "real, profound, and enduring" interest in the security and independence of the three Baltic states. As the Charter also notes, our interest in a Europe whole and free will not be ensured until Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are secure.

I commend the people of Lithuania for their courage and perseverance in using peaceful means to regain their independence. I pledge to work with my colleagues to continue working to secure the freedom and independence of Lithuania and its Baltic neighbors, and I join with the people of Lithuania as they celebrate their independence.●

NATIONAL EYE DONOR MONTH

● Mr. BREAUX. Mr. President, I'm pleased to rise today to call to the attention of my colleagues and all of our constituents across the nation that March is National Eye Donor Month. For more than 55 years now thousands of Americans have participated in this selfless exercise of helping others.

The purpose of National Eye Donor Month is not only to honor the past donors who have played a pivotal role in restoring the sight of over half a million individuals, but also to raise public awareness of the continuing need for donors. When people decide to become a donor all they need to do is sign a card and announce their intent to their family.

The many recipients of this "gift of sight" represent the great diversity of our nation's population. For instance, Judrita Billiot is a young Houma Indian who lives in a small community about 50 miles from New Orleans, Louisiana. This young girl was born with a condition known as congenital opacity, in which the corneas neither transmit nor allow the passage of light. When she was still less than a year old Judrita received corneal transplants in both of her eyes. I'm happy to say that today she is a healthy young girl with normal vision thanks not only to the transplant procedure, but also to the donors who were thoughtful enough to leave behind this extraordinary gift.

The success of Judrita's transplants is not uncommon. The current success rate of corneal transplantation is nearly 90% thanks to a rigorous screening process and the dedication of our nation's eye banks, working in conjunction with the Eye Bank Association of America.

I appreciate this opportunity to highlight National Eye Donor Month and I encourage all of my colleagues to work with their local eye banks to increase public awareness of corneal transplan-

tation and the continuous need for donors.●

RECOGNIZING KUAKINI HEALTH CARE SYSTEM ON ITS 100TH ANNIVERSARY

● Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, I rise to recognize the Kuakini Medical Health System as it celebrates its 100th anniversary caring for Hawaii's people. Kuakini began as an ethnic charity hospital founded by Japanese immigrants who arrived in Hawaii to labor in the thriving sugar cane fields. Plantation wages were low and many newcomers found themselves unable to afford medical care. The Japanese Benevolent Society provided emergency relief to the immigrants, but a fire destroyed their facilities in January, 1900. Undaunted, the Japanese Benevolent Society started plans to build a charity hospital. Funds were raised through membership dues and community donations. Half an acre of land was purchased in Kapalama and a two-story wooden building housing 38 patient beds was completed by July, 1900. This humble beginning was the start of Kuakini Health System.

As the last existing hospital in the United States established by Japanese immigrants, Kuakini is unique among health institutions in the United States and Hawaii. There have been many changes during the past century, but the commitment of the health professionals and volunteers of Kuakini Health System to meet the health care needs of Hawaii's community has not wavered. Kuakini Health System has expanded to embrace and serve Hawaii's community without regard to ethnicity, disability, age, sex, religious affiliation, or financial status. Kuakini Health System is in the company of only 5 percent of all U.S. hospitals having a heavy Medicare caseload. Sixty-five percent of the hospital's admissions are Medicare patients and Kuakini's hospital cares for the largest composition of elderly patients among Hawaii's hospitals.

Kuakini Health System is a teaching facility, training health professionals in the precepts of compassion and quality in health care. Guests from around the world tour Kuakini to learn American health care and specific methods for health care. Kuakini includes the community in its educational goals with health and wellness fairs, health and prevention education classes, an information hotline, Internet access to information, Speakers Bureau Program and Open House aimed at giving students a first hand look at the different departments and professions within a health care organization. By bringing health awareness to our community, Kuakini contributes to the overall health and well-being of Hawaii's people.

Kuakini Health System strives for excellence. Federal funds support nationally and internationally recognized medical research and health programs