

approach to the delivery of medical care to Indian people, most of whom live in isolated, sparsely-populated and under-served areas of our country. Subsequent reauthorization, has amended the Act to reflect advancements in health care delivery, respond to the desire of tribes for greater responsibility of programs, and target the high incidence of certain diseases that have plagued this segment of the American population.

The bill we introduce today is based largely upon recommendations made by the Indian health community—including tribal leaders, tribal health directors, health care experts, Native patients themselves, and the Indian Health Service. Its primary objective is to improve access to quality medical care for this population.

In this bill we maintain the basic framework of the IHCA, including its provisions that target diseases for which Indian Country shows an astonishingly high rate—such as diabetes, tuberculosis, infant mortality, and substance abuse. We have included a greater role for Indian tribes in setting local priorities for health care delivery and provide for innovative options for funding of Indian health facilities. This legislation authorizes a nationally certified Community Health Aide program to supply medical care in under-served, remote areas and strengthens health programs that serve Indian people in urban areas. In addition, this bill will provide for the consolidation of substance abuse, mental health and social service programs into a holistic system for behavioral health services.

We have certainly made improvements in the health status of Indian and Alaska Native people since IHCA was first authorized including; infant mortality which has decreased by nearly 55 percent. Native people, however, still suffer death rates from some diseases at rates many times higher than the national population such as; diabetes at 249 percent higher, tuberculosis at 533 percent higher, and substance abuse at 627 percent higher.

I will push for immediate action on this important legislation in the Resources Committee where I serve as the Ranking Democratic Member and look forward to working with my colleagues and Indian Country as we proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT

HON. SHERWOOD L. BOEHLERT

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 1, 2001

Mr. BOEHLERT. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce the Department of Environmental Protection Act, important legislation that redesignates the Environmental Protection Agency as an executive department in the executive branch.

Like many of my colleagues, I believe the time has come to elevate EPA to cabinet-level status. This is not a new idea, but it continues to be a good idea. Rep. Jim Florio and I introduced legislation in the 101st Congress (1988) to elevate the agency. I introduced a similar bill again in the 103rd Congress. Several of my colleagues also introduced EPA elevation bills and, in 1993, there was significant debate surrounding Senate-passed and House Com-

mittee-passed bills. The problem wasn't so much the concept behind the bill, but the "baggage" attached to the bill. It became a magnet for controversial provisions and pet projects.

And so, today I'm introducing a baggage-free EPA elevation bill. I believe the bill steers clear of controversial issues that could sidetrack the broader effort. It also combines features from previous legislative efforts, particularly those of the former Chairman and Ranking Member of the Government Operations Committee, Representative JOHN CONYERS and former Representative Bill Clinger.

The Department of Environmental Protection Act should help start the discussion in the 107th Congress. There is at least one bill introduced in the Senate. The subject also came up during Administrator Whitman's confirmation hearings. But there needs to be much more discussion and, most importantly, action.

It may be an "old" idea but it's still a good idea. EPA's mission is too critical for the agency not to be an official part of the cabinet. The idea was good under a Republican President in the late 1980's, a Democratic President in the 1990's, and now a Republican President at the start of the 21st Century.

I urge my colleagues to join me in support of the effort.

TRIBUTE TO MS. JENNIFER LUCIANO

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 1, 2001

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Ms. Jennifer Luciano. Ms. Luciano has spent the last five months doing an internship in my Congressional office. As she prepares to leave Capitol Hill tomorrow and return to Loyola University to complete her education I wish her well.

On behalf of the constituents of the Seventh Congressional District I want to commend and congratulate Jennifer for doing an outstanding job. During her internship Jennifer responded to constituent mail, drafted ideas for legislation, prepared "Dear Colleagues" and assisted the legislative staff.

In particular, Jennifer thought of the idea for a Minority Women's Statue to be displayed in the Rotunda of the United States Capitol. Currently, there are no depictions or Statues that represent the accomplishments of Minority Women to the history of America. In addition, she thought of a bill to expand Medicare coverage to cover eyeglasses and hearing aids for the Medicare eligible population. These are just two of the outstanding ideas that Jennifer worked on.

I am certain that Jennifer will do well in her future endeavors if she continues to work as hard as she has worked on behalf of the people of the Seventh Congressional District and the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join with me in congratulating Jennifer Luciano as she prepares to go back to Chicago, Illinois.

ANNIVERSARY OF AQUI EN EL VALLE

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 1, 2001

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to *Aqui en el Valle* newspaper, headquartered in Bloomfield, New Mexico, and its founder, LaVerta Valdez-Johnson, on its recent one-year anniversary. In that short period, this newspaper has delivered dedicated service and commitment to the Hispanic community in the Four Corners area.

Aqui en el Valle, or "Here in the Valley," is typically focused on positive local news and information that benefits the Hispanic community. The paper also focuses on Southwestern history and profiles of successful Hispanics. The newspaper is even used in Bloomfield elementary and high schools for Spanish language classes.

The *Aqui en el Valle*, however, would never have become a reality without the persistence and vision of LaVerta Valdez-Johnson. She was told by the business community that a Hispanic newspaper was not a sound investment. Undeterred, Mrs. Valdez-Johnson, with the help of her husband, Wesley and son, Russ, the monthly paper has gone from 1,000 copies in March, 2000, to a circulation today of more than 5,000. It has established a strong and diverse base of support and serves a vast area of 11 New Mexico towns that stretch from Bloomfield to Santa Fe.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in commending LaVerta Valdez-Johnson for not backing down from her dream and to extend best wishes for continued success in the coming years.

THE MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE PROFICIENCY PARTNERSHIP ACT OF 2001

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 1, 2001

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing a bill to authorize the Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF) to establish a demonstration program under which the Director awards grants to qualified schools.

The grants received by these schools will be used to develop a program that builds or expands mathematics, science, and information technology curricula; purchase equipment necessary to establish such a program and provide teacher training in such fields. The act also allows the private sector to contribute goods and services, such as the donation of computer hardware and software; the establishment of internship and mentoring opportunities for students who participate in the mathematics, science, and information technology program; and the donation of scholarship funds for use at institutions of higher education by eligible students.

The need for this legislative proposal to provide grants to qualified schools is beyond doubt, and the case supporting this bill can be simply stated: