Mr. Speaker, please join me and the many friends, family and colleagues of P.J. Corr in commending P.J. Corr for his lifetime of service to this nation, his community and his family. We look forward to his continued leadership and inspiration in the years to come and we wish him continued happiness and success.

HONORING UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY
OF ILLINOIS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 20, 2002

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. As the world celebrates this day, we must reflect and take action against the existing discrimination and hate within our borders. Since the terrorist attacks on September 11th, thousands of assaults have been reported across the country on people of South Asian, Arab, Muslim, Sikh, and Jewish backgrounds. By October 11th, the Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee had already collected more than 700 reports of hate crimes in the month following September 11th. People have been physically and verbally attacked, others shot and killed, temples were firebombed, and houses were vandalized. Innocent Americans, touched by the devastation of September 11th like the rest of us, must not be singled out for hate just because of their skin color or religious beliefs.

We in Congress condemn this hate and violence. But we must do more. It is time to take the next step and strengthen our current laws to protect victims who are chosen because of their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, or disability. It is our duty. It is especially important that our children learn that hate crimes will not be tolerated. This is why we must pass H.R. 1343, The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2001, which would elevate the status of hate crimes within federal law and ensure that state governments and local police have the tools needed to fight and prosecute these crimes. This bill would not take away the ability of state and local authorities to continue prosecuting most hate crimes. It would allow federal officials to assist over-stretched states and local officials investigate and prosecute these crimes. It would also provide states and localities with grants designed to combat hate crimes committed by juveniles. Sadly, the prevalence of hate crimes goes beyond the backlash from September 11th. The Southern Poverty Law Center estimates that last year alone, over 50,000 hate crimes took place. In the summer of 1999, the Midwest, including my district in Illinois, was rocked by the killing spree of Benjamin Althaniel Smith. A follower of the World Church of the Creator, Benjamin Smith killed Ricky Byrdsong, an outstanding role model in the community and a constituent, and Won Joon Yoon, a student at Indiana University. The Jewish Community in my district was also assaulted by the Sadaqa of Jihadijah.

The weekend after the September 11th attacks, I marched in solidarity with the South Asian, Arab, Muslim, Sikh, and Jewish communities to stand against the terrorist attacks and the attacks on the community. I saw not only overwhelming sadness, but the fear of violence on the faces of those walking with me. Members of my community and the district that I represent were afraid to send their children to school. They did not want to leave their homes even to go grocery shopping. But I also saw the commitment from community members to combat bigotry and racism.

Those who commit hate crimes perpetuate the sense of terror in our communities and undermine the ideals of our nation. This is why it is so important that hate crimes be recognized for what they are and punished accordingly. These crimes not only devastate victims and their families and friends, but they devastate the community to which the victim belongs. This community becomes stricken with grief as well as the fear that they could be next. The violence inflicted on those based solely on skin color or religion violates the very essence of what our nation is about. Our country represents tolerance and acceptance. We must pass the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act. I am proud to represent one of the most diverse districts in the nation and I will work to protect and honor the civil rights of all our people, without any exceptions.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MEDICARE AND MEDICAID NURSING FACILITY QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2002

HON. DAVE CAMP
OF MICHIGAN
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 20, 2002

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce the Medicare and Medicaid Nursing Facility Quality Improvement Act of 2002. This session, legislation has been introduced on numerous important long term care issues ranging from criminal background checks for nursing home staff to additional funding for the provision of quality care. The legislation would restore the ability of state and local authorities to resolve many disputes concerning quality care, and it would allow for an eight state survey and certification waiver demonstration program so states can adopt innovative regulatory process for nursing homes that focus on improving resident outcomes. States should work together with consumers, providers, labor representatives and other involved parties to craft innovative systems that can improve the quality of care. For example in the state of Washington there is broad support among all key stakeholders for such a waiver, and I believe other states would come forward with valuable waiver applications if such a process were available. In addition, states would be given some narrow additional discretion to work within the current enforcement process to avoid any unintended consequences of current law which could harm resident quality of life. Waivers incentives would provide additional opportunities for technical assistance to help all facilities improve the quality of care. The legislation would establish a range of incentives to encourage nursing homes that are providing the best possible care to exceed their already high standards, while facilitating the provision of technical assistance and advice on best practices to facilities that need to improve care for residents. Such measures will help both good facilities to implement even more effective care practices and assist those who are still struggling to meet challenges in their efforts to provide excellent services. Current law provides many penalties to deter and punish those who provide low quality care but strangely absent are incentives for the overwhelming majority of responsible nursing facilities to improve the quality of care.

Insure fair and accurate survey results. Residents, family and health care providers are best served if all disputes concerning survey resolution are resolved quickly and cost-effectively through an independent review process. In fact, in my home state of Michigan providers and regulators are able to resolve many disputes through an independent dispute resolution process. Unfortunately, in many states the process is not independent enough of the state regulatory agency to provide for fair and impartial review. Our independent process in Michigan, as well as the independent systems in several other states can offer many lessons for the nation. Michigan’s additional steps are needed to insure that all citations, even those that do not result in the immediate imposition of a penalty, can be subject to an appeal. Basic fairness and the principle of due process require us to allow nursing facilities to appeal all publicly reported deficiencies.

Ensure proper medical care. The legislation would prevent government inspectors from overturning the orders of patient’s own physicians. Inspectors are charged with evaluating the medical condition of nursing home patients and for making sure nursing facilities provide the best possible care. However some inspectors, even though they are not physicians,