

50 years ago to preserve a truly unique relic of Hawaiian history and culture. Up until the early 19th century, Hawaiians who broke the ancient code of law could avoid an otherwise certain death by fleeing to this place of refuge, or pu'uhonua, for absolution and clemency. Defeated warriors and non-combatants could also seek refuge here during times of battle. It is this function that gave this park its name, City of Refuge, which was later changed to Pu'uhonua o Honaunau.

In addition to the refuge, which is enclosed by a great wall, the surrounding land also housed several generations of powerful Hawaiian chiefs, adding to the area's great historical value. The pu'uhonua and royal grounds are still considered sacred by native Hawaiians and the sites draw a half million visitors each year who come in search of the vast cultural, spiritual, educational, and recreational opportunities the park has to offer. Visitors can attend cultural demonstrations of traditional Hawaiian arts and crafts, hike along the historic 1871 Trail to several archaeological sites, observe wildlife such as the endangered green sea turtles in Keone Ele cove, or snorkel in the clear waters of Honaunau Bay.

When the National Historic Park was established in 1955, nearly two-thirds of the ancient village of Ki'ilae remained undiscovered and outside of the park in a single private ownership. Recently, the approximately 238-acre Honaunau tract, which contains the balance of the Ki'ilae Village site and a human habitation record stretching back nearly a thousand years, became available for acquisition. This property is extremely rich in pre-history, and provides important clues about ancient Hawaiian life. Agricultural structures, stone piles, and walls are interspersed among recreational sites and the burial sites of the villagers. Acquisition of this area is crucial to protect extraordinary early Hawaiian cultural sites and expand the public understanding and interpretation of cultural traditions and Hawaiian subsistence patterns. This public acquisition will safeguard this important glimpse into early Hawaiian village life and social dynamics.

It is important to note that the acquisition and expansion of Pu'uhonua o Honaunau is overwhelmingly supported by the National Park Service, the County of Hawaii, and the local community. In addition, an identical version of H.R. 1906 has already passed the Senate in the form of S. 1057. All that remains is the passage of H.R. 1906 in the House of Representatives.

I urge my colleagues to protect these ancient Hawaiian cultural sites and support this legislation.

Mr. HANSEN. Madam Speaker, I have no requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. KILDEE. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1906, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HANSEN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material into the RECORD on the three bills just considered, H.R. 4103, H.R. 3936, and H.R. 1906.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Utah?

There was no objection.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 415) recognizing National Homeownership Month and the importance of homeownership in the United States.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 415

Whereas the President has issued a proclamation proclaiming June 2002 as National Homeownership Month;

Whereas owning a home represents the American dream for our Nation's families;

Whereas the national homeownership rate has increased to 67.8 percent, higher than at any other time in history for all demographic groups, and homeownership rates among minority families are increasing faster than such rates for the population as a whole;

Whereas the purchase of a home is oftentimes a family's largest personal investment;

Whereas homeownership provides economic stability and security for homeowners and their communities by allowing homeowners to build wealth over the life of the home and have a greater stake in local schools, civic organizations, and churches;

Whereas improving homeownership opportunities requires the commitment and cooperation of private, nonprofit, and public sectors, including the Federal Government and State and local governments; and

Whereas the current policies of the United States Government and the Congress encourage homeownership and should continue to do so in the future: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) fully supports the goals and ideals of National Homeownership Month; and

(2) recognizes the importance of homeownership in building strong communities and families in the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation and to insert extraneous material on the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, H. Con. Res. 415 recognizes National Homeownership Month. First, I would like to thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY), chairman of the Committee on Financial Services, for his interest in this issue. The chairman looks for ways to get involved in housing issues. His willingness to look at new ideas and focus on long-term solutions is really encouraging to the rest of the members of this committee. The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), the ranking member on the Democratic side, has been very encouraging and also forthright in looking to issues and ways to resolve the housing crisis in this country.

Homeownership is the American dream. I introduced this resolution because I feel so strongly about homeownership. This country is home to people of many different origins; but everyone seems to have the same dream, to own their own home. This dream means many things to many people, independence, financial security, geographic stability, the ability to accumulate personal wealth, a place to raise a family, a prized possession to decorate and improve, or simply a place to go after a long day of work and find peace.

As a homebuilder for over 30 years, I enjoyed watching many people achieve this dream. You could always see the excitement and anticipation in the face of a new homebuyer. I believe very strongly in the dream of homeownership, and I was pleased to see President Bush recognize it by proclaiming June 2002 National Homeownership Month. I look forward to working with him and HUD Secretary Mel Martinez to further the goal of this proclamation.

The role of the Federal Government in homeownership: when I first started my business, I had an old van that used more oil than gas and every tool I had was in a cardboard box in the back of it. It was a small company and I grew that company over the years. But with each passing year, I saw the impact of government on the housing industry and with each year came more government laws and regulations making it harder to build a home. The red tape kept increasing costs, which in business you have to pass on to the consumer. Homes kept getting more expensive.

During National Homeownership Month, I think it is very important that we talk about how the government is impacting home prices. Last month, a 27 percent tariff was placed on Canadian softwood lumber, which will be used to frame homes. This will increase the cost of a new home by at least \$1,500. Although we have a very similar species of wood that is native to the Pacific Northwest, Federal logging restrictions have reduced the supply below demand, so builders need to

import it. The Endangered Species Act is often interpreted to give rats, frogs and plants more rights than people.

In some parts of the country, in my district, specifically, in southern California, the heavy burden of Federal, State and local mandates is creating a generation of people who cannot afford to live in the community where they work and grew up. I call these people the new homeless. Exactly who are the new homeless? In my district it might be a couple whose husband might be a firefighter and the wife is a teacher. They have a good job and they make a good living, but their combined income does not qualify them to buy a median-priced home in Southern California. This is a national problem also occurring in New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Colorado and Oregon, among other places. The new homeless either end up renting, postponing the American dream of homeownership, or they commute, sometimes hours, until they find a community they can afford to live in. Although they may be homeowners, the only time they really spend in their home is the 8 hours they spend in bed. Most of the other 16 hours of the day are spent working and commuting to and from work.

I would encourage my colleagues to talk to their D.C. staff to see if you have any of the new homeless individuals in your offices. One of my legislative assistants has been looking for a condo since January. In that time, she has been outbid by \$40,000 on an 854 square-foot condo that is \$40,000 above the asking price and lost out on another opportunity to bid because she got to the property on a Sunday morning the day after it had gone on the market, and it was already under contract. She is almost priced out of the marketplace in the area and about ready to move to a cheaper part of the country. My legislative director and his wife bought a home in Sperryville, Virginia, which is about 2 hours from here. In both cases, the dream of homeownership is becoming a question of affordability and quality of life.

Although nationally homeownership is at an all-time high of 67.8 percent, there are pockets in this country where that statistic is significantly lower, and H. Con. Res. 415 states that improving opportunities for homeownership requires the commitment and the cooperation of all levels of government, Federal, State and local. I hope that National Homeownership Month will encourage that.

The Federal Commitment to Improving Homeownership: I feel strongly about this issue because homeownership is the key to personal wealth in our country. When someone buys a home, they purchase an asset which will grow over time; and as equity accumulates, so does personal wealth. The role of the Federal Government should be to help individuals and families move into homeownership so they would have the ability to achieve personal wealth.

I am so pleased that President Bush has announced his aggressive agenda to expand homeownership opportunities to at least 5.5 million families before the end of the decade. The Federal Government has a long history of supporting housing programs. FHA allows people to become homeowners with as little as 3 percent for a down payment. The Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco is working on a program that will help some of the new homeless achieve the dream of homeownership. They have teamed up with the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce and other organizations to offer loans to about 300 middle-income families. What is unique is how they define middle income, because in San Francisco that includes families making about \$100,000 a year.

While there are also great programs helping specific groups of people, I agree with President Bush, we can and must do more to expand homeownership opportunity to all people in this country.

Long-term solutions: when most people talk about housing, they tend to focus on the low-income end of the spectrum. While I agree that assisting this group is important, I firmly believe that until we address the new homeless and begin creating a move-up market for the low-income individuals, we will not resolve our affordability entry level housing crisis.

□ 1445

The Federal Government supports a lot of great programs such as section 8 rental vouchers, which target low- and moderate-income families. But now these programs are starting to experience inefficiencies because there is no move-up market for the people in the section 8 housing to move out to.

Programs like section 8 rental vouchers are crucial to moving families off welfare and can meet the needs of families who experience an emergency such as a job loss or death of a spouse. However, they should not be considered long-term solutions. Because we do not have a move-up market for a section 8 voucher family, they get stuck relying on government. If they make too much money and no longer qualify for the voucher, they cannot afford to move into their current community; and because they continue to tie up the voucher, other families who need assistance are stuck on waiting lists.

In some areas such as Los Angeles, families are waiting years to get a voucher. This problem is compounded by the lack of housing supply because landlords can charge much higher rents, usually to the new homeless families who can pay the rent, but then cannot save for the down payment.

There is no real incentive to be part of the section 8 voucher program. Fifty-nine percent of Los Angeles section 8 voucher recipients cannot find a place where they can use the voucher use the voucher. To truly address the housing problem in our country, we

need a real solution, not a Band-aid. We need policies which encourage the private sector to provide the housing that is needed; and this is something that the Federal, State, and local governments must really take on, and take on in a serious manner.

I am pleased with President Bush that he has recognized this problem and has a plan to expand home ownership opportunities by working with the private sector to overcome the obstacles facing the new homeless as well as low- and moderate-income families. I am anxious to learn more about his proposal and do everything I can to produce a bill that will implement it.

In conclusion, National Home Ownership Month is exciting. It has created a forum for us to start addressing issues that impact homeownership. I encourage my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 415 and take time this month to talk to the public housing authorities, Realtors, lenders, and especially perspective homebuyers in their districts to learn about the issues affecting homeownership.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FRANK. Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for yielding me time.

Homeownership Month should be a time to study and take note of both the successes and the problems our country faces in homeownership. The President is in Atlanta speaking today about homeownership for minority Americans, and I applaud him for doing so.

The reason one focuses on minority Americans, people of color, is because of a success story. During the New Deal, one of Roosevelt's aims was for every American to own her own home. Today, we can say that almost every American does own her own home. The average American has obtained homeownership; and if we look at who has not, who has not are, of course, those who have had other disadvantages in society, and particularly people of color.

In the 1990s we had an extraordinary housing boom and people of color forged ahead in homebuying as never before. But with the housing boom came economic boom that has very much subsided. Indeed, unemployment continues to go up every month, even given all of the prognostications about the recession being over. Even so, the housing boom brought a housing bust for many families.

If you live in the District of Columbia or any suburb of any great city in the United States, finding affordable housing is like looking for a needle in a haystack. It has gone to the top of the list of American problems, receiving, however, almost no attention in our country and certainly no attention from this body. It is a great problem of our time.

I do want to focus on a great success story here in the Nation's Capital,

however. I was able in 1997 to get a \$5,000 homebuyer credit for people who buy homes in the District of Columbia if you have not owned a house previously in the District and if you have an income of up to \$90,000 for single people and up to \$130,000 for married people. It goes up to that degree because the need in the District was for middle-income people. We have got more poor people than most other parts of the region.

A \$5,000 homebuyer credit, of course, can be the down payment on a \$100,000 House; and Fannie Mae has monetized the homebuying credit, meaning it is in fact the down payment for many people.

An independent study has looked at the \$5,000 homebuyer credit and what it has done for this city and what a similar credit given by States could do for other large cities. The Greater Washington Research Center in one study found that over half of those who bought homes said the credit caused them to buy at this time. In 2000, 50 percent of those who bought homes in the District of Columbia bought homes because of the credit.

I have a provision before the House that would make the \$5,000 homebuyer credit, perhaps the most successful economic stimulus in the city's history, permanent. It is chiefly responsible for stemming the flight that almost destroyed the city's tax base during the 1980s and during the financial crisis of the 1990s. The credit offers significant evidence that a tightly targeted tax incentive can have a major turnaround effect on a central problem confronting a city. The credit has been so successful that we have recommended that States do the same for many large cities that are rapidly losing taxpayers.

70 percent of the D.C. homeowners who purchased homes the year after the credit was passed did so because of the credit. The \$5,000 homebuyer credit has proved itself so quickly and well that I have been able to get it repeatedly extended by Congress. It is minimally necessary if the city is to have any chance of increasing its still small and depleted tax base, which is an urgent necessity in this city at this time.

I am grateful that the gentleman from Illinois (Speaker HASTERT) has been working with me to extend the credit. Most such credits go up to 9 years. I have had to go every 3 years to get this credit extended. It expires at the end of the next fiscal year, the end of 2003.

The city, your Nation's Capital, needs 100,000 more residents for the capital city to be stable. This credit has proved its worth, using market forces and a tiny tax base, this tax credit provided by the Federal Government. States can do that for cities like Boston and Chicago. Only the Federal Government can do this for the capital of the United States. It has been an extraordinary success. It has helped us to get a diverse tax base once again.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 3 minutes.

Madam Speaker, this resolution and what the President is trying to do is an attempt to help people. The best thing you can do to help people in this country is enable them to help themselves.

I remember when I was a boy, I moved to California when I was a year old from Arkansas, and at that point in time I lived in South Whittier, which was the district of my good friend from the Democrat side, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO).

At that time it was a bunch of immigrants. It was "Arkies" and "Okies"; and we had one thing in common, we were poor. My dad left my mother when I was 6 months old and I was raised by my grandparents. We lived in a poor community, but it was our home; and in that home we established pride, and with that pride grew equity.

Today that community is still a community of poor people, but now they are from Mexico and Latin America; but they still have the same thing in common that I did with my neighbors at that time: we were poor.

Homeownership means a lot. What can we do? We need to make sure that the States understand how important it is that we provide opportunity for people through homeownership. I applaud the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK). The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) looks at this issue, and he understands that section 8 vouchers are great because they help people that need help; but we have never found a unit that has been built with a section 8 voucher.

In order to make sure that people have a place to live, we have to make sure that there is an affordable housing stock that is a level above a section 8 voucher, and that is for people to move out of section 8 homes into affordable homes. With that comes equity, and with that comes a future, and with that comes prosperity for their children and their future.

We need to do everything we can in this country to focus the light on what the problem is. In many cases the problem is government. We need to focus on that issue fervently. The President and the chairman of HUD, Secretary Martinez, are doing what they need to to look at issues and say how can we fast track the process where people can get permits to build houses. How do we eliminate a lot of the restrictions and red tape and regulations? How do we tackle the Endangered Species Act?

I have seen projects in my district that took 5 years to process, where they finally got entitled through the county, only to find because of a lawsuit that the Federal Government placed a mandate over that they now own rat habitat. After 5 years, the project ended up having a designation of "habitat for a rat."

I really believe that people are more important than rats. Yes, we need to be concerned about the environment, but

there was a time in this country when we used to swat flies and poison rats. Now we set aside habitat for those little critters. The problem is, it is not a federally owned habitat; the habitat is owned by private property owners, and that is wrong.

We need to resolve the problems in this country, we need to provide opportunity for people to buy homes, and we need to deal with the new homes properly.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FRANK. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam speaker, I would like to note that I am glad to be here endorsing the importance of homeownership; but as the gentleman from California indicated, homeownership is very important for a significant segment of the population, indeed, we hope for a very large majority. But there will always be people among us who, for economic reasons in particular, will not be able to afford homes, and a rounded housing policy, we will do everything we can to help with homebuilding. It will also help with rental, including the production of rental housing.

I hope that we will continue to support a balanced program, indeed, with more resources than we have done previously.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, giving every family and individual the tools they need to buy a home is good for the homebuyer, the community, and the Nation. We must never lose sight of our goal and National Homeownership Month is the perfect time to rededicate ourselves to this goal.

The housing industry is in a unique position to lead the Nation out of recession in 2002. A new report issued by the National Association of Home Builders, "Housing—The Key to Economic Recovery," shows that housing accounts for about 14 percent of the Nation's Gross Domestic Product, or about one out of every seven dollars spent in the U.S. each year.

The same report shows that the construction of 1,000 single-family homes generates 2,448 jobs in construction and construction-related industries, approximately \$79.4 million in wages and more than \$42.5 million in Federal, State and local tax and revenue fees. Construction of 1,000 multifamily homes generates 1,030 jobs in construction and related industries, approximately \$33.5 million in wages, and more than \$17.8 million in Federal, State, and local tax revenue and fees.

Minority purchase power is rising. Hispanics homeownership increased 39 percent between 1994 and 2000. African-American homeownership increased 24 percent in that same period. However, minority homeownership rates are almost 30 percent lower than the overall national rate.

Homeownership is a wise investment for long-term financial security, and an investment in America.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 415. As we commemorate National Home Ownership Month throughout the month of June, it is the perfect time to remember that nothing sustains the American dream like

owning a home. Home ownership is an essential tool for strengthening our communities and allowing more Americans to accumulate wealth. Homes are where our Nation's families grow, where lives are shaped and where decisions are made.

It is essential that we work to increase the ranks of homeowners in every community across this country, and in particular among members of the African-American community, whose home ownership rates have traditionally lagged far behind other groups.

According to the 2000 census, African-Americans recorded a \$27,910 median household income—the highest ever recorded—while recording record-low poverty rates. In 2001, it was estimated that the total income for African-Americans exceeded \$565 billion, and more than half of African-American married couples had incomes of at least \$50,000.

Yet, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, only 48 percent of African-Americans own homes, compared to 74 percent of white families. And, in a recent study, 36 percent of African-Americans believed that access to capital was their greatest barrier to owning a home.

These statistics show that many families of color are unable to capitalize on the benefits that home ownership provides. For far too long minority communities have been left out of the home ownership process. Though the number of African-American homeowners has increased by more than 20 percent in the last decade, too many people of color are missing out on the power of home ownership because they've fallen prey to decades of unfair lending practices, lack of savings or lack of affordable housing. As we all know, without proprietorship we have no power. This is why we must take responsibility to ensure that our families can prosper through the benefits of owning a home.

That is why the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation created the "With Ownership, Wealth" initiative to promote access to lending and home ownership education and resources for people of color. This initiative is one way that the CBCF is letting people know the importance of home ownership and connecting those people with the funding sources that can make that dream a reality. Since its inception, the Congressional Black Caucus has championed equality for all, and the WOW initiative is merely an extension of our fight to ensure that all Americans will have the opportunity to experience the prosperity that is felt by too few.

Combined with the CBC's agenda to increase the Nation's home ownership rates, this program will serve to develop the all-inclusive America of which we have only dreamt for far too long.

I applaud the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, under first the extraordinary leadership of Congresswoman EVA CLAYTON and now the groundbreaking leadership of Congressman JEFFERSON, for helping us forge ahead with this incredibly important initiative which will help all Americans realize the American dream.

We still have much work to do to educate consumers about the value—and the responsibility—of owning a home, but I am pleased that more resources are available than ever before to assist potential homebuyers in making this first step toward acquiring wealth. When we give people the right tools to pur-

chase a home, we put them on a road to financial success.

America is only as strong as its communities, and communities are only as strong as the families that live within. Home ownership is part of the foundation of a stable family. It provides a base for marriages to grow, a safe environment for children to learn, and the center through which families bond. Just as importantly, home ownership is the first step to wealth acquisition, and a primary mechanism for building a family asset base.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, today I rise to voice my support for H. Con. Res. 415, Recognizing National Homeownership Month. Today, there are 73 million Americans, who own a home. As our economy slowed down, housing is the glue that holds the Nation's economy together. This fact alone offers a compelling argument in support of homeownership. Owner-occupied property made up 21 percent of all household wealth in 1998. Moreover, the Federal Reserve says that this was more than 71 percent of all tangible wealth. Housing generates more than 22 percent of the Nation's Gross Domestic Product. Housing accounts for 32 to 40 cents of every dollar consumers spent.

We are ignoring the fact that less than half of America's minority families are homeowners. So, while strides have been made, the gap in homeownership rates is unacceptable until everyone in America has the same opportunity for homeownership. Because where homeownership flourishes, neighborhoods are more stable, and residents are more civic-minded. In addition, schools are better, and crime rates decline. We are marking this month with events across the country. This is our opportunity to spread the word about homeownership—especially to minority families, who own far fewer homes of their own than non-minority families do.

H. Con. Res. 415 helps to recognize homeownership, thus more Americans become homeowners. This is the central mission at HUD. Congress has a long-standing commitment to homeownership. The American housing finance system is the best in the world. Moreover, I support President Bush's initiative to increase minority homeownership as once I did our past President William Jefferson Clinton's efforts as well. Therefore, I strongly support H. Con. Res. 415.

Mr. FRANK. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 415.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the

Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SUPPORTING GOALS AND IDEALS OF MENINGITIS AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. MICA. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 340) supporting the goals and ideals of Meningitis Awareness Month.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 340

Whereas meningitis is usually caused by a viral or bacterial infection;

Whereas viral meningitis is generally less severe than bacterial meningitis;

Whereas bacterial meningitis caused by the meningococcus, *Neisseria meningitidis*, is one of the most deadly and least understood infections in the United States;

Whereas in 2000 more than 2,900 people in the United States developed meningococcal disease;

Whereas the 2 most common types of meningococcal disease are meningitis, an infection of the fluid that surrounds the spinal cord and the brain, the symptoms of which include high fever, headache, stiff neck, confusion, lethargy, vomiting, and seizures, and meningococemia, an infection of the blood stream, the symptoms of which include a red-brown rash or purple blotches;

Whereas although meningococcal disease can be treated with a number of effective antibiotics, such treatment must begin early in the course of the disease, because the disease can be fatal within hours after the first symptoms appear;

Whereas individuals who survive meningococcal meningitis can suffer from debilitating effects such as hearing and vision loss, learning difficulties or mental retardation, loss of arms and legs, and paralysis;

Whereas between 20 percent and 25 percent of all people carry the bacterium that causes meningococcal disease in the back of their noses and throats without developing the disease, but can pass the bacterium to others;

Whereas the bacterium that causes meningococcal disease can be passed by close contact that involves the exchange of respiratory or throat secretions with someone who is infected or is carrying the bacterium, including coughing, kissing, and sharing items such as cigarettes, lipsticks, foods, drinks, toothbrushes, and mouth guards;

Whereas meningococcal disease cannot be spread merely by being in the same room with an infected person or by breathing the air where an infected person has been;

Whereas meningococcal disease usually develops within 1 to 14 days after exposure;

Whereas although the occurrence of meningococcal disease was once highest among children between the ages of 6 months and 36 months, the occurrence of the disease among older children and adolescents has been increasing in recent years, with a number of outbreaks occurring at schools and universities;

Whereas although a vaccine is currently available which provides protection against 4 of the 5 common strains of meningococcal disease in the United States, vaccinations are rarely administered until after an outbreak occurs;

Whereas the medical community should be encouraged to make a routine practice of informing adolescent patients and their parents about the option of being vaccinated