

RECOGNIZING 100TH ANNIVERSARY
OF 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAM

SPEECH OF

HON. ANÍBAL ACEVEDO-VILÁ

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 24, 2002

Mr. ACEVEDO-VILÁ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of 4-H and I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this important resolution. This is a wonderful time to cherish our country's youth and their achievements. However, it important to remember those who have fought for farmer workers fair treatment. One great example is Dolores Huerta. As we mark National Hispanic Heritage Month, I urge the leadership to bring House Concurrent Resolution 177 to the floor. This Resolution recognizes the achievements of a great American; moreover, of a great woman. Dolores Huerta was a leader for farm workers' rights. She was the cofounder of American Farm Workers with Cesar Chavez. They have fought for fair wages, safe working conditions, and against harmful pesticides. The Women's Hall of Fame recognized her great achievements by inducting her in 1993. Additionally, she has recently been named as one of the six women sustaining the American Spirit by the National Women's History Project. It is important that we bring special attention to this woman's achievements. In closing, as a original cosponsor to H. Con. Res. 177, I urge you to bring this to the floor.

CONSUMER RENTAL PURCHASE
AGREEMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2002

Ms. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 1701, the Consumer Rental Purchase Agreement Act. While supporters of this bill claim that it will protect the interests of consumers, it will do the exact opposite in my state of Minnesota and other states that have enacted strong protections against abuses by the "rent-to-own" industry.

If enacted, H.R. 1701 would pre-empt laws in Minnesota, New Jersey, Wisconsin and Vermont that currently treat "rent-to-own" as consumer credit transactions subject to state credit sales laws. These strong state laws protect consumers from being charged exorbitant prices for items purchased through "rent-to-own" transactions. Conversely, H.R. 1701 would require all states to treat these transactions as renewable leases subject to minimum disclosures.

H.R. 1701 would allow "rent-to-own" businesses to charge even more outrageous prices to consumers. While "rent-to-own" businesses must currently comply with usury laws that set maximum interests that may be charged for these transactions, H.R. 1701 will completely undermine this protection.

Further, this bill would allow the "rent-to-own" industry to avoid millions of dollars in legal penalties that are collected from businesses in violation of Minnesota's consumer

protection laws. With strong enforcement of these laws, Minnesota courts have collected \$30 million in penalties since 1997 from just one "rent-to-own" chain. Clearly, the "rent-to-own" industry stands to benefit greatly from the "get out of jail free" card that H.R. 1701 would provide.

During my time in the Minnesota House of Representatives, I fought attempts by the "rent-to-own" industry to strip these important protections from our state law. Now, as a member of Congress, I must fight these attempts again to protect the interests of the low- and moderate-income consumers who are targeted by the deceptive practices of the "rent-to-own" industry.

IMPACTS OF UNCOMPENSATED
CARE ON SOUTHWEST BORDER
COUNTIES

HON. DUNCAN HUNTER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 26, 2002

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, this morning, the United States/Mexico Border Counties Coalition released an important report detailing the increased healthcare burden incurred by our nation's twenty-four counties that share a border with our southern neighbor, Mexico. I am privileged to represent a congressional district that includes nearly all of the California/Mexico international border. As a result, I can tell this body firsthand what the study proves—border communities suffer a significant financial burden from providing unreimbursable healthcare services to undocumented aliens.

The study, titled "Medical Emergency: Costs of Uncompensated Care in Southwest Border Counties," estimates that at least 25 percent of the border county hospitals uncompensated care costs, or \$190 million in 2000, are incurred from providing services to undocumented aliens. In addition, emergency medical service providers lost about \$13 million providing care and transportation for illegal aliens injured while crossing the border.

In 1998, Imperial County alone incurred nearly \$1.3 million in unreimbursed healthcare services provided to undocumented aliens. Unfortunately, Imperial County is already one of the poorest counties in the country and certainly in the State of California. As a result, this financial burden is particularly difficult for this community to sustain. While the cost of healthcare delivery is high, it is not the only cost incurred on behalf of illegal aliens. In total, Imperial County estimates that, in 1998, it spent more than \$5.4 million providing services to undocumented aliens and that amount continues to increase.

At the same time, San Diego County is also bearing a significant cost for unreimbursable services provided to illegal aliens. The County estimates that in 1998 they spent nearly \$10.8 million for emergency medical care and over \$50 million in total services provided. Clearly, this money would be better spent delivering services to needy county residents.

The impacts of uncompensated emergency services does not stop at an affected hospitals' balance sheet. Healthcare costs and insurance premiums are on the rise, partially in order to cover the unreimbursable costs in-

curred by the healthcare institutions. Rising health insurance premiums are threatening employers' ability, particularly small businesses, to offer their employees affordable health care benefits. High liability costs and low levels of compensation are threatening the viability of emergency rooms and emergency transportation providers all along the border, and particularly in California where the healthcare system is already in crisis.

Throughout my tenure in Congress, I have fought for additional border security, not only to address safety concerns, but also as a way of addressing the financial impacts of caring for the undocumented alien population. The fact is, securing our international borders is the responsibility of the federal government. So it logically follows that providing necessary medical care for individuals who penetrate our border is also a federal responsibility.

To make matters worse, the federal border agencies, in order to avoid paying the costs associated with healthcare delivery to the injured alien, will report an emergency situation to local emergency personnel without officially taking control of the alien. As a result, when the ambulance picks up the undocumented alien for transport to the nearest hospital, they are also accepting total financial obligations for the immigrant. It is unacceptable for federal agencies to be passing on their responsibilities to our already financially-strapped local communities. This practice must come to an end.

The study makes several important recommendations for addressing these problems, all of which appear to have merit. The primary solution, however, is clear: border communities must be compensated for the costs incurred from caring for undocumented aliens. I plan to work closely with my colleagues who represent affected counties to find a solution to this problem and I hope my colleagues throughout the Congress will join us in this effort. After all, it is a matter of fairness and accepting responsibility of our federal obligations.

KYRGYZSTAN

HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 26, 2002

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the President of Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akayev, and the First Lady, visited the United States.

I rise to welcome them and thank them for their friendship.

Kyrgyzstan is centrally located along the Great Silk Road, an ancient economic and cultural trade route that connected Europe to Asia.

Kyrgyzstan has absorbed traditions from the East and the West, making its history rich and its people diverse.

Today, the Great Silk Road is being renewed and Kyrgyzstan, once again, is at the center.

Kyrgyzstan has made notable progress since its independence, but it still faces many challenges.

Over the past decade, Kyrgyzstan has moved to adopt democratic reforms and a market economy. However, the potential that Kyrgyzstan holds to be an example to the region has not yet been fully realized. The U.S.