

HONORING THE 933RD MILITARY
POLICE COMPANY

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, as this Congress convenes, I am proud to rise in honor of the brave men and women of the Illinois Army National Guard's 933rd Military Police Company. I was honored to be invited to attend this unit's holiday ball on the evening of Saturday, December 11, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois.

While serving during Operation Iraqi Freedom, members of the 933rd MP Company were assigned to the 504th Military Police Battalion—the active component based in Fort Lewis, Washington. The 504th MP Battalion was assigned to the 220th Military Police Brigade of the U.S. Army Reserve—the theater military police brigade that is assigned to the 377th Theater Support Command, which supports the entire theater of operations.

I want to thank all soldiers and the families of those who served in the 933rd MP Company for the strength and courage they have demonstrated since Operation Iraqi Freedom was launched. We are very proud of their impeccable service record as well as their skill, bravery and professionalism, each of which have directly resulted in saving the lives of innumerable U.S. soldiers, Coalition troops, and Iraqi civilians. The 933rd is a credit to the Military Police Corps.

It is fitting that my first statement in this new Congress recognizes the brave men and women of the 933rd MP Company. Accordingly, we in Congress will endeavor to measure up to the valor of the soldiers of the 933rd, who make the city of Chicago and indeed the entire state of Illinois so very proud. We shall strive to make sure that maximum production and surplus equipment is provided to our troops to safeguard their lives as they carry out the crucial mission of maintaining the peace across Iraq.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION
HONORING CELIA CRUZ BY
AWARDING HER THE CONGRES-
SIONAL GOLD MEDAL

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer legislation to honor my great friend, the music icon, Celia Cruz, who lost her courageous battle with cancer on July 17, 2003.

Today, in the People's House, I am joined by my colleague, Representative ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, to introduce legislation that will posthumously award Celia Cruz the Congressional Gold Medal.

Celia de la Caridad Cruz Alonso was born on October 21, 1924, in Havana, Cuba. Her career blossomed when she left Cuba for the United States in 1960, where she eventually made Fort Lee, New Jersey her home.

Over a five-decade career as an entertainer, Celia Cruz became known as the "Queen of Salsa," and claimed the calling card cry of "Azucucar!" Celia's passion, boundless en-

ergy, and charisma transfixed generations of salsa fans and musicians. She recorded more than 70 albums and her collaborative efforts with other performers including the legendary salsa artist Tito Puente, pop star David Byrne, and hip-hop producer Wyclef Jean helped break down ethnic and cultural barriers. She was one of the few bridges that crossed cultural and racial divides.

Celia's musical talent earned her hundreds of awards worldwide, including five Grammy's, two Latin Grammy's, and the National Medal of Arts, the highest honor bestowed on an artist in the United States. She was a Hispanic Heritage Awards Lifetime Achievement recipient, and has a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame. Her music was a unifying force, and her passion for a free Cuba was evidenced in both her music and her words.

Celia touched the lives of millions. More than 100,000 individuals mourned her loss at her wake in Miami, Florida and 75,000 people lined the streets of Manhattan to pay their respects as her funeral procession made its way through the streets of New York City.

Celia Cruz made countless contributions to American society and the world as an entertainer, and she was an ambassador of Latino culture and a voice of freedom. Her music, her words, and her love of freedom live on. This legislation would make Celia the first Latina to receive the Congressional Gold Medal.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I urge the leadership to bring it swiftly to the Floor for a vote.

PREPARING FOR THE
PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I support passage of S. Con. Res. 2, which would re-establish the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies to continue preparations for the presidential inauguration at the U.S. Capitol on January 20, 2005 and authorizes the use of the Capitol Rotunda for the proceedings.

This non-partisan joint committee was originally created last year by concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 94, to begin its work, but since resolutions do not carry over from one Congress to the next, it expired automatically on January 3, 2005, along with the 108th Congress. That is why this routine action is necessary today.

Congress passes this concurrent resolution every four years. The Speaker, Majority Leader and Minority Leader were originally appointed to represent the House on the joint committee and will be re-appointed to continue in those roles.

As for the use of the Rotunda authorized by Section 2 of S. Con. Res 2, we traditionally pass this measure at the beginning of any Congress following a presidential election in order to accommodate security planning and rehearsal for the inaugural, since the Rotunda is routinely used for ceremonial purposes during the inauguration and could host the event itself, depending on the weather at that time. A similar concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 93) was also passed last year during the

108th Congress to allow early planning for the inaugural to begin, but, like any resolution, it expired on January 3. That is why this action renewing the authority is necessary today. Therefore, I would like to urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this resolution so that we can move forward with Inaugural ceremonies.

SAFE DRINKING WATER FOR
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES ACT OF
2005

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to introduce the Safe Drinking Water for Healthy Communities Act of 2005. This legislation will require the Environmental Protection Agency to establish a national primary standard for drinking water for perchlorate, a component of rocket fuel used heavily by the military and its defense contractors.

Communities across the country are finding perchlorate in their drinking water, groundwater, irrigation water, soil and food. Perchlorate has been linked to disruption of the thyroid, resulting in behavior changes and delayed development in children and thyroid tumors in adults. Today more than 120 wells in Los Angeles County have been found to be contaminated with varying levels of perchlorate and my community alone faces costs of at least \$200 million over the next 15 years to manage and contain perchlorate.

Perchlorate removes valuable water supplies from service and can contaminate our food supply. Yet there exists no enforceable public health standard to ensure our drinking water is safe and to prevent further contamination. At the current rate the Environmental Protection Agency has stated it could not begin to promulgate a public health standard for perchlorate until 2007, if it chooses to do so. Ultimately it is the responsibility of Congress to make sure that the public can trust its water supply, that water providers have guidance, and that those responsible for contamination know that contaminating the water supply and threatening public health is not acceptable.

This bill requires the EPA to establish an enforceable national primary drinking water standard by July, 2007. Without this, there is no requirement for water to have safe levels of perchlorate and water providers will continue to struggle with guaranteeing long term reliability of safe water sources. Inaction poses an unreasonable risk to both our valuable water supply and our health.

INTRODUCTION OF THE
DEMOCRACY DAY ACT OF 2005

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Democracy Day Act of 2005, legislation that would establish each Tuesday,

after the first Monday in November (in even-numbered years), as a legal public holiday.

The Democracy Day Act of 2005 is designed to respond to the alarming trend of voters being unable to cast their vote due to work or other important commitments. According to a recent Census Bureau study, nearly 25 percent of eligible voters cited time constraints or busy work and school schedules as the primary reason for failing to vote in the past 2000 presidential election. The creation of a federal election holiday would help address this problem by providing many hardworking Americans with the necessary time off from work so they can vote. Furthermore, the bill would have the added benefit of: Increasing the number of available election day judges, poll workers and suitable polling places; decreasing long lines and the overcrowding that occurs during peak times on election day; and reinforcing the notion that voting is an important civic duty.

This Congress must ensure that every American has an equal opportunity to participate in the voting process. Enacting the "Democracy Day Act of 2005" would be a crucial first step towards achieving that objective.

The legislation is strongly supported by a wide array of voting rights and labor organizations.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HEALTH
IMPROVEMENT AND PROFES-
SIONALS ACT OF 2005

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, it is well documented that many states, including my home state of California, are currently suffering from a nursing shortage that, if left unchecked, will quickly reach epidemic proportions. More than 126,000 nursing positions in hospitals around the country are unfilled, according to the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. In addition, the workforce is shrinking, because it's aging (and retiring) at twice the rate of other occupations. While the problem of nursing shortages will require a multifaceted solution, I was shocked to learn recently that entry into the United States by many qualified nurses was being delayed entry because of an easily correctable bureaucratic regulation. We cannot simply stand by and allow the nursing shortage to ensnarl the quality of American health care, and that is why I am introducing the Health Improvement and Professionals Act (HIPA) of 2005.

Due to a change in procedures by the Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) of the Department of Homeland Security, the federal agency responsible for processing citizenship and immigration applications, it became necessary to impose a cut-off date in order to process a backlog of work-related immigration applications. As a result, CIS recently announced that it would no longer consider employment-based visa applications from the Philippines, India or China that were filed after January 1, 2002. Due to the unfortunate shortage of American nurses, many of our nation's hospitals are dependent on filling their nursing ranks with new workers from these countries. My legislation, the Health Improvement and

Professionals Act of 2005, would provide a common-sense, short-term solution to the problems caused by the CIS policy change, while still allowing the agency to do the necessary and important work of processing its backlog.

Mr. Speaker, my legislation simply allows CIS to recapture unused work-based immigration quota numbers from countries that have undersubscribed their own allowable visa numbers. By reassigning unused quota allotments from previous years, we would allow more qualified nurses to come to this country, bringing their crucially needed skills with them. Let me be clear, the HIPA Act of 2005 does not increase the number of immigrants allowed into our country. Instead, my legislation ensures that we are putting to full use the number of workers' visas currently allowed by law, in order to fulfill a crucial and exponentially increasing worker shortage.

The HIPA Act is modeled directly on the American Competitiveness in the Twenty-First Century Act, which Congress passed, and President Clinton signed into law nearly five years ago, in response to the shortage of highly skilled computer programmers and information technology workers needed to fuel the Internet boom of the late 1990's. Like the HIPA Act of 2005, that law allowed for the recapture of unused employment-based visas to fill a necessary labor shortage.

The growth of the nursing shortage is easily traceable—one only has to look to the fact that in 2002, 30 states were reportedly experiencing some level of nursing shortages. This number is expected to rise to 45 states by 2012. The scope of this problem is compounded by the fact that many of today's nurses are nearing retirement, and so our country is facing the compounded problem of increased retirements coupled with increased demand. This problem is well known to the federal government, as the Department of Labor has noted that one million new nurses will be needed by 2012 to meet the growing health needs of our country.

Some may criticize my legislation for bringing nurses into the country instead of training American men and women to do the job. Unfortunately, enrollments in baccalaureate nursing programs at colleges and universities across the United States have declined for five consecutive years. Even in states where the programs are full, as in my state of California, nearly 70% of all nurses are trained by community colleges. Many of the programs at these schools in California are full, and some even have substantial waiting lists of eager students ready to learn about the exciting and rewarding profession of nursing. I will continue to work to expand the capacity of nurse training programs in our country to help relieve this shortage. However, the shortage in California is so severe that even if all of the nursing programs in the state were to double their enrollments, California would still not be able to meet her nursing needs in the year 2010.

Mr. Speaker, the lack of nurses in our hospitals has a direct effect on the quality of the health care these facilities can provide. The shortages currently experienced in 30 states affects all patients, from those in operating rooms and intensive care units to those who treat children and cancer patients. In fact, according to a study conducted by the Harvard School of Health and the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, over 50% of physicians

surveyed believed that the nursing shortage is a leading cause of medical error. Additional studies and surveys published in the New England Journal of Medicine, Journal of the American Medical Association, and by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations all confirm that the shortage of RNs is influencing the delivery of health care in the United States and negatively affecting patient outcomes. It is completely unacceptable in 21st century America that these preventable deaths are occurring. I hope my colleagues are as appalled about this as I am and that they will join me in supporting this common sense and critically important legislation. While we search for a longer-term solution to the problems as well as the causes of this nursing shortage crisis, the Health Improvement and Professionals Act of 2005 will provide a desperately needed injection of health care professionals into this country.

HONORING THE LIFE OF BRAD
ROWSE

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, Mr. HAYES, Mr. BOSWELL, Mr. KIND, Mr. PUTNAM and all the Members of the Congressional Sportsman's Caucus received tragic news that Brad Rowse, Manager of Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation's (CSF) State Caucus program and the new National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses died of an aneurysm on Monday, December 27, 2004. He was 26 years old.

Brad was a dedicated and highly respected member of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation joining the organization two years ago to help lead the early efforts to expand the sportsmen's caucus model to state legislatures. A native of upstate New York, Brad grew up hunting and fishing on his family's farm where he grew a passionate fondness for the outdoors. He used his undergraduate work at Cornell University and his Masters from SUNY Syracuse to focus on natural resource policy with the goal of adapting, improving and creating programs and policies to improve our fish and wildlife resources. Before coming to the CSF, he interned with The Wildlife Society and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in Washington, DC.

The unique combination of skills that Brad had acquired served him well during his time with the CSF. As the CSF State Caucus Manager, he built the program from its early beginnings to the national network of state caucuses that was launched on December 5, 2004. Brad took primary responsibility for monitoring sportsmen's issues at the state level and for building relations with state legislators and sportsmen's groups to create a unified voice for sportsmen. Through Brad's leadership and dedication there are now 21 state sportsmen's caucuses and a new National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses to support their growth and success.

America's sportsmen and women will miss his leadership and commitment to protecting our natural resources and hunting and fishing heritage.