

dedicating the month of May in San Francisco as Asian Pacific Heritage month.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have come full circle as a nation in our attitudes toward Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. This vibrant part of our community offers an array of perspectives that are firmly woven into the fabric of America, and I am extremely proud to serve as a representative of the community. I invite my colleagues of all backgrounds to join me in observing this wonderful month and recognizing the contributions that they have made in fighting for liberty and freedom for this great nation.

HEALTH INSURANCE CRISIS

SPEECH OF

HON. JAMES P. McGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 3, 2005

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take time today to recognize "Cover the Uninsured Week," a project of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation designed to raise awareness of the issue of access to health care.

It may be hard to believe, but more than a decade has passed since the Clinton Administration's health care plan died in Congress. In survey after survey, Americans consistently rate access to health insurance as one of their top concerns. But unfortunately, our nation's political leaders have failed to lead on this critical issue.

The facts reveal a startling truth—as a Nation, we are facing a crisis of the uninsured. In just the last four years, the number of uninsured Americans has ballooned to 45 million, an increase of more than 5 million people. If the millions that go without health insurance for some period during the year are included, the number of uninsured dramatically increases to more than 85 million people.

To dispel one myth: This rise in the number of uninsured is not the result of people deciding not to work. Rather, an overwhelming majority of the uninsured—80 percent—are working families, many employed by businesses that have become less able to provide health coverage for their employees.

And if things weren't bad enough, the Administration has proposed broad cuts to Medicaid, essentially gutting the healthcare system of last resort for poor Americans, by at least \$10 billion. In these worsening times, how can we justify pulling the rug out from underneath our community's most vulnerable?

In my home state of Massachusetts, we have been fortunate; we are among those states with the lowest percentage of uninsured. But, even there we have a lot more work to do. According to a recent Urban Institute report, there are currently 532,000 uninsured people in Massachusetts, and most of the health care available to these people is provided by local hospitals.

And like many other states, since 2000, Massachusetts workers have seen their health premiums rise three times faster than their wages. If these trends continue, fewer individuals and families will be able to afford to pay for coverage, and fewer small businesses will be able to provide this vital benefit to employees.

As we all know, we often tend to ignore that, which does not directly affect us, but we

can no longer afford to do so; there are clear consequences to all of us for ignoring the plight of the uninsured. According to a recent Institute of Medicine report, the United States loses \$65–\$130 billion each year as a result of the poor health and early deaths of uninsured adults. Should things continue to worsen, we will all be forced to bare the financial burden of the uninsured.

But this problem extends beyond the dollars and cents. As citizens, we have a moral responsibility to our communities, and we cannot stand by in good conscience as millions are denied access to basic health care.

So, as we take this time to recognize "Cover the Uninsured Week," I hope that my colleagues will join me in raising awareness about the reality facing the millions of uninsured. We must not allow this issue to remain on the back burner of the national political debate. Health care is a right, not a privilege, and all of us must work to extend that right to every single American.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF MR. R.B. "DICKIE" WILLIAMS, III

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 5, 2005

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, recently south Alabama lost one of its most colorful personalities, and I lost a dear friend, R.B. "Dickie" Williams, III, and I rise today to honor him and pay tribute to his memory.

A native of Mobile, Alabama, "Dickie" was raised on the Williams Plantation in Finchburg, Alabama. After graduating from Monroeville High School and attending Auburn University, he graduated in 1958 with a B.S. degree in pharmacy from Howard College (since renamed Samford University). In 1961, "Dickie" moved to Selma, Alabama, and worked for three years on the staff of Swift Drug Company. In 1964, he moved one last time to Monroeville, where he opened Williams Drug Store.

For nearly 40 years, Williams Drug Store was one of the foundations of the businesses found on Monroeville's town square and provided—in addition to one of the best and most efficient pharmacies anywhere in the area—a gathering place for members of the community who would come together for fresh coffee and good conversation. In addition, the store became an unofficial repository of decades of Monroe County history, and during the latter part of his life "Dickie" was known as Monroe County's "unofficial historian." During his life, he shared his vast knowledge of county history and personal recollections of life in Monroe County in a column for the town's newspaper, the Monroe Journal, and in a series of four books.

Perhaps most importantly, however, "Dickie" was deeply concerned for the personal well-being of his fellow Monroe Countians and for the preservation of his county's and his State's natural and historic sites. During the course of his life, he established the Monroe County Conservation Club and was instrumental in the creation of the Monroe County State Fishing Lake. Additionally, he was a past president of the Alabama Wildlife Federation and for 21 years was an

elected Alabama delegate to the National Wildlife Federation. "Dickie" was also instrumental in helping to save the Old Monroe County Courthouse from demolition and was one of the founders of the Monroe County Heritage Museum.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering a devoted citizen and long-time advocate for Monroe County, Alabama. "Dickie" will be deeply missed by his family—his wife, Nancy Beeland Williams, his brothers, Charles Robbins Williams and John Bonner Williams, his daughter, Elizabeth Williams Olsey, his son, Richard Russell Williams, his stepsons, Dr. David Stallworth and Jeff Stallworth, his stepdaughter, Nancy Stallworth Weiss, and his 9 grandchildren—as well as the many friends he leaves behind. Our thoughts and prayers are with them all at this difficult time.

FAIR TAXES, FAIR BENEFITS, FAIR SOCIAL SECURITY FOR THE WOMEN OF OUR NATION!

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 5, 2005

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge support for three bills that I have introduced to provide financial relief to women in our Nation. Both men and women will receive assistance from this legislation, but because women are often with less financial resources, they will particularly benefit.

My first bill, H.R. 2127, the "Fair Taxes for Seniors Act", will provide a one-time increase in the capital gains tax exemption on the sale of a home for citizens who are 50 years of age or older. Passing this bill will give many seniors the additional money they need for nursing home care, medical costs, and other retirement expenses.

The current capital gains tax exemption works well for younger people who often move from job to job, selling their homes. The current exemption works well for people who live in areas where housing prices are below average. But it is not working for individuals who have lived in one home for 20 to 50 years and have a capital gain that is much larger than the present exemption. In other words, it is not working for seniors who live in areas with higher housing prices, such as San Diego, California in my Congressional District.

My bill doubles the current exemption by providing a one-time increase to \$500,000 for a single person and \$1 million for a couple that can be excluded from the sale of a principal residence for taxpayers who have reached the age of 50. Because they will be able to keep more, an added benefit is that family members and perhaps the government will be relieved of the burden of caring for these individuals as they grow older.

My second bill is H.R. 2126, the "Social Security Survivors Fairness Act", legislation to provide Social Security widows' and widowers' benefits to people under the age of 60. Many of these survivors are women, women who have spent their life working in the home, raising their children, and supporting their husbands. They currently are allowed to receive Social Security widows' benefits, but to qualify they must be 60 years old.