

NOAA VESSEL TIME CHARTER

HON. DON YOUNG

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, beginning in Fiscal Year 2001 Congress began providing funds for a vessel time charter for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA, to use in addressing the critical hydrographic survey backlog. The vessel time charter added a third method of acquiring the data needed to update and improve the hydrographic charts of our nation's waterways. These charts are essential for our national security, defense and economy. NOAA now uses (1) its own hydrographic survey vessels, (2) data—contracts under the Brooks Act, and (3) a long-term, multi-year, vessel lease/charter of a private sector vessel with contract hydrographers.

The long-term vessel lease/charter, is now completing its first year of operation. I rise today to urge NOAA to reprogram funds to extend the current charter through the end of this calendar year. This extension will allow enough data to be gathered to determine whether the continued use of the time charter is cost effective, and competitive with other methods of acquiring hydrographic data. It will also keep the contract going long enough to determine if fiscal year 2006 funds are available for continued long term vessel charters. To emphasize the bipartisan importance of this issue, I ask that the May 31, 2005, letter to the NOAA Administrator that my good friend and colleague, NORM DICKS signed with me, be entered into the RECORD.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, May 31, 2005.

Vice Admiral CONRAD C. LAUTENBACHER, Jr.,
Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Herbert Clark Hoover Building, Washington DC.

DEAR ADMIRAL LAUTENBACHER: As you are aware, the Nation faces a huge backlog of critical hydrographic survey work. To reduce this backlog, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) had developed a three-pronged approach. NOAA is using 1) its own hydrographic survey vessels and personnel; 2) data acquisition contracts; and 3) a leased vessel staffed by contract hydrographers.

In fiscal years 2002 through 2005, Congress provided funding and specific direction to NOAA to enter into a multi-year vessel lease. After a lengthy bid process, the Military Sealift Command entered into a lease on NOAA's behalf that included a base year, and 4 one-year options. The first year of that lease will soon end, and unless it is extended this portion of the hydrographic surveying initiative will end. The bidders, including the winning bidder, based their bids on a 5-year lease period. Therefore, it was very disappointing to learn that NOAA does not intend to exercise even its first annual lease option, especially since NOAA appears to be satisfied with the work that has been done by the leased vessel.

We have requested that the Appropriations Committee include funding to continue the vessel lease program in fiscal year 2006. This will allow NOAA time to acquire and examine cost data on the lease to determine if vessel leasing is a cost effective method of acquiring hydrographic data. While this request is pending, we urge you to extend the

vessel lease with the roughly \$1.6 million remaining of the amounts already appropriated for that purpose. This will hold open the door to allow NOAA to exercise the first annual contract option if Congress appropriates vessel lease funds in Fiscal Year 2006.

Both Congress and NOAA deliberated long and hard before establishing the longterm vessel lease program as an additional method to reduce the survey backlog. Given the time and effort it has taken to get that program under way, it would be very inefficient for NOAA to kill the program this year, and then go through another multi-year contract bidding process starting next year. Therefore, we urge you to use the remaining funds to extend the vessel contract.

Thank you for your expeditious consideration of this request. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

DON YOUNG,
*Congressman for All
Alaska.*

NORMAN D. DICKS,
Member of Congress.

CELEBRATING THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF GARY JOB CORPS IN SAN MARCOS, TEXAS

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Gary Job Corps for 40 years of successful service to the people of San Marcos, Texas.

Located on a campus of 1,000 acres at the former Gary Army Air Field, Gary Job Corps is the largest of 118 Job Corps campuses nationwide, enrolling nearly 2,000 young men and women. It represents the fulfillment of President Johnson's 1964 promise to develop a national job training program for youth, a promise he made while visiting the former Southwest Texas State University.

For 40 years, Gary Job Corps has been helping young men and women achieve their academic and professional dreams. In addition to providing vocational training for careers in the health occupations, business, computers, cooking, and numerous other industries, it has sent on its alumni to the student bodies of Texas State University, Alamo Community College, and other institutions of higher education.

Gary Job Corps has helped countless young Texans achieve their life goals, and has helped bring economic growth, educational achievement, and the promise of a better future to Central Texas. I am happy to have this opportunity to congratulate Gary Job Corps on the occasion of its 40th anniversary, and I wish all of its staff and students many more years of success.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, on World Refugee Day, to pay tribute to the indomitable spirit and courage of the world's ref-

ugees and internally displaced persons (IDP's), as well as the brave people who help them rebuild their lives. I recognize the generosity of the United States and its assistance to refugees. However, the next year promises to be a unique opportunity for the return of refugees, and in order to seize this opportunity, we must increase our investment in long-term development to make refugee returns durable. I also urge the Bush Administration government to do more to protect current refugees, resolve the conflicts that produce refugees, and prevent future refugee crises.

Among the most vulnerable groups of people in the world are those who are displaced, whether as a result of conflict, persecution or other human rights violations. Often losing everything but hope, refugees and IDP's are among the great survivors of our time. Initially, the fear that refugees and IDP's must overcome may be the immediate one of trying to escape the horrors of war and persecution, the pain of losing homes and loved ones, and the ordeal of flight. Refugees and IDP's deserve our respect—not just for enduring the dangers and violence of the crises that made them refugees—but also for the courage they show in rebuilding their lives and contributing to society in difficult or, unfamiliar circumstances. Albert Einstein, Victor Hugo, Congressman TOM LANTOS, Thabo Mbeki, Marlene Dietrich, and Paul Rusesabagina (of Hotel Rwanda fame) were all refugees whose phenomenal achievements earned the world's respect. Today's refugees are also heroes and deserve no less than our respect.

But giving our respect to refugees and IDP's—truly honoring their courage—requires much more than flattering rhetoric and pledges of solidarity. It requires us to look back at what the world has done well to assist refugees and IDP's. It also requires us to deepen our understanding of the perils and fears they continue to face. In addition, if we truly want to celebrate their courage, it means we must focus our attention on what still needs to be done to help them.

People have fled persecution from the moment in history when they began forming communities. The tradition of offering asylum began at almost the same time. And when nations began to develop an international conscience in the early 20th century, efforts to help refugees also spread across the globe. In 1921, Fridtjof Nansen was appointed as the first refugee High Commissioner of the League of Nations, the forerunner of the United Nations. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) began as a small organization, with a three-year mandate to help resettle millions of European refugees who were still homeless in the aftermath of the Second World War. Since that time, the organization has continually expanded to meet the growing needs of refugees and other displaced people. In more than five decades, the agency has helped an estimated 50 million people restart their lives. Today, a staff of more than 6,000 people in more than 100 countries continues to help some 17 million persons in every corner of the world. Today I commend the outstanding, tireless work of the UNHCR. However, as a former high commissioner said, the fact that the world still finds a need for the UNHCR should serve as a sobering reminder of the international community's continuing failure to prevent prejudice, persecution, poverty and other root causes of conflict and displacement.

In our tribute to the world's refugees, it is important not to forget the internally displaced persons, or IDP's. Last week, during his first few days as the 10th U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres reminded the world that millions of internally displaced people are not currently being cared for. The internal displacement problem is one of the biggest neglected humanitarian problems that we face. The abstract term "internal displacement," created to distinguish IDP's from refugees, fails to convey the immense human suffering most internally displaced people are forced to undergo. The act of displacement itself often is accompanied by violence and the most serious human rights violations such as killings, torture, kidnappings and rape. IDP's are a very vulnerable category and most of them receive less assistance than refugees in camps. Whereas refugees have managed to cross borders to escape persecution, the internally displaced, for various reasons, are stuck within the same borders between which forces of violence and persecution continue to hunt them.

The number of people "of concern" to UNHCR, including IDP's, grew last year by over 2 million to 19.2 million. The increase was mainly the result of a rise in the numbers of internally displaced people and stateless persons to 7.6 million—up from 5.3 million at the end of 2003. Of the world's approximately 25 million IDP's, 13 million are in Africa. Sudan has the largest IDP population in the world, with between 5 and 6 million displaced persons. Sudan also is the country with the largest number of newly displaced persons in 2004 (about 1 million, mostly in Darfur, where a total of 2 million IDP's survive on a day-to-day basis). Sudan is followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo with 2.3 million IDP's. In Colombia, Afro-Colombians continue to be caught in the crossfire between government troops and rebels. Afro-Colombians represent a disproportionate level of the country's IDP population of more than 2 million, which represents the world's third largest IDP population. Iraq and northern Uganda each have around 2 million IDP's.

Despite the scale of the worldwide internal displacement crisis, its destabilizing effects on regional security, and the vulnerabilities of many internally displaced populations, the U.S. and other members of the international community have been slow in addressing the issue. Refugees, usually far more visible, continue to receive a great deal more international attention, although their number is only about half that of IDP's. The IDP problem is a humanitarian challenge, as well as a challenge to peace-building and post-conflict recovery. For example, it will be extremely difficult to rebuild Sudan with millions of persons uprooted and on the move. As we see in the massive displacement crises of Colombia and Somalia, the U.S. and the rest of the international community are far from being capable of effectively responding to or preventing such emergencies. Due to the chronic under-funding of aid agencies by donor governments, the IDP problem will not likely see progress towards a solution any time soon. Unless we change this shameful status quo.

Today, I call on the Bush administration to take three specific steps to help the internally displaced. First, I call on the Bush administration to actively pressure countries that are using the global "war on terror" to justify brutal

repression and the displacement of millions. In 2004, several governments continued or intensified anti-rebel military campaigns labeled "counter-terrorist" operations, which resulted in new internal displacements and prevented return, including in Chechnya (Russian Federation), Aceh (Indonesia), Colombia, northern Uganda and Nepal. Second, I call on the Bush administration to reexamine the effectiveness of U.S. bureaucratic structures that are intended to assist IDP's. Currently, the responsibility for assisting IDP's is shared between the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration and the U.S. Agency for International Development; however, this responsibility is poorly defined, suffers from lack of coherence, and is vulnerable to bureaucratic turf battles. Regarding IDP's, the relationship between PRM and USAID must be better defined in order to facilitate the creation of a more effective system to monitor and assist the internally displaced.

Finally, I call upon the Bush administration to set up a fund specifically intended to assist IDP's. IDP's continue to fall through the cracks in our handling of crises. Establishing such a fund—to be administered by the appropriate government agency—would serve as a first step toward not treating IDP's as an afterthought. It would also serve as a model to the international community that would facilitate an improvement in how we address the sad phenomenon of internal displacement. In summary, let us not neglect IDP's, for their struggle is often just as dangerous as that of refugees, and their courage also merits a tribute today, a tribute that translates to humanitarian action.

Today, the worldwide suffering of uprooted peoples continues. There are currently nearly 20 million refugees and other persons of concern to the UNHCR, the majority of whom are women and children. Afghans remain by far the biggest refugee group in the world at 2.1 million. In Sudan, the increase in refugees in 2004 accounted for the largest increase in the world. Sudan produced 125,000 new refugees, mostly people fleeing genocide in the Darfur region to neighboring Chad. The total number of Sudanese refugees world-wide rose to 731,000 in 2004, from 606,000 in 2003, an increase of 20 percent.

Recent trends give some room for guarded optimism. On June 17, the UNHCR reported that the global number of refugees fell 4 percent in 2004 to 9.2 million, the lowest total in almost a quarter of a century. Repatriations are also up. In 2004, a total of 1.5 million refugees repatriated voluntarily, an increase of some 400,000 over the previous year. The 2004 returns include 940,000 refugees who went back to Afghanistan and 194,000 who returned to Iraq. In addition, over the past few years, successful repatriation operations in Africa and the countries of former Yugoslavia have reduced significantly the number of people of concern to the UNHCR. In Burma, recent developments are providing a basis on which to plan for the eventual return of refugees in Thailand. Across the globe, resettlement continues expanding through the practice of group resettlement. The UNHCR, with support from the U.S., has succeeded in helping several million people begin new lives.

Despite the good news, though, numerous serious challenges remain. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the numbers of refugees increased by 2.4 percent, pushing the

total number of Congolese refugees up to 462,000. In Northern Uganda the murderous Lord's Resistance Army continues to abduct thousands for use as soldiers and sex slaves. In Burundi, under pressure from Rwanda, the Burundi government recently announced that 10,000 Rwandan asylum seekers who had fled Rwanda since the beginning of April in fear of persecution over the 1994 genocide would not be granted asylum, despite not having been screened to see if they met the definition of a refugee. Already, at least 5,000 of the refugees have been returned to Rwanda, and because the UN was not granted access to the refugees, many fear they were forced to return. In Afghanistan, there is a need for more comprehensive solutions for Afghans still outside their country, and dialogue between the UNHCR and relevant governments and other stakeholders in the Afghanistan situation must continue. In addition, although a peace deal in January officially ended Sudan's north-south conflict, at least 7,500 people had fled into Uganda this year, and refugees and IDP's say that food distribution had stopped in camps inside Sudan.

Because of its long history of displacement, and since Africa Refugee Day corresponds with World Refugee Day in many countries, Africa merits special attention in this examination of refugees and IDP's. Africa hosts approximately 3 million refugees, about 30 percent of the world's total. Africa also hosts 13 million IDP's, or more than half of the world's total IDP population. In Africa today, return and reintegration opportunities abound if we can get the politics of peace right. There are an unprecedented number of repatriation and reintegration operations currently underway—particularly in Burundi, Liberia, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, and Somalia. In 2004, refugees from Liberia (100,000), Burundi (90,000), Angola (64,000), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (30,000) returned to their countries in large numbers and the UNHCR started a program intended to help an additional 340,000 Liberians repatriate. In March 2004, the UNHCR took an important step to act on the improved prospects for the return home of millions of long-time refugees in Africa. The UNHCR launched its Dialogue on Voluntary Repatriation and Sustainable Reintegration in Africa. The Africa Dialogue calls on the international community to seize this unique opportunity for the return of up to 2 million refugees and several million displaced persons across the continent, and it stresses the need to invest in long-term development to make returns durable. Today, the Africa Dialogue continues to make progress; however, considerable challenges still lie ahead. Returns must be matched by post-conflict reconstruction and reintegration in order to break the cycle of violence and make repatriation sustainable. The populations of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia all await the outcome of political negotiations, and the U.S. and the UNHCR must lend their support to these peace efforts while assisting the victims of conflict.

Of great concern, the genocide being perpetuated by the government of Sudan in that country's Darfur region has forced approximately 2 million Darfurians to become internally displaced. In addition, more than 200,000 Sudanese have fled Darfur and are now living in camps in neighboring Chad. For the

UNHCR mission in eastern Chad, where 300 UNHCR staff assist a total of 213,000 refugees in 12 camps, the U.S. has given \$18 million in 2005, or half of all donors' contributions. However, the UNHCR still lacks about \$40 million to cover the 2005 needs-based budget.

Across the border from the camps in eastern Chad, the situation in Darfur is more dire. In Darfur, the mismatch between humanitarian capacity and human need grows more deadly by the day. The UNHCR Darfur mission has a total of 25 staff. The U.S. has provided no money for UNHCR operations in Darfur in 2005, although half the year has already passed. There is now a disgraceful \$30 million shortfall from what the UNHCR needs in Darfur for 2005. The lack of security is still a tremendous problem, partly due to an increase in small arms trafficking. Government-recruited and armed Arab militias, also known as Janjaweed, continue to target civilians, and in April, rape, kidnapping, and banditry increased. Aid workers are still at great risk of being targeted. Due to the conflict and failed harvests, the food situation is serious. More than 3.5 million IDP's are in critical need of food and are running dangerously short of water. The World Food Program does not have what it needs to feed persons of concern past July. Local Sudanese officials are pressuring some IDP's to return to their villages, despite the constant threat of government-supported Janjaweed militias and other armed groups. Although the presence of the AU force in Darfur promises some protection, it will never be sufficient.

A country of concern that is often forgotten is Western Sahara, a swath of land in West Africa that lies along the Atlantic Ocean. In camps in Algeria, about 165,000 refugees from Western Sahara, a country that has been occupied illegally by Morocco since 1975, continue to live in "deplorable conditions," according to a recent report from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. The government of Morocco has promised the people of Western Sahara, the Sahrawi, a vote to determine their own future. However, more than a decade later, that vote has yet to occur, and Morocco continues to disregard international law. No progress has been made in UN efforts to find a solution to the dispute between Morocco and the Sahrawis. The U.S. must put pressure on Morocco, not only to end the exile and suffering of Sahrawi refugees, but also to allow a free, fair and transparent referendum to determine the country's future and prevent the creation of more refugees.

Another source of concern is Tanzania. A generous host of refugees over the last 30 years, Tanzania continues to host Africa's largest number of refugees. However, recently, a troubling policy shift seems to have emerged, reflecting an increasingly harsh stance towards refugees. Local and national politicians are feeling increasing pressure from their constituencies due to the perception that refugees receive more attention and assistance than local communities and have in some cases publicly blamed them for crime and the spread of disease. In 2004, the government frequently did not provide protection against refoulement, the return of persons to a country where they feared persecution; on a number of occasions, the government refouled refugees and refused persons seeking asylum or refugee status. In addition, the government

at times did not cooperate with the UNHCR during 2004. Although repatriations of Burundian refugees living in Tanzania continues, the U.S. and the international community must engage Tanzania regularly to ensure that the country does not turn its back on those in need, and on decades of humanitarian tradition. At the least, we must listen to Tanzania's concerns and explore options to provide more support to what has traditionally been the most hospitable country in Africa for refugees.

The best solution for refugees is voluntary repatriation, or going back to one's original homeland once all the key conditions are in place. However, for some people who fled their homes amid conflict and widespread human rights abuses, returning is still a distant prospect. For this reason, finding creative solutions for meeting the needs of refugees and the local populations that host them is critical. One example is the *Zambian Initiative*, a government-led "Development through Local Integration Project" established in 2002. The *Zambian Initiative* has promoted a holistic approach in addressing the needs of refugees and Zambians living in refugee hosting areas in the Western Province of Zambia. By facilitating cooperation between the host communities and the refugees, the UNHCR and the Zambian government have enabled the production of food and housing, thus alleviating the effects of a food deficit, poor infrastructure and limited access to services and economic opportunities. The presence of refugees can stretch local resources and infrastructure and exacerbate poverty. However, in Zambia, local development committees involve the local populations and refugees by identifying needs and projects in areas such as health and education. While voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees continues, the *Zambian Initiative* has created a sense of ownership while pursuing durable solutions for refugees through local integration. We must commend and encourage this type of innovative approach to refugees and the pressure their presence can place on local populations. Let us use *World Refugee Day* to call for more such innovation, so that refugees will not be trapped in the same sad status quo.

The donor response to the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 was admirable and generated unprecedented world-record contributions, thanks in part to the dramatic nature of the tsunami, its effects on numerous countries, and its timing, the day after Christmas. However, other humanitarian catastrophes, especially the needs of refugees and IDP's in Africa, remain virtually ignored. As UN Humanitarian Coordinator Jan Egeland has pointed out, in many ways, Africa has a silent tsunami several times each year. If you look at the numbers in Sudan or the Democratic Republic of the Congo, you see that the impact of conflict on refugees and IDP's is equivalent to a tsunami every few months. Today, we have an opportunity to honor the courage of refugees and IDP's by recognizing the magnitude of their suffering, but to do this we must act out of the same compassion that drove us to alleviate the suffering of the tsunami victims.

The UNHCR is working hard to resolve many of the protracted situations around the world. But it is a labor and resource-intensive endeavor, requiring sustained international attention and continuing donor support, including support from the United States. The same is true of UNHCR's advocacy efforts and its work

to ensure a smooth transition from repatriation to reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction so that refugees can go home and stay home. The results show that an investment in solutions is a good investment indeed.

The U.S. has shown great hospitality and generosity in hosting and assisting refugees and other displaced people. In 2004, the U.S. welcomed 52,000 refugees from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. In absolute terms, the U.S. continues to be the leading donor to UNHCR and for humanitarian assistance to refugees world-wide. However, as a proportion of national wealth, the U.S. contribution to refugees and IDP's lags far behind most western countries. The persistent failure of donor government, including the U.S., to provide funding for relief efforts is the most critical flaw in the humanitarian aid process today. The UN Consolidated Appeal (CAP) is a collaborative assessment of the minimal financial commitment necessary to provide essential emergency assistance in humanitarian crises. Despite the CAP, all assistance programming is under-funded by almost 35 percent every year, leaving tens of millions of men, women, and children around the world to suffer needlessly. The recurring shortfall in financial assistance is not the only thing hindering our response to the refugee and IDP crises of the world. In the last five years, global food aid has dropped by nearly 50 percent, despite an 8 percent increase in the number of chronically hungry people in the world. In addition, funding delays continue to jeopardize the progress of emergency relief for refugees and IDP's. In Somalia in recent years for example, nearly 50 percent of all funds received for emergency assistance arrived in the last quarter of the year. And currently, reportedly due to bureaucratic delay, the U.S. has still not contributed any funds to the UNHCR operation in Darfur, although we are already in the second half of 2005.

The U.S. must act as a leader to address the persistent and damaging delays in funding for refugees and IDP's. If the U.S. wants to reform the UN and render the international donor community more effective, this is a good place to start. Therefore, I call on the Bush administration and other members of the international community to increase financial commitments to humanitarian appeals for refugees and IDP's. At the least, the international community should pledge to provide 75 percent of the aid requested in the CAP pledge in order to ensure that the most critical emergency relief programs remain funded.

Many prosperous countries with strong economies complain about the large number of asylum seekers and refugees, but they offer little to prevent refugee crises. Humanitarian action is of limited value if it does not form part of a wider strategic and political framework aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict. Experience has shown time and time again that humanitarian action alone cannot solve problems which are fundamentally political in nature. Yet all too often, humanitarian organizations like the UNHCR have found themselves isolated and alone in dangerous and difficult situations (such as Darfur), where they have had to operate without adequate financial and political support. Therefore, we must invest in lasting solutions: conflict prevention, return, and reintegration. We must support the UNHCR's efforts to ensure international protection and assistance to refugees

and IDP's through a range of solutions, including improved management of operations. We must not demonstrate a lack of political commitment to solving refugee problems during the post-conflict phase, when the spotlight of the international media has moved away. We must more fully recognize the link between human displacement and international peace and security. History has shown that displacement is not only a consequence of conflicts; it can also cause conflict. Without human security, there can be no peace and stability. The U.S. must recognize the link between refugees and IDP's, on the one hand, and stability and the seeds of democracy on the other.

If we are to honor the courage of refugees and IDP's today, we must come together with the UNHCR, nongovernmental organizations, and other donor governments to actively pursue durable solutions. If we fail to do so, refugees and IDP's will remain in their miserable conditions—surviving on a handful of maize each day, living in immense boredom under windblown tents, and clinging to their hope amid memories of atrocities. On World Refugee Day and every other day, let us show the refugees and IDP's that we are with them. Having endured conflict, rape, abduction, trafficking, chronic hunger, squalor, and other unspeakable suffering, the courage of refugees and IDP's has been tested beyond what we can imagine. However, despite their courage, they remain vulnerable to the loss of hope. If we will allow them to lose hope, we allow them to lose courage. In our tribute to their indomitable courage, we must pledge never to let that happen. We must pledge to help them rebuild their lives today, to commit ourselves to long-term solutions, and to prevent the nightmare from reoccurring tomorrow.

AUTHORIZATION OF PARKINSON'S
DISEASE RESEARCH EDUCATION
AND CLINICAL CENTERS

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, Parkinson's disease is a serious health problem in the United States. Up to 1.5 million Americans have the disease and approximately 60,000 new cases are diagnosed each year nationwide. By 2010, an estimated 39,000 veterans who are age 85 and older will have this progressive neurological disorder. Treatments exist for Parkinson's, but medical research continues to improve treatments and to find a cure.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) took an important step in 2001 towards eradicating this disease by establishing Parkinson's Disease Research Education and Clinical Centers (PADRECCs). In addition to providing an unparalleled environment for researchers to see their results rapidly and directly applied to better patient care and shared with the medical and scientific community, these centers of excellence are the backbone that now enables the VA to provide excellent care to veterans with Parkinson's disease and to conduct research.

Through the PADRECCs and the National VA Parkinson's Disease Consortium—a network of nationally dispersed VA clinicians with expertise and/or interest in the fields of Parkin-

son's disease and related movement disorders—the VA is able to treat 42,000 veterans with Parkinson's disease.

Together the PADRECCs and the Consortium serve as a channel for collaboration and development in the areas of clinical care, scientific research and educational outreach. The collaborative efforts of the PADRECCs and Consortium provide veterans nationwide with integrated, expert medical care and access to the full spectrum of state-of-the-art diagnostic and therapeutic services to meet and exceed the standard of care.

In just a brief time since their inception, the six PADRECCs, which are based at the VA medical centers in Houston, West Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Portland-Seattle, Richmond and San Francisco, have made enormous contribution to Parkinson's disease care and research and training of health care professionals. The PADRECCs, including the VA hospitals in Albuquerque, Las Vegas, Lorna Linda and Long Beach, Calif., Phoenix, San Diego and Tucson, which are affiliated with the Southwestern PADRECC located at the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center put VA at the forefront of the landmark clinical study to assess the effectiveness of surgical implantation of deep brain stimulators in reducing the symptoms of the disease.

The efforts of the VA PADRECCs are the model of innovation in the delivery of healthcare and research for chronic disease in the veteran population. The efforts of the PADRECCs deserve continued support.

Today, I am proud to introduce H.R. 2959 along with Mr. BAKER of Louisiana, Mr. BOEHLERT of New York, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Ms. MALONEY of New York, Mr. PICKERING of Mississippi, Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon, Mr. KING of New York, and Mr. BLUMENAUER of Oregon, which would permanently authorize these six PADRECCs. The Disabled American Veterans and Parkinson's Action Network support permanently authorizing the PADRECCs.

I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill which will benefit tens of thousands of veterans and provide additional hope for all Americans who have Parkinson's disease.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS,
Washington, DC, June 17, 2005.

HON. LANE EVANS,

Ranking Member, House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: The Disabled American Veterans supports your draft bill that would authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to establish six Parkinson's Disease Research, Education and Clinical Centers. Currently, VA medical centers treat over 40,000 Parkinson's disease patients every year.

These centers would conduct research covering basic biomedicine, rehabilitation, health services delivery, and clinical trials to assess the effectiveness of treatments such as surgical implantation of deep brain stimulators in reducing the symptoms of Parkinson's disease. Furthermore, the establishment of a consortium would allow VA to design a national network of VA clinicians with expertise and interest in the fields of Parkinson's disease and related movement disorders. The collaboration and development in the areas of clinical care, scientific research, and educational outreach would ensure specialized care will be embedded throughout the continuum of care provided by the VA health care system.

Thank you for your efforts to improve VA's specialized medical programs for serv-

ice connected disabled veterans, and thank you for your continued support of disabled veterans

Sincerely,

JOSEPH A. VIOLANTE,
National Legislative Director.

PARKINSON'S ACTION NETWORK,
Washington, DC, June 16, 2005.
House of Representatives, Veterans' Affairs Committee, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE: On behalf of the Parkinson's Action Network (PAN), I would like to express support for legislation that will be introduced by Rep. Lane Evans shortly that provides for the establishment of the Parkinson's Disease Research Education and Clinical Centers (PADRECCs) in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

PAN is the unified education and advocacy voice of the Parkinson's community—more than one million Americans and their families. Through education and interaction with the Parkinson's community, scientists, lawmakers, opinion leaders, and the public, PAN leads the fight to ease the burden and find a cure. PAN increases awareness about Parkinson's disease and seeks federal support for Parkinson's research.

More than one million Americans have Parkinson's disease, with approximately 60,000 more diagnosed each year. As the disease progresses, patients are ultimately robbed of their ability to speak, walk, and perform many of the activities of daily life such as rising from a chair or rolling over in bed.

PADRECCs, as suggested by their name, are charged with conducting clinical and basic science research, administering national outreach and education programs, and providing state-of-the-art clinical care. These services, provided by the existing six PADRECCs, are vital not only to veterans, but to the entire community.

We firmly believe that patients, family members, and the general public should continue to have access to the invaluable services provided by the Parkinson's Disease Research, Education, and Clinical Centers. On this basis, PAN respectfully requests your support of this important legislation.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me or Mary Richards, PAN Director of Government Relations at (202) 638-4101.

Sincerely,

AMY L. COMSTOCK,
Executive Director.

CONGRATULATING COMMERCE
BANK AND PRESIDENT IGNACIO
URRABAZO ON THE OPENING OF
THEIR NEW HEADQUARTERS

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Commerce Bank and President Ignacio Urrabazo on the opening of their new headquarters.

The headquarters will serve as the bank's primary location for the Laredo market. Commerce Bank is dedicated to providing convenient and superior services to its customers, even if that means traveling to a customers' place of business, or working far beyond a banker's traditional hours. Customers are known by their names, not by their account