

Since its inception in 2003, the week held from May 1–May 7, recognizes the plight of one of the greatest threats to our Nation—46 million Americans who lack health insurance coverage.

This important initiative is led by former Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. During the week, community-based events are organized throughout the Nation to heighten public awareness about the importance of making health care coverage a civil right and a priority on our public policy agenda. Over the past three years, the week of events has included health fairs, seminars for small businesses, as well as faith-based, college and university activities.

Mr. Speaker, 46 million Americans—which equates to 15 percent of the population—are living without any form of health insurance coverage. As a Nation that embodies democracy and spreads its principles of equality throughout the world, we should be shocked by this astounding figure. The statistics regarding the uninsured are equally shocking:

Proportionately, Hispanics and African-Americans have been hit the hardest by our failure to provide health care for all. At least 60 percent of Hispanic Americans, more than 43 percent of African Americans, and 23 percent of Caucasians are among the uninsured.

More than one in four uninsured adults (or 26.6 percent) have less than a high school education.

Only 9 percent of people in families with income over \$50,000 per year are uninsured, compared to 40.8 percent of people with family income below \$5,000.

A national survey conducted in 2003 found that almost six in 10 uninsured adults (59 percent) have been without health insurance for two years or more.

In the state of Maryland, approximately 810,000 people, 14.6 percent of the total population, lack health insurance coverage.

Mr. Speaker, these statistics illustrate something very concrete and clear: the human consequences of having tens of millions of Americans uninsured are appalling. Necessary medical treatment is being delayed too long or altogether, and the Americans are dying unnecessarily.

Apart from this fact, the employment-based health insurance system, which provides health insurance for almost two-thirds of the non-elderly population, is also broken.

The reasons are complex, but this much is clear.

Too many Americans are working at low-paid or part-time jobs that do not provide health insurance coverage.

Insurance costs are increasing—and those employers who do offer coverage are attempting to shift more and more of those costs onto their employees.

We also know that those areas of our economy in which any job growth is occurring are about 10 percent less likely to provide health care coverage than those in which the number of available jobs is shrinking.

Mr. Speaker, based on all of these facts, the time to change our Nation's healthcare equation is upon us. There has to be a better way to ensure universal, high quality care. I am convinced that there is no human right more fundamental than the preservation of life. Wealth should not be a pre-condition to world class health care in a nation that truly values all of its people.

With that said, I have joined Michigan Congressman JOHN CONYERS and many others in proposing the United States National Health Insurance Act (H.R. 676).

This proposal would create a nation-wide, single-payer health care system that is publicly financed but provides private care. It would include expanding and improving the existing Medicare program to cover Americans of all ages. Under the plan, Americans would retain (or regain) the right to choose their own doctors. Other health care professionals and all medically necessary services would be covered. There would also be neither co-pays nor deductibles.

Today, I encourage my colleagues to work with us in advancing the vision of universal health care for the following three reasons:

We must not allow the sick and dying Americans in our communities to be marginalized.

We must make common cause with all of the Americans to provide the care that they need at a cost that they can afford.

We must be clear in our assertion that health care is a fundamental human right whatever may be the color of a person's skin.

Now is the time to create a health care system that truly serves ALL Americans and now is the time for America to transform our human right to health care into a civil right guaranteed—and funded—by federal law. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor H.R. 676.

NATIONAL FOREST SERVICE OF  
FLORIDA LAND SALE

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 4, 2006

Mr. CRENSHAW. Mr. Speaker, today I introduced common sense legislation that provides the Forestry Service the flexibility they need to properly manage their assets. This legislation modifies the Florida National Forest Land Management Act in two simple ways, which will provide the Forest Service essential authority to manage the National Forests in Florida effectively.

The first provision simply adds an unmanageable tract of land located in Tallahassee, FL to the list of lands the Secretary of Agriculture is currently authorized to sell. This specific property, tract W-1979, is approximately 114 acres of land that has evolved into an unmanageable problem area for the Apalachicola National Forest. Due to the configuration and surrounding development, the vegetation cannot be managed through prescribed fire. Although a very valuable tract from a real estate/commercial aspect, this tract has lost its National Forest character. The sale of this land will allow the Forest Service to purchase other lands located within the Forest that are more manageable and will enhance National Forests in Florida.

Secondly, this legislation would allow the Forest Service to use proceeds from the sale of other "non-green land" to be used for construction and improvements to Administrative facilities essential to the proper management of the Forest. These "non-green land" tracts of land are owned by the Forest Service, but have urban improvements like fairgrounds or sporting complexes and are not conducive to the overall purpose of protecting our National Forests.

This legislation would allow the Service to use the proceeds from the sale of improved lands to build critical infrastructure they need to manage the Forests in Florida, while allowing the Forest Service to continue its practice of using receipts from all nondeveloped "green land" tracts for the acquisition of other "green land" tracts to enhance the National Forests in Florida. By passing this legislation, the Forest Service will have the ability to efficiently and effectively manage our Nation's precious resources.

CONGRATULATING CHIEF MASTER  
SERGEANT JEFFERY D. GUSTAFSON

HON. GIL GUTKNECHT

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 4, 2006

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate CMSgt Jeffery D. Gustafson of Rochester, Minnesota, on his dedicated service in the United States Air Force.

In November of 1975, Chief Master Sergeant Gustafson enlisted in the United States Air Force at the 934th Airlift Wing, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Air Force Reserve Station in Minnesota. He retired from the same station on April 1, 2006, having achieved the highest attainable enlisted rank in the United States Military.

Chief Master Sergeant Gustafson has served the United States from across the world, including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Honduras. He was given the distinct honor of being the first troop commander of a fully manned Aerospace Expeditionary Force for the United States Air Force. He was also the first recipient of the General Rawlings Air Force Sergeant Association and Air Force Association Chapter's Chief Master Sergeant of the Year. In addition, Chief Master Sergeant Gustafson has been thanked in person for his military service by President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush.

Mr. Speaker, I offer my sincere gratitude to CMSgt Jeffery D. Gustafson for his service in the United States Air Force and his commitment to our nation. His distinguished accomplishments reflect to the highest degree upon himself and the United States Air Force.

AMTRAK 35TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 4, 2006

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Amtrak on its 35th Anniversary, and commemorate its 35 years of public service to this Nation through its commitment to passenger rail.

I travel all over the country and the people I talk to love Amtrak. It is a great way to commute to work, it takes cars off our already congested highways, and in many areas of the country is the only mode of transportation available. In fact, ridership has increased in 8 of the last 9 years reaching a record level of over 25 million passengers last year. It is also important to note that Amtrak's long distance