

East, earning a living wage, accessing affordable health care and relief from sky-rocketing gas prices. Minnesotans in the 4th District have made it clear that Congress should get to work on the priority issues of this country, rather than continue to play political games.

H.R. 2389 would remove the Pledge of Allegiance from the jurisdiction of federal courts. This bill is an attempt by Republicans to strip our federal courts of their power to rule over issues of Constitutional relevance, and to tell our federal courts that their expertise on Constitutional freedoms is irrelevant. Our system of checks and balances was constructed by our Founders for this specific reason—to retain the independence of the Courts, and their ability to rule justly and uphold the rule of law in this great country. As Justice Sandra Day O'Connor stated last year, the effectiveness of the federal courts relies on the knowledge that they will not be subject to retaliation for their rulings.

Representative MEL WATT offered an amendment today to this bill that, had it passed, would have allowed the Supreme Court to hear cases regarding the Pledge of Allegiance—in effect, reversing the negative damage this bill will inflict if it passes. I supported Mr. WATT's amendment, and am extremely disappointed that the majority of my colleagues did not do the same.

This bill is likely unconstitutional and debating it on the floor of the House today is an outrage considering the real issues facing American families. I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing this legislation, upholding the system of justice our Founders intended, and return to debating the issues we were elected to resolve.

HONORING BRIAN D. THORSON,
CRNA, MA PRESIDENT OF THE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
NURSE ANESTHETISTS

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 24, 2006

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Brian Thorson, CRNA, MA. Mr. Thorson will soon complete his year as National President of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA). I am very pleased that Mr. Thorson was tapped as the 2005–2006 President of this prestigious national organization, which I am proud to say is headquartered in Park Ridge, Illinois, in the Congressional district that I represent.

Celebrating its 75th Anniversary, the AANA is the professional organization that represents more than 36,000 practicing Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) across the country. Founded in 1931, the AANA has ably served the interests of CRNAs and the patients who rely on them for quality care. CRNAs are anesthesia professionals who administer approximately 65 percent of all anesthetics given to patients each year in the United States. They work in every setting in which anesthesia is delivered, including hospital surgical suites and obstetrical delivery rooms, ambulatory surgical centers, and the offices of dentists, podiatrists, and plastic surgeons.

CRNAs provide anesthesia for all types of surgical cases and, in some states, are the

sole anesthesia providers in approximately 75 percent of all rural hospitals, affording these medical facilities obstetrical, surgical and trauma stabilization services.

Brian Thorson has done a remarkable job as National President of the AANA, bringing his training, skills and hands-on experience to the job. He was educated in the art and science of Nurse Anesthesia at the St. Paul-Ramsey School of Nurse Anesthesiology in St. Paul, Minnesota, and earned his Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) from Winona University in Winona, Minnesota. In addition, Mr. Thorson also holds a Master of Arts (MA) degree in Curriculum Development and Instruction from the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, and an additional Bachelors of Science from the College of Health Sciences at the University of Minnesota, in Minneapolis, where he graduated summa cum laude. Currently, he is a Staff Anesthetist within the Department of Anesthesia at Hennepin County Medical Center, which provides anesthesia services in and around the Minneapolis area. In an effort to make certain that those citizens in the Minneapolis area are ensured access to needed care, Brian Thorson continues to shape the future of nurse anesthesia by serving as a Clinical Instructor and didactic faculty member at the Minneapolis School of Anesthesia in St. Louis Park, Minnesota and Saint Mary's University of Minnesota.

Mr. Thorson held various leadership positions in the AANA as President-Elect, Treasurer, and Regional Director before becoming the National President of the AANA in 2005. In addition, Brian has served terms as President, President-Elect, Vice-President, Federal Political Director, and as a Member of the Board of Directors for the Minnesota Association of Nurse Anesthetists (MANA). He has also served as the anesthesia representative to both the Council of Minnesota Nursing Organizations and the Minnesota Organization of Leaders in Nursing.

Adding to his professional accomplishments, Mr. Thorson has been recognized for speaking on anesthesia-related topics over the years. He has taken his experience and knowledge from the workplace and AANA leadership roles to lecture on political and academic anesthesia-related topics before different professional groups. During his AANA presidency, Mr. Thorson has played important roles in advocating for the practice of nurse anesthesia and its patients before Medicare and other federal agencies. He has worked tirelessly to help ensure that CRNAs have a seat at the table in the development of a pay-for-performance reimbursement model, increased communication among AANA members, promoted anesthesia patient safety through vigorous participation in the interdisciplinary National Quality Forum (NQF), and advanced principles of wellness among practitioners in this high-stress profession. In addition, under Mr. Thorson's leadership and direction, AANA testified before three House subcommittees about the importance of nurse anesthesia education, the roles and contributions of CRNAs in the Veterans Affairs health system, and the dedication with which CRNAs have provided safe anesthesia care to members of the U.S. Armed Forces at home and abroad. Finally, Brian Thorson has fought hard to maintain equality in teaching and instruction so that all anesthesia professionals have the opportunity to provide the care patients need, without the

system harmfully favoring one provider over another.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me today in recognizing the outgoing President of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, Mr. Brian Thorson, CRNA, MA, for his notable career and outstanding achievements.

HONORING THE LIFE OF GEORGE
BAHAMONDE

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 24, 2006

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, the First Congressional District lost a great friend, supporter, and leader this past week. George Bahamonde, President and CEO of the United Way of the Capital Area, died suddenly on Thursday while on vacation in Maine.

George moved from Cuba to Bridgeport, Connecticut with his family when he was 11. He placed great value on education and received his bachelor's degree from the University of Bridgeport and earned a master's degree in business administration from the University of Miami and a master's degree in education from Fairfield University. He stressed the value of education throughout his career in public service and was especially proud of his work introducing the Girls and Boys Town Well-managed Classroom training model to the Hartford school system. A five-year assessment of the program showed that academic achievement had increased and school suspensions had decreased in the schools where it was implemented.

In 1970, George began a career in human service that lasted the remainder of his life. He started as a caseworker for Catholic Family and Community Services in Bridgeport, then joined the United Way in 1972 at the United Way of Eastern Fairfield County. He also served the United Way of Puerto Rico, the United Way of Portland, Maine, the United Way of Aurora, Illinois, and the United Way of Greater Los Angeles.

Connecticut was fortunate to see George return in 1994 to become President and CEO of the United Way of the Capital Area. His vision for the forty towns served by the United Way was to improve the lives of children and families and better community conditions. To this end, he created numerous initiatives and partnerships and worked tirelessly of their behalf. George worked as easily with nonprofit organizations as he did with corporate donors.

What truly made George special though was not just that he cared about the communities he served, he cared about each individual in those communities. He was a great friend to many and will be remembered for his quick smile, his wit, and his professionalism. He was always willing to share a laugh, talk baseball, or offer words of advice and encouragement.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to join me in expressing condolences to George's wife Jenny, his son Matthew, and the rest of his family. The Hartford area has lost a truly caring person and a quietly effective leader. However, George's work will be carried on by those who believe in his vision that we can make each person's life better.