

She is the Emergency Management Specialist for Flower Mound and has worked in emergency management for 5 years. Before then, she worked in the town's geographical information systems department, which designs the town's maps.

Prior to her work in north Texas, Ms. Skordinski worked with geographical information systems at Cape Canaveral, Florida, and was a geographical information systems contractor for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA.

Ms. Skordinski started Flower Mound's CERT program after learning about it from a Flower Mound firefighter. She felt that it was important to start this program in order to get the citizens of Flower Mound more involved in the Fire Department. In the years since Ms. Skordinski began the CERT program, numerous residents have received the training required to respond to emergency situations, making the community safer for all.

Madam Speaker, it is an honor today to rise in recognition of Ms. Skordinski's dedication to the safety and well-being of her fellow Flower Mound citizens. She is truly deserving of such an enormous honor. Flower Mound is now a safer city, and all those who recognize the contributions of Ms. Skordinski are truly grateful. She is an inspiration to all Americans devoted to community service.

RECOGNIZING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

SPEECH OF

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 4, 2008

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 845 to bring awareness and recognize the 60th anniversary of our beautiful and unique Everglades National Park.

The Everglades are truly a national treasure, an irreplaceable part of our national landscape with its vast wetland wilderness unlike any other in the world. The Everglades National Park is part of the south Florida ecosystem that includes over 3 million acres with subtropical wetland landscapes that stretch 220 miles from Orlando to Florida Bay. As President Truman noted when he dedicated the park in 1947, "To its natural abundance we owe the spectacular plant and animal life that distinguishes this place from all others in our country."

The Everglades National Parks constitutes the largest subtropical wilderness in the Nation featuring slow-moving waters and provides critical habitat to ecosystems for countless animals including rare and endangered species such as the American crocodile, Florida panther, Western Indian manatee and more than 350 species of birds, including the Great Egret, Wood Stork, Swallow-tailed Kite, Cape Sable seaside sparrow, and Roseate Spoonbill.

For good reason, it has been designated an International Biosphere Reserve, a World Heritage Site, and a Wetland of International Importance—in recognition of its significance to all people of the world.

Many people have had a great impact on the establishment and history of the Ever-

glades, including former Florida Governor Spessard Holland, who incidentally is a Bartow native. His work in the 1940s to secure thousands of acres needed for the creation of the park along with his 25 year Senate career in which he championed and ensured resources were made available for projects was instrumental. He was one of the first great champions of the Everglades and I am so grateful for his work, without which, we might not be here celebrating the Park's 50th anniversary.

Unfortunately, the Everglades have been negatively impacted by encroachment and disruption that has harmed wildlife and destroyed wetlands. I am pleased that Congress and the State of Florida have been working together through to restore and rehabilitate this treasure through the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, CERP. I join my colleagues in continued support and dedication to these efforts in the years to come to ensure and preserve the Everglades' majesty and beauty for future generations to enjoy.

PAUL WELLSTONE MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION EQUITY ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN

OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 5, 2008

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to praise the passage of the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act (H.R. 1424)—a bill that will fill the long-standing gaps in mental health care in this Nation and that will end the unfortunate disparate treatment that patients seeking mental health care currently receive.

Mr. Speaker, as a physician who practiced for more than two decades prior to coming to Congress, I have seen what happens to people who are afflicted with mental illnesses like bi-polar disorder, depression, and schizophrenia who do not receive appropriate, consistent care.

Studies confirm that mental health is integral to the holistic health and wellness of all people. Additionally, under-addressed mental health care issues are not just issues that affect the individuals who live with mental disorders; they also affect their friends, families, and communities. And, today, statistics show that 1 in 17 Americans suffer from a serious mental health disorder and that these disorders are the primary cause of disability in the United States among people 15 to 44 years of age—during their most productive life years.

Despite the enormous impact that mental illnesses can and do have on millions of Americans every day, good treatment works. But, of course, the treatment options available to patients comes with a cost and one that up until now has had to be borne largely by the consumer. It is important to recognize though that the cost of mental health problems—when they are un- and under-addressed—becomes staggering.

The good news is not only that over the past eight years, the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) has made "parity" coverage for mental health care available to

Members of Congress and 8.5 million other Federal employees, but that there has been no significant cost increase to this parity requirement in FEHBP. Based on this and further analysis, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated that H.R. 1424 would have a miniscule impact on premiums—just two-tenths of 1 percent.

For the sizeable proportion of Americans that suffer from more than one mental health disorder at a given time, this bill will be critical in improving mental health care access, options, and treatments available to patients seeking services.

Certainly, there is no better time than now to ensure that patients seeking treatment for mental illnesses are able to do so in a system that champions mental health parity, where care is accessible and not subject to reimbursement limitations by insurers or group health plans. This bill is exactly what is needed to finally bring equity and fairness into the mental health care system in this Nation and to finally make the health care that individuals can receive comprehensive.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I also want to add that as the chair of the CBC Health Braintrust, I have long been concerned by the racial and ethnic disparities in mental health and in mental health care that detrimentally affect the millions of innocent, hardworking Americans, and have long championed and supported legislation to reduce such disparities.

The Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act is a bill that will help reduce the disproportionate burden of mental health and mental health care disparities on African Americans and other people of color.

Mr. Speaker, the burden of mental illness on the health and productivity in the United States and throughout the world has long been underestimated. This is a situation that demands and needs immediate action, for all children and adults who live with mental illness. Enacting strong mental health parity legislation will improve the health status of individuals who suffer dire health consequences as a result of their mental illness and pushes us one step closer to achieving health equity.

I am pleased that the House passed H.R. 1424. Now we can move forward to eliminate all disparities in health care by passing H.R. 3014, the Healthcare Equity and Accountability Act.

RECOGNIZING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF JUAN ANTONIO "CHI-CHI" RODRIGUEZ IN PROFESSIONAL GOLF AND HIS WORK ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN

HON. LUIS V. GUTIERREZ

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 6, 2008

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to announce the introduction of my bill, a Resolution Recognizing the Accomplishments of Juan Antonio "Chi-Chi" Rodriguez in Professional Golf and His Work on Behalf of Children.

The bipartisan resolution I introduce today, congratulates and recognizes Juan Antonio "Chi-Chi" Rodriguez for his continued success on and off of the golf course, for his generosity and devotion to charity, and for his exemplary dedication to the intellectual and