

country. Close to half of those reside in California. More than 600,000 reside in my district of San Bernardino County.

Why, just the other day, the Los Angeles Times was discussing the fact that, in California, Hispanics are no longer the minority. That is why this coming month is a time for all Latinos to be able to recognize the great accomplishments by the people here in the States as well as around the world.

We recognize the great achievements of people like Cesar Chavez who led the fight for the protection of farm workers' health and health rights; Bishop Barnes, who represents San Bernardino Riverside Catholic Diocese; Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, who wrote about the great Don Quixote; and people like Andres Segovia, Tito Peuntes, and Julio Iglesias, who were and still are some of the best Spanish musicians in the world.

The teachings and contributions of Hispanics like these, and learning about the cultures from which they come, are how we are able to continue our tradition through our youth.

In many of our classrooms around the country, teachers will hold activities and discussions that will focus on what our ancestors have accomplished. That is why they will learn the great accomplishment of the Spanish explorers as well as those who first settled in States like California and Texas.

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This is why cities like Los Angeles, San Bernardino, San Antonio, amongst many other cities, have Hispanic names. Such teachings and discussions will not only educate our children, but also provide them with the proper role models needed to succeed. It also lets them know that they too can accomplish higher dreams; Hispanics in positions, in leadership positions throughout the United States.

We now see that Hispanic Heritage Month is not just about celebration, but it is about uniting our community to better educate our children and to educate ourselves about what it means to be a Hispanic. It means being proud of who we are. It does not matter if we are Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Spanish, or Central American. This is a time we all continue to celebrate our cultures as a whole.

And what a culture we have. The number of Hispanic-owned businesses in the United States increased by 76 percent between 1986 and 1992 and continues to grow daily. Across America we find more and more Hispanic businesses growing and more and more Hispanic business owners, business owners like Richard Romero out of my district who owned quite a few car dealerships, who just recently passed away.

We have more representatives in government now than we have ever had in the history of this country and of our people. Each year, from now until the

year 2050, the Hispanic population is projected to add more to people in the United States than any other race or ethnic group, and we are soon to become the largest minority in the country. But even with the success, we still have problems. We lack full health care benefits for all people. There are still problems with immigrant laws that were written in haste and do not protect the people they were originally written for. High school dropout rates and teen pregnancy numbers are too high. We must address these issues if we plan to build a better culture and a better country for all people of America.

And speaking of education, we have to address the issues of bilingual education and the digital divide. And that does not just apply to Spanish children, it applies to all children. We have to begin by providing our youth with the tools necessary to succeed. We can begin to provide these tools right here in Congress.

By understanding each other's culture we can understand what is needed for everyone and we learn to respect one another. And respect is what we all ask for. That is why it is so important for this Congress to recognize this month and to take time to learn about a great culture with a great future, that is each other's culture and the Hispanic culture this month.

Before I go on, I also want to recognize September 16, Mexico Independence Day. I want to recognize the hardship that the people have had to face in order to achieve their independence. Like this country, they too believe in the freedom of choice and independence from tyrannical government. Only through a better understanding can we achieve our goals, a united country working for the betterment of ourselves, and not only where we come from but where we are going. Together, united, our country will be a lot better.

#### REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4115, UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Mr. REYNOLDS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 106-822) on the resolution (H. Res. 570) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4115) to authorize appropriations for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

#### TRIBUTE TO FIREFIGHTERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TANCREDO). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Idaho (Mr. SIMPSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the men and women

who have been selflessly fighting fires throughout the western United States this summer. Unfortunately, I have the distinction of representing the district that has, what I am told, the largest fire and the most acres burned in the United States. The Clear Creek fire alone covers an area of over 200,000 acres, outside of Salmon, Idaho, an area one-third the size of the State of Rhode Island. It is but one of many that have been burning throughout Idaho and the western United States.

I was fortunate that I was able to spend 2 days on the fire lines and in the camps with the men and women who have been heroically fighting these catastrophic fire. I saw firefighters on the line in the smoke and ash. I met with support crews in the camps who cook, provide firefighting supplies and equipment, make maps all night long in preparation for morning briefings, and the men who run the showers so that the firefighters can have a basic semblance of normalcy, a hot shower after 16 hours on the fire line. That is what it comes down to for front-line firefighters, food, a hot shower, and, if they are lucky, a little sleep.

Many of the firefighters and support personnel are wives and husbands who have left their families in other areas of the country for weeks at a time. I met one woman from Missouri who worked at a Forest Service district office there. She was running the commissary. It is the people on the front lines and behind the scenes working together that help to contain these wild fires, with some help from Mother Nature. Without their dedication, perseverance, and individual sacrifices, many more lives, structures, and wildlife habitat would have been lost. Their commitment and dedication is unsurpassed, and they are the best in the world.

Spending a couple of days in the fire camps and on the lines, I picked up a few things from the people who are at the ground level. One is obvious, and we have been discussing it for years. We have to manage our forests. They are in an unhealthy state, with the Forest Service's own estimate placing 40 million acres at high fire risk. I saw the high fuel loads; lodgepole pines so thick it looked like toothpicks had been dropped from the sky, and the high levels of brush on the ground.

We need to find a way to restore many of our forests to a more healthy, natural state that includes managing prescribed burns and thinning. We may not agree on every aspect of getting to that natural state, but we can find common areas that we can agree on; that fuels reduction is better than fuels feeding these catastrophic fires in our forest. The old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is very appropriate.

A well-funded fuels reduction program will pay significant dividends in