

requirements, coordinate with teacher activities under Title II of the No Child Left Behind Act, and ensure that current and future teachers are highly qualified. Authorized grant activities will place a renewed emphasis on the skills needed to meet the highly qualified standard: the use of advanced technology in the classroom, rigorous academic content knowledge, scientifically based research, and challenging state student academic content standards. In particular, states are authorized to use grant funds for innovative methods for teacher preparation programs, such as charter colleges of education, that exchange flexibility in meeting state requirements for institutional commitments to produce results-based outcomes for teacher education graduates—measured based on increased student academic achievement.

The Ready to Teach Act authorizes partnership grants to enable effective partners to join together, combining strengths and resources to train highly qualified teachers and achieve success in the classroom. These partnerships will require faculty of participating teacher preparation programs to serve with a highly qualified teacher in the classroom, allowing effective in-class experience to ensure that highly qualified teachers are truly prepared to teach.

Teacher recruitment grants under the Act will help bring high quality individuals into teacher preparation programs and gives a funding priority for applicants that will emphasize measures to recruit minorities into the teaching profession, providing a teaching workforce that is both highly qualified and diverse.

The Ready to Teach Act will also hold teacher preparation programs accountable for preparing highly qualified teachers. While current higher education law contains annual reporting requirements, these reporting measures have proven ineffective in measuring the true quality of teacher preparation programs. In fact, the current requirements have often been manipulated, leaving data skewed and often irrelevant. The Ready to Teach Act includes accountability provisions that will strengthen reporting measures and hold teacher preparation programs accountable for providing accurate and useful information.

This bill makes needed reforms to improve the quality and accountability of our nation's teacher preparation programs. I would like to commend Mr. Gingrey for his work on the Ready to Teach Act. I would also like to thank Mr. McKeon, Chairman of the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, for his continuing efforts to improve all aspects of our country's higher education system. I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and believe that this legislation will enjoy broad support in the Congress.

INTRODUCTION OF THE READY TO TEACH ACT OF 2003

HON. PHIL GINGREY

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Ready to Teach Act of 2003 to reauthorize teacher quality provisions under Title II of the Higher Education Act through fis-

cal year 2008. The first in what will be a series of bills to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, the Ready to Teach Act seeks to meet the call of the No Child Left Behind Act to place a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by making improvements that will help ensure teacher training programs are producing well-prepared teachers to meet the needs of America's students.

The caliber of teacher education programs at institutions of higher education has come under increased scrutiny over the past several years. Among other things, teacher preparation programs have been criticized for providing prospective teachers with inadequate time to learn subject matter; for teaching a superficial curriculum; and for being unduly fragmented, with courses not linked to practice teaching and with education faculty isolated from their arts and sciences faculty colleagues.

Accordingly, the Ready to Teach Act authorizes competitively awarded grants to: (1) increase student academic achievement; (2) improve the quality of the current and future teaching force by improving the preparation of prospective teachers and enhancing professional development activities; (3) hold institutions of higher education accountable for preparing highly qualified teachers; (4) and recruit highly qualified individuals, including minorities and individuals from other occupations, into the teaching force. As in current law, funds for these grants will be distributed in the following manner: 45 percent of the funds are reserved for State grants; 45 percent of the funds are reserved for partnership grants; and 10 percent of the funds are reserved for teacher recruitment grants.

State grants under the Act must be used to reform teacher preparation requirements, coordinate with teacher activities under Title II of the No Child Left Behind Act, and ensure that current and future teachers are highly qualified. Programs administered through state grants would focus on effective teacher preparation, placing a renewed emphasis on the skills needed to meet the highly qualified standard: the use of advanced technology in the classroom, rigorous academic content knowledge, scientifically based research, and challenging state student academic content standards.

In addition, states are authorized to use grant funds for innovative methods for teacher preparation programs, such as charter colleges of education, which can provide an alternative gateway for teachers to become highly qualified. Teacher advancement and retention initiatives will also be created, such as merit-based performance systems and professional growth opportunities. These activities will help ensure that schools are able to recruit highly qualified teachers while having the necessary flexibility to remove incompetent or unqualified teachers.

The Ready to Teach Act authorizes partnership grants so educational entities can combine expertise and resources to improve teacher training. Each eligible partnership must include at least: (1) a high quality teacher preparation program at an institution of higher education; (2) a school of arts and sciences; (3) a high need LEA; and (4) a public or private educational organization. Among other things, partnership activities will help to ensure that teachers are able to use advanced technology effectively in the classroom, ad-

dress the needs of students with different learning styles (particularly students with disabilities), and receive training in methods of improving student behavior in the classroom.

Teacher recruitment grants under the Ready to Teach Act will help bring high quality individuals into teacher programs, and ultimately put more highly qualified teachers into classrooms. The Ready to Teach Act recognizes the need to ensure that high need local educational agencies are able to effectively recruit highly qualified teachers, and will help answer that need by increasing the number of teachers being trained. Additionally, this legislation places a priority on applicants that will emphasize measures to recruit minorities into the teaching profession.

Current law provisions in Title II of the Higher Education Act include annual reporting requirements to hold states and teacher preparation programs accountable for producing a competent teaching force. The Ready to Teach Act strengthens these reporting requirements to ensure complete and effective information is available to determine the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. Under this legislation:

States must report annually to the Secretary of Education on the percentage of students passing state certification or licensure and rank the quality of all teacher preparation programs in the state.

The Secretary of Education must analyze teacher qualifications and preparation in the United States, providing: a comparison of states' efforts to improve teaching quality; and the national mean and median scores on any standardized test that is used in 1 or more state for teacher certification or licensure.

Institutions of higher education with teacher preparation programs must report on the number of students passing state certification requirements, with improved reporting requirements that will prevent "gaming" of data that leave results without meaning. Additionally, institutions must compare both pass rates and average scores of their program participants with those of other programs in the state, making effective comparison data available to measure program quality.

The Ready to Teach Act of 2003 will improve the quality and accountability of our nation's teacher preparation programs. I ask my colleagues to support this legislation and look forward to working with the distinguished Chairman of the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, Mr. MCKEON, and the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Mr. KILDEE, to move this bill so we can ensure our children are receiving a world class education.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HISPANIC HEALTH IMPROVEMENT ACT

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleague, Congressman CIRO RODRIGUEZ, in introducing the Hispanic Health Improvement Act of 2003.

Every 24 hours in this country, over 2,700 people are diagnosed with diabetes, just one of the multitude of diseases and illnesses plaguing our Nation. And of these 2,700 daily

new cases of diabetes, minority groups like Latinos are disproportionately affected.

But diabetes is not the only illness that burdens Hispanic communities more than non-Hispanic populations. Diseases like asthma, HIV/AIDS, cardiovascular disease, obesity and cancer consistently plague Latino communities at rates that are simply unacceptable.

As many of you will recall, in 1999, Congress petitioned the Institute of Medicine to conduct a report to assess the extent of racial and ethnic disparities in health care and the resulting disease outcomes. We have been given our answers.

Some of the top research institutions in the country continually report that the health of Hispanics in the U.S. is deteriorating and must be addressed.

For example, 37 percent of non-elderly Latinos are uninsured—a rate twice that of non-Hispanic whites, and most come from working families. The incidence of AIDS among Hispanics is around 200 per 100,000, while it is only 60 per 100,000 among non-Latino whites. list goes on and on.

Latinos are now 16 percent of the total population, so it is imperative that we address the increasing trends in poor Latino health. The need to act on behalf of our Latino communities is great, and today we are being presented with the opportunity to help.

The Hispanic Health Improvement Act is our chance to respond to the data and to commit to the health of our Latino communities across the U.S. This bill is a comprehensive measure focusing exclusively on improving the health among Latino populations. This bill expands the important State Children's Health Insurance Program, S-CHIP, to cover low-income pregnant women and parents, and it gives States the option to cover any individual below 100 percent of poverty under their Medicaid program. It provides for an enhanced 90 percent Federal matching rate to States through Medicaid and S-CHIP to provide language services—like oral interpretation, or translation of written materials—for individuals with limited English proficiency.

These services are extremely critical when one third of Latinos and over 40 percent of Spanish-speaking Latinos report having problems communicating with their health care provider.

The bill also addresses health disparities by establishing programs and grants to respond to diabetes, cancer, asthma, HIV infection, AIDS, obesity, oral health, mental health, and other illnesses. It also recognizes the need to strengthen the diversity in our health care work force by supporting Hispanic-serving health professional schools and training health providers in cultural competency.

As you can see, this legislation is the critical pivot point whereby we can reverse the sliding health of our Latino population.

In conclusion, I want to applaud the leadership of my good friend Congressman CRO RODRIGUEZ in championing this bill for several years.

I am pleased to be part of this effort and I urge my colleagues to seize this opportunity to protect the future health of Latinos—and all Americans—by cosponsoring this bill.

OBSERVER STATUS FOR TAIWAN

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the World Health Organization's 56th World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland this week, and to voice my support of granting Taiwan observer status for WHO functions.

In her opening address to the Assembly, WHO Director-General Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland outlined the key lessons learned so far from the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and called for expanded surveillance and rapid response to save lives and protect economies against new diseases in the future.

In February, the world was introduced to this dangerous new disease. It is believed that the current epidemic originated in China, rapidly spread to East and Southeast Asia, and then onto Europe, the United States, Canada, and the rest of the world in a manner that left many in the medical community searching for answers.

Global infection rates seemed to peak in mid-March, but the persistent nature of SARS continues to raise concern among both medical professionals and government officials.

The United States has been able to keep this disease at bay—but other members of the international community have had more difficulty dealing with the disease and some international organizations have hindered the sharing of information and resources, most notably with Taiwan.

The World Health Organization has reported over 7,800 cases of SARS worldwide in 33 countries, with more than 600 deaths. More than 7,000 of these cases have been reported in Asia. The people of Taiwan have been especially affected. They have recorded 344 cases of SARS and 40 deaths, but have no representation in the World Health Organization. The international community does not largely recognize theirs as a legitimate government, thus limiting the degree of help that is available to this tiny, democratic nation. If Taiwan was able to participate as an observer of WHO, additional resources could be brought to bear to address their domestic health crisis.

More needs to be done to contain this disease and a good first step would be to grant WHO observer status to Taiwan.

On June 17, 2003, WHO plans to hold an international conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to review the epidemiological, clinical management and laboratory findings on SARS and to discuss global control strategies. Key participants in the response to the current outbreaks and other public health authorities will be invited to attend the conference. But since Taiwan is not even granted observer status in WHO, it has not been invited to participate in this vital convention. This is especially troubling, since recent reports show that Taiwan is at the epicenter of this epidemic.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting the admittance of Taiwan's health minister to attend the WHO's conference on infectious diseases next month in Malaysia.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE LARRY COMBEST

SPEECH OF

HON. HENRY BONILLA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 19, 2003

Mr. BONILLA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to express the deep admiration I share with each member of the Texas Delegation for Representative LARRY COMBEST. It is with a heavy heart that I stand here today to send off my friend from West Texas. LARRY and his lovely wife Sharon have truly made a difference to his constituents, the state of Texas and the nation.

While serving as Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, LARRY proved his true leadership during the deliberation of the 2002 Farm Bill. Through long, hard days and nights working tirelessly on the measure, LARRY never lost sight of the true reason for the bill. The farmers and ranchers of this nation owe LARRY a great debt of gratitude for his distinguished service. That being said, the true measure of LARRY COMBEST may not be his astute knowledge of agriculture and politics, but the balance he has kept between his public life and his private life. It is apparent to anyone who knows LARRY that his family has always been his top priority.

I commend LARRY for his great service, and wish him the best as he and Sharon embark together on their next adventure in life.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE LARRY COMBEST

SPEECH OF

HON. MIKE PENCE

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 19, 2003

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, when America's farmers and ranchers found themselves devoid of a proper safety net while facing record low prices, they found an advocate in LARRY COMBEST. As Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, LARRY utilized his trademark discipline to develop a balanced farm bill, seeking the input of countless producers.

His efforts resulted in a flexible farm policy that will provide stability to American agriculture producers for years to come. LARRY's leadership and strong voice will be sorely missed not only by his constituents in West Texas, but by all of rural America.

Further, Mr. Speaker, those of us who have had the pleasure of working with LARRY hold him in the highest regard not only as the visionary behind American farm policy, but also as a friend.

LARRY and his lovely wife Sharon were among the first people to welcome my wife and me to Washington when I arrived for the 107th Congress. They extended neighborly compassion and sound guidance, the very things you'd expect from a West Texas couple. Karen and I are truly grateful for their friendship.

Mr. Speaker, I wish LARRY COMBEST the best in his coming retirement.