

novelist William Eastlake's remarks to West Point cadets about My Lai, as quoted in the Encyclopedia of American War Literature: "You cannot say after wiping out a village, 'My superior told me to do it.' You're big boys now. Behave yourselves. Don't blame all your sins on General Westmoreland."

Last fall, around the time the Haditha events occurred, another veteran of the current war, a National Guard second lieutenant, confessed to me his war crime. His platoon was searching a home where an Iraqi man was sobbing uncontrollably for the loss of his brother. "Would somebody shut him up?" the lieutenant shouted, throwing in an expletive for good measure.

THE PATRIOT CORPORATIONS OF
AMERICA ACT: INVESTING IN
AMERICA

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2006

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, as we approach the 4th of July and the 230th birthday of our great Nation, I am today introducing the Patriot Corporations of America Act which encourages corporations to invest in the American people and the American economy. It is time to rekindle the spirit of patriotism and create a new patriotic corporate ethic in America—one that unites workers and their employers in the mutual goal of building a stronger, more prosperous, more democratic business sector that can vigorously and proudly compete in the twenty-first-century global economy.

Since the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, we have benefited from the great work and contributions of countless American patriots and Congress has always undertaken efforts to honor those men and women. The Patriot Corporations of America Act continues that tradition by rewarding companies that commit to America and American workers.

If you want to make Americans of all stripes mad, tell them about the billions of dollars in subsidies and tax breaks our government gives to companies that outsource jobs and relocate to avoid giving back to the our great country. A recent poll in Foreign Affairs magazine reported that nearly 90 percent of Americans worry about losing their jobs to corporate outsourcing. And, it is estimated that between \$30 and \$70 billion is hidden away in tax havens like Bermuda by corporate ex-patriots.

To end this race to the bottom, to end the offshoring of jobs and research, Bill Edley, a former State Representative in Illinois, and political scientist Robin Johnson of Monmouth College, introduced a new idea of turning the tables around with the Patriot Corporations of America Act. It would reward companies, like New Maryland Clothing and Tama Manufacturing, that care about our Nation, our communities, and American workers. I am honored to be introducing this commonsense concept in the form of legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

In exchange for preferential treatment in government contracting and a 5 percent tax rate reduction, Patriot Corporations would be asked to pledge their allegiance to our country by producing at least 90 percent of their goods and doing at least 50 percent of their research

and development in the United States. They would limit top managements' compensation to no greater than 100 times that of their lowest-compensated full-time workers. They would show their commitment to their workers by contributing at least 5 percent of payroll to portable pension funds and by paying for at least 70 percent of the cost of health insurance plans. Finally, Patriot Corporations would simply be required to comply with existing federal regulations regarding the environment, workplace safety, consumer protections and labor relations, including maintaining neutrality in employee organizing drives.

Mr. Speaker, the Patriot Corporations for America Act would be revenue neutral. It would be paid for by closing corporate offshoring loopholes that that have been exploited and, if necessary, reining in some of the new tax breaks for millionaires.

Patriot Corporations would create a new class of companies committed to uphold the dignity and prosperity of American workers as well as to selling their goods on the American market and around the world.

Patriot Corporations are an expression of the American spirit of our fore fathers and mothers when they took that brave step of declaring our independence and creating the United States of America.

I am honored to be introducing this bill today and I encourage my colleagues to join me in saluting American businesses and workers.

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDENT
FINANCIAL READINGS ACT OF 2006

HON. JOE KNOLLENBERG

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2006

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing a very important piece of legislation that will provide additional relief for families as they plan for the financial cost of their children's education.

Over the past ten years, tuition at public and private four-year institutions of higher learning has increased by 38 percent. Furthermore, over the past twenty-two years the cost of a four-year degree at a public college has increased by more than 202 percent. The expense is staggering, but the financial burden of college should not prevent individuals from seeking and receiving an advanced education.

That is why I am introducing the Student Financial Readiness Act of 2006, which will increase the amount of the annual tax-free contribution a family or individual may contribute to a student's elementary, secondary, or college expenses.

Coverdell Education Savings Accounts allow families to make a yearly tax-free contribution of \$2,000 per child to assist with educational costs. The money can be spent on both K-12 education, and college. By allowing families to make tax-free contributions to education savings accounts, we promote ownership of education and help ease the financial burden of education expenses.

However, the current \$2,000 annual limit currently in place on Coverdell accounts needs to be adjusted to keep pace with increasing tuition rates. My bill, the Student Financial Readiness Act of 2006, would permit

a contribution level of \$5,000 annually and index the contribution amount by the cost-of-living adjustment.

We must give families the option of providing the very best education possible for their children. Our nation's future depends on the next generation. They must be given every opportunity to receive the highest education and the ability to be competitive in our changing job market.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the time to speak on behalf of my bill, the Student Financial Readiness Act of 2006. I respectfully request the support of my colleagues for this important piece of legislation to help ensure the future success of our nation's children and the financial stability of American families.

THE IMMIGRANT STORY OF
AMERICA

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2006

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remind my fellow colleagues about the contributions of immigrants to America. In an article in the New York Daily News, published June 16, 2006, Mr. Errol Louis told us about the opportunities that America has given immigrants to leap from "humble, grinding work to middle-class prosperity."

Idrisul Alam, whose father has been a cook at the Waldorf-Astoria for the past 9 years, is one of the many who was given the chance to make something of herself. She graduated first in her class at the High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology in Brooklyn, speaks four languages, was an editor of her school newspaper, was a student government officer, and raised money for earthquake victims in Pakistan. She is planning on studying engineering at Columbia University this coming fall.

Idrisul is only one of the 35 high school seniors whose achievements were celebrated in a ceremony at the Sheraton New York last week. Michelle Quach who is heading to University of Pennsylvania, Reuben Rafaelov who is going to St. John's University, Jessica Acosta who is starting classes at Harvard are all shining examples of the triumph of the immigrant experience.

Coming from parents who have had no choice but to perform low rung jobs like bellhops, busboys and housekeepers, because of their lack of language skills, these children symbolize the success of the dreams and wishes of their parents. In light of the controversial national debate on immigration and all the immigrant bashing, we need to remind ourselves what immigrants bring to our society. I congratulate the New York Daily News and Mr. Louis for bringing attention to these heartwarming stories about the immigrant experience and reminding us about the positive aspects of immigration.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to enter the article titled From humble roots, they blossom by Mr. Errol Louis into the RECORD.

FROM HUMBLE ROOTS, THEY BLOSSOM

(By Errol Louis)

Far away from the speeches and slogans of the national debate over immigration, a simple, inspiring ceremony at the Sheraton New

York this week spoke louder than all the posturing and threats coming from immigrant-bashing politicians these days.

The point of the ceremony was to give plaques, congratulations—and \$8,000 scholarships for college—to 35 graduating high school seniors whose parents are members of Local 6 of the New York Hotel Trades Council. Local 6 represents the invisible New York army that prepares meals, cleans rooms and hails cabs for tourists, diplomats, politicians, movie stars and business titans.

A great many of these bellhops, busboys and housekeepers are immigrants. “You don’t have to know how to speak English to wash dishes, scrub floors, polish silver or clean 14 suites a day, and so hotel jobs have always attracted immigrants.” is how Local 6 spokesman John Turchiano puts it.

Hotels attract men like Idris Alam, who traded in his apron for a jacket and tie and made his way to the Sheraton to see his daughter, Idrisul, collect her award. Alam, who has been a cook at the Waldorf-Astoria for the last nine years, was quiet, dignified and understated, like the other parents.

Even on this joyous day, they carried themselves the way they do on the job: with humility and class. There was none of the silly parental whooping and screaming you normally hear at graduation ceremonies.

But there was plenty to be happy about. The ceremony showed, in stunning fashion, how New York creates Americans, giving immigrants the chance to leap from humble, grinding work to middle-class prosperity in a single generation.

Reading thumbnail sketches of the extraordinary achievements of the 35 award winners, it was hard to remember that they are teenagers, barely out of childhood.

Alam’s daughter Idrisul, for instance, finished first in her class at the High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology in Brooklyn. She speaks four languages, helped edit the school newspaper, was a student government officer and raised money for earthquake victims in Pakistan. She plans to study engineering at Columbia University.

Michelle Quach, whose father works at the New York Athletic Club, is the valedictorian of DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx, captain of the varsity swim team and a volunteer at the New York Chinese School. She’s heading to the University of Pennsylvania. Reuben Rafaelov, the valedictorian of Thomas Edison Technical High School in Queens, will be off to St. John’s University in the fall.

Jessica Acosta, whose mother works at the St. Regis, studied flamenco guitar in Spain and is going to Harvard. Innis Baah, who hails from Ghana, plans to study business at Hobart and William Smith College. Nanaba Wallace is on her way to Yale to study politics.

The national debate on immigration will take a turn in a few years, when these kids are running Congress, the courts and whatever else they set their minds to. And make no mistake about it—these kids will be running the show.

The festivities ended with a ballroom luncheon for the awardees and their parents—giving the cooks and cleaners a chance to relax and be served for a change.

On the way out, I asked Alam, the Waldorf cook, how the food tasted.

“Fantastic,” he said. “Fantastic.”

FAMILIES USA STUDY EXPOSES THE WEAKNESSES OF PRIVATE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLANS

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2006

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in order to bring to the attention of my colleagues a study released by Families USA on the new Plan D prescription drug plan, Big Dollars Little Sense: Rising Medicare Prescription Drug Prices. This report, which was released earlier this month, describes how private prescription drug plans have failed to secure cheaper drug prices for Medicare enrollees and have done nothing to stem the tide of rising drug prices.

By comparing the prices under private Part D plans to the prices available to veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health system, the Families USA report shows that the private insurers are failing to provide needed cost savings to their customers. Between November 2005 and April 2006, private Part D insurers raised the prices on seventeen of the top twenty most frequently prescribed drugs to seniors significantly, while the same drugs under the VA plan experienced little or no increase at all. The median difference in price between the Part D and VA plans was 46 percent. In other words, seniors enrolled in Part D private plan are paying an average 46 percent more for those drugs than they would have if they had been able to receive VA-negotiated prices.

As the study details:

For each of the top twenty drugs prescribed to seniors, the lowest price charged by Part D plan was higher than the lowest price secured by the VA. For Zocor (20 mg), a drug used to prevent coronary heart disease, the lowest VA price for a year’s treatment was \$127.44, while the lowest Part D plan price was \$1,275.36, a difference of \$1,147.92 or 901 percent. For Zocor (40 mg), the lowest VA price for a year’s treatment was \$190.72, while the lowest Part D plan price was \$1,275.36, a difference of \$1,084.60 or 569 percent.

This difference is staggering, and it shows the difference between a publicly accountable plan that is committed to helping its beneficiaries and private plans that are committed to helping their profit margins. Big Dollars Little Sense debunks the myth that the price differences between the VA and private Part D plans has to do with the number of drugs covered. As the study states, the VA plan covers just as many drugs as the plans in Part D but is able to obtain “large discounts simply by using the government’s negotiating power.” The VA utilizes the significant leverage it has in order to get cheaper drugs for its beneficiaries—an authority Medicare is explicitly prohibited from using under the Medicare law.

Another discovery that the report made was that the private insurers have done almost nothing to protect seniors from rising drug prices. Over a six-month period between November 2005 to April 2006, drug prices for the top twenty drugs prescribed to seniors rose 3.8 percent. That increase was mirrored by the private drug plans, which raised their prices to their customers 3.7 percent. (Again, prices under the VA system either did not increase or increased at a far lesser rate.) The

drug prices continue to rise and the private insurers simply pass that increase on to the seniors enrolled in their plan, making little effort to negotiate fairer prices.

The Families USA report not only draws attention to the ineffectiveness of the private insurers but highlights the fact that there is no way to hold them accountable. Part D states that these plans are required to pass the discounts they receive on to Medicare beneficiaries but does not specify the proportion of the discount that must be passed on. The insurers could actually be getting huge discounts from the drug manufacturers and just keeping the difference, but we have no way of knowing. There is no disclosure and no accountability for the private providers who supply an essential benefit to the elderly in this country. This is a serious problem for seniors. Prices are higher than necessary, can increase over the course of the year, and can vary among plans. It is also a serious problem for taxpayers, who pay 75 percent of the cost of Part D premiums. Big Dollars Little Sense reports, too, that the median difference between the highest and lowest prices that Part D plans charged for the same drug was 36 percent. This is not just a question of picking the right plan during the enrollment period—since plans can change prices throughout the year but seniors are locked in, even a smart shopper can end up paying much more for their drugs than enrollees in other plans.

This report concludes that seniors in this country would get a far better deal if they were able to benefit from Medicare price negotiation:

Price data from the Part D plans from November 2005 and April 2006 show that these plans are failing to deliver on the promise that competition would bring prices down. The use of “market power,” lauded by Medicare officials and the Administration, has not resulted in drug prices that are comparable to the low prices negotiated by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Not only are Part D plan prices high, but these prices are increasing far more often than they are decreasing, and the plans are not containing drug price inflation. These disturbing price trends do not bode well for either Medicare consumers or taxpayers. The “market power” of the plans has not delivered the low prices promised to Medicare consumers.

The law that established the Medicare prescription drug benefit, in prohibiting Medicare from using the negotiating clout of 43 million seniors and others in Medicare to obtain low drug prices, has given seniors and taxpayers a benefit that costs more than it should. When negotiations are divided among a multitude of plans, none seems to do as well as a single negotiator might. When it comes to reducing and containing drug prices, the Medicare drug program is an opportunity that has been badly squandered.

A Medicare-administered plan with Medicare price negotiation would lower prices since the drug companies would be more likely to provide a good deal to an entity representing 43 million of their best customers. That is why I urge my colleagues to read this important report and to support H.R. 752, the Medicare Prescription Drug Savings and Choice Act, which would give seniors and persons with disabilities the ability to enroll in a Medicare-operated plan with lower prices.