

information technology in our state. One project in particular—and this is just one of many—called EHR-RI, has brought together physicians, hospital administrators and insurance company representatives to focus on the goals of getting this technology into physicians' offices and aiding in the often-complicated transition to new systems. The health care community recognizes the need to compromise and work in collaboration to achieve the goals of using technology to help patients and their families.

Because the efficient use of technology is central to our efforts to control costs and increase quality in health care, I urge my colleagues in Congress to follow their lead. Support stronger legislation that would truly advance the electronic health information exchange in our nation's health care system.

TRIBUTE TO DANIELLE BRIGHT

HON. ELIOT L. ENGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 28, 2006

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Danielle Bright, a Haitian community leader, education activist and upstanding member of the Rockland county community.

Born in Haiti in 1951 her family fled the oppressive Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier regime in 1964. Her family then spent two years in Congo before moving to Europe. It was in 1971, in France that she married Lealy Bright; they later had two children. The family eventually settled in the United States in 1978, first in Brooklyn and then in my district in Rockland County.

After moving to New York, Ms. Bright did not forget her Haitian heritage. She went on to be a longtime activist for the Haitian Community in Rockland County. She was the founder and a board member of the Haitian-American Parents Association. Most recently, she was honored at the annual dinner of the Martin Luther King Multi-Purpose center.

Fighting for the Haitian community was just one of Ms. Bright's causes. She was also a strong advocate for education for all children. She was an active member of the East Ramapo Board of Education. An ardent opponent of school budget cuts, she always argued that children deserved better. Those who worked alongside Ms. Bright on the school board called her a fierce advocate, dedicated to her work.

Danielle Bright spent a large portion of her life trying to improve the lives of others. She will be sorely missed by all of those in the community whose lives she touched.

RECOGNIZING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE IRANIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 28, 2006

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, next month marks the 100th anniversary of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, a pivotal event in Persian and Middle Eastern history. In the

face of a corrupt and authoritarian monarchy, and in order to defend Persian interests against British and Russian imperialism, the Persian people rose up and forced the creation of a parliament and the adoption of a constitution containing basic democratic rights for the first time in Iranian history.

To mark these events, I will be introducing a resolution recognizing and honoring the 100th anniversary of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, which I have drafted with the support of leading members of the Iranian-American community and the input of preeminent scholars of modern Iranian history.

At a time when the United States faces very serious and difficult issues with regards to Iran, this historic event demonstrates that the Iranian people have a long-standing desire for democratic self-government, free from authoritarian rule or foreign interference. I believe that understanding these values common to the Iranian and American peoples, as well as Iran's political history, will help us develop a constructive policy towards Iran. It is also an important sign of support for the Iranian people and our Iranian-American constituents.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HOMELESS VETERANS ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2006

HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 28, 2006

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing H.R. 5960, the Homeless Veterans Assistance Act of 2006, to fortify our Nation's efforts to prevent and end homelessness among veterans.

Each night, as many as 200,000 male and female veterans are sleeping in a doorway, under a bridge, in an alley, box, barn, car, or homeless shelter. While the number of homeless veterans has decreased somewhat, many veterans are on the brink of homelessness. Many veterans are at high risk of homelessness because of poverty, dismal living conditions, and lack of support.

A third of homeless men living on the street are veterans. Women veterans are up to four times more likely to become homeless when compared with their peers in the general population. According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, the number of women among homeless veterans is increasing, from 2 percent of the homeless veteran population in 1996 to 7 percent at the end of 2005.

About half of all homeless veterans suffer from mental illness. More than two-thirds suffer from alcohol or drug abuse problems.

Behind these disturbing statistics are real men and women who have served our nation. We must lift the veil of invisibility that conceals the reality of homeless veterans. We must take action to honor these veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs has many good programs that need Congressional reauthorization to continue. However, even with these programs, we are not meeting the demand or providing adequate support to prevent at-risk veterans from falling into homelessness.

Earlier this month the Associated Press reported that homelessness is a threat for returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. Herold Noel is a 26-year-old former Army pri-

vate first class who served in Iraq during the beginning of the war. When he returned to New York, he could not find a job to support his wife and children. They ended up in a homeless shelter after the housing programs for veterans in the city were full. Mr. Noel is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), caused by his experience in the service. Mr. Noel, who drove a fuel-truck in Iraq, has had to deal with nightmarish images that he saw during war.

We must and can take steps to prevent homelessness among our returning troops.

My legislation recommits our nation to preventing and ending homelessness among veterans.

My legislation is the result of an ongoing dialogue with the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, information and findings from a Congressional briefing sponsored by Democratic Members of House Committee on Veterans Affairs, which heard from VA experts, community providers of care for homeless veterans and former homeless veterans, reports from the Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans, and annual reports from the VA evaluating VA's health care programs for homeless veterans.

Specifically my legislation would extend expired authorization for VA's successful Homeless Veterans Grant & Per Diem Program through 2011 and reauthorizes yearly appropriations for the program at \$200 million.

In fiscal year 2005, the average per day payment to community providers to provide shelter, meals and intensive supportive services to veterans was \$24.16. It would be hard to find a hotel room in most cities at that rate, let alone provide a veteran with meals and supportive services, such as mental health and vocational counseling. My legislation would put the per diem rate paid to community service providers on par with the per diem rates for State Veterans Homes providing domiciliary care, which is \$31.30 for 2006.

This increase will greatly improve the capacity of community providers to help homeless veterans recover, rehabilitate and reintegrate back into society.

My legislation also improves accountability and performance of the Homeless Veterans Grant & Per Diem Program by requiring the Secretary to establish performance standards to evaluate and document clinical activities and outcomes.

The legislation also would require each grant recipient to provide financial information necessary for the VA to verify that payments provide services to homeless veterans.

VA provides grants for comprehensive homeless service centers that are open to homeless veterans on an unscheduled and drop-in basis. These centers are a vital access point to homeless veterans. The legislation clarifies that funding for these drop-in service centers for homeless veterans may be used to maintain adequate staffing for services.

The authorization to treat veterans suffering from serious mental illness, including homeless veterans expires on December 12, 2006. In addition, the authority to expand and improve the provision of benefits and services to homeless veterans in the 20 largest metropolitan areas expires on December 31, 2006. The legislation extends both authorities for five years, through 2011.

The legislation also extends authorization of program in 38 U.S.C. 2041 through 2011.

At the May 18, 2005, Congressional briefing on homeless veterans, we heard from Denise Randolph, a former homeless woman veteran. She explained that when she went to the VA to stay at the domiciliary she felt unsafe because the space was not set up to house women. VA experts confirmed that many VA domiciliary programs are not equipped to handle the privacy and safety needs of female veterans, although VA is addressing this problem. Given that more women are serving in our armed forces and those women veterans are at greater risk for homelessness, we must ensure that female veterans have access to safe VA programs. The bill would require the VA to enhance its capacity to provide safe domiciliary care for women veterans.

The VA has no specific programs to help community providers who focus on homeless veterans in rural and remote locations. This legislation would authorize special grants to community providers to meet the needs of homeless rural veterans.

Dental care has consistently been identified in the top five unmet needs of homeless veterans. The legislation expands homeless veterans' eligibility for dental services and treatment.

The legislation authorizes appropriations of \$1 million each year through 2011 to provide technical assistance grants to assist community providers in addressing the problems of homeless veterans.

The authorization for the Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans expires on December 31, 2006. This committee has been very effective in assessing the effectiveness of VA policies, organizational structures and services to assist homeless veterans. The Committee has also been pivotal in identifying gaps in programs and barriers to addressing the needs of homeless veterans. The legislation reauthorizes the Committee through September 30, 2011. The legislation also clarifies that the Executive Director of the Interagency Council on Homelessness, the VA Under Secretary for Health and VA Under Secretary for Benefits are ex-officio members of the Committee.

Helping transition homeless veterans is a complex and challenging effort that requires vigilance and coordination. A number of geographic regions of VA hospitals do not have full-time staff as Homeless Veterans Coordinators. My legislation requires each Veterans Integrated Service Network, known as VISNs, to have at least one full-time Homeless Veterans Coordinator.

Last August, our nation saw the destructive force of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The homeless shelters in New Orleans, like other structures, suffered damage from this disaster. The legislation would authorize the VA to make emergency grants to community shelters providing care for homeless veterans to repair or replace facilities that are damaged or destroyed by a disaster.

Homeless veterans with severe disabilities, including mental health disorders, need supportive services to maintain their functional lives. Linking permanent housing to supportive services is an effective way to end long-term homelessness for veterans who have mental health disorders, including substance abuse or other disabling conditions. According to the Corporation for Supportive Housing, providing supportive services to individuals in permanent housing reduces costly emergency room visits

by 57 percent, decreases inpatient hospital days by 58 percent and reduces use of public residential mental health programs by 100 percent. The VA's research has found that homeless veterans who have housing and supportive services can revive social networks and rebuild their family relationships.

My good friend and colleague from New Hampshire, Representative JEB BRADLEY, has introduced legislation to require the VA, in coordination with HUD, to provide financial assistance to non-profit organizations to coordinate the provision of supportive services for very low-income veterans residing in permanent housing. I support his bill and I have included a similar provision in my legislation.

In addition to providing the services at-risk veterans need to remain in permanent housing, we must also take steps to prevent homelessness. The legislation authorizes the VA to conduct a demonstration program, in at least three sites, to identify veterans who are at risk of becoming homeless after discharge or separation from the armed services and provide referral and counseling services to help prevent such veterans from becoming homeless.

The legislation makes permanent the successful pilot program to provide counseling and outreach to at-risk veterans who are transitioning from a penal institution or an institution that provides long-term care for mental illness.

The Homeless Veterans Assistance Act of 2006 has the strong support of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, the Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America and the Corporation for Supportive Housing.

I urge my colleagues to support the Homeless Veterans Assistance Act of 2006.

IN HONOR OF THE MONTEREY
COUNTY FAIR

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 28, 2006

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Monterey County Fair on an outstanding 70 year tradition. During the week of August 15–20, 2006, the 7th District Agricultural Association's official County Fair will be enjoyed by both community residents and visitors with a theme of "That's Entertainment."

The Monterey County Fair promotes Monterey County's rich agricultural heritage with livestock demonstrations, displays and auctions to raise money for scholarships, including the participation of over 5,000 of Monterey County's youth through programs such as FFA and 4–H in festivities offered at the fair.

Exhibitors can choose from agriculture, horticulture and floriculture divisions for those with a green thumb, visual arts for the crafty and artistic, home arts for culinary whizzes and wine makers, and photography for camera buffs. Livestock categories include cattle, sheep, swine, rabbits, and poultry. These fun and friendly competitions are a chance to win both ribbons and prize money.

The Fair hosts Kids' Day, Seniors' Day, and Special Friends Day so that all children under age of twelve, all senior citizens living in Monterey County, and citizens of who are mentally or physically challenged can enjoy the fair.

The Monterey County Fair provides an excellent showcase of the unique, creative tal-

ents of the residents of Monterey County including crafts, fine art and photography. With over 200 categories for exhibitors to choose from, such opportunities increase self-esteem and community pride for all ages. This year they have added such innovative educational exhibits as a Living Food Pyramid that showcases local produce and teaches nutrition in a dynamic way, a Birthing Barn, Kid Tractor Pulls, a special new Kids Club, a Wild West Express Act, a special Street Rodder Car Show, and the all new Battle of the Bands.

The Monterey County Fair has launched a year-round Kid's Club to encourage Monterey County kids to learn more about the Monterey County Fair and get involved with many Fair activities year-round while having fun, such as the Read and Ride contest, coloring contest, and special Kids' Day activities.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Monterey County and all its citizens, I want to acknowledge the valuable contributions of the Monterey County Fair, and wish them all the best on their 70th anniversary.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 28, 2006

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, because of a briefing in the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, I was absent for rollcall vote 414 on an amendment by Congressman TOWNS. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye".

HONORING MS. NORCELLA GIBSON
FOR RECEIVING THE KINDRED
SPIRIT AWARD

HON. C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 28, 2006

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you to acknowledge the good deeds of a caring and compassionate woman who has been an effective advocate for defenseless animals. Ms. Norcella "Sally" Gibson is the creator of Lucky Cat Rescue, an organization established to save the lives of stray and feral cats.

Along with rescuing and re-homing over 250 cats each year, Ms. Gibson can add to her resume the Kindred Spirit Award from the Doris Day Foundation. The award is given to people who show extreme kindness and compassion to animals. By founding an organization that gives cats and kittens medical attention, foster care, proper diet, and loving homes, Sally Gibson was a first-rate candidate.

Sally, the Executive Assistant to the Chief of Pediatrics at the University of Maryland Hospital for Children, is known for her devotion to the safety and well-being of our most vulnerable, animals and children.

Lucky Cat Rescue takes in cats and kittens that are considered "unadoptable" by other shelters. In fact, these are the cats that would potentially be euthanized. Ms. Gibson maintains three feral cat colonies. She and other