

commemorate the 85th Jubilee of the birth of their late President Heydar Aliyev. A larger than life personality and a man of enormous political skill and stature, Heydar Aliyev worked tirelessly for more than 30 years—first as part of the Soviet Union, and later as President of a free and independent Azerbaijan—to build a strong, vibrant, healthy and prosperous nation.

When Azerbaijan regained its independence in 1991, the political and economic vacuum caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, domestic tensions fueled by competing forces at home and the disastrous war in Nagorno-Karabakh—which resulted in the military occupation of 20 percent of Azerbaijan, and nearly one million refugees and internally displaced people—threatened to rip the country apart. Many Azerbaijanis were fearful that their first experience as the short-lived first Republic in the Muslim world (1918–1920), would be repeated; and that a free and independent Azerbaijan would be nothing but a footnote in history.

Heydar Aliyev, however, had a vision for Azerbaijan. He knew that Azerbaijan's future would be assured if countries around the world had a stake in its independence and he knew that the key to attracting international investment in Azerbaijan's rich resources was stability. In 1993, when Heydar Aliyev became President of the Republic, first by appointment under the constitution, then through direct popular election he moved quickly to implement his vision. First, he negotiated a ceasefire in the war with Armenia—which was implemented in 1994—and next he pushed Parliament to begin enacting a series of laws to make the country friendlier to foreign investment and a member of the international market economy. President Aliyev opened up the country to investment from the United States, Western Europe, Russia, and Turkey and Azerbaijan soon became a pioneer in opening the Caspian Sea to international cooperation and oil and gas exploration. In fact, since the so-called "Contract of the Century" was signed in 1994, Azerbaijan has extensively developed its energy resources to help diversify western energy supplies. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, for example, which became fully operational in July 2006 and will soon provide one-third of the new oil flowing into the international market. In addition to the BTC pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline is now functioning.

President Aliyev was also aggressive in asserting Azerbaijan's place on the international political stage. He became a great friend to the United States and one of the first international leaders to offer unconditional assistance to the U.S.-led fight against global terrorism after 9–11—and was also one of the few Muslim leaders to agree to send troops to Iraq and Afghanistan. The strong relations between our two nations are a monument to his determination and will not be forgotten.

Madam Speaker, despite foreign and domestic critics of President Aliyev's pro-western policies, most people acknowledge that President Heydar Aliyev represented security during those very dark early years of Azerbaijan's second independence; and most Azerbaijanis felt at the time that as long as Heydar Aliyev was at the helm, the ship of state would not sink. Today it's up to the youth of Azerbaijan to steer that ship and to carry on Heydar Aliyev's vision of a strong, vibrant, healthy and

prosperous, and independent Azerbaijan. If they build upon the legacy President Aliyev left, I have no doubt they will succeed.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND
IDEALS OF MOTHER'S DAY

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 5, 2008

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker. I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 1113, "Celebrating the Role of Mothers in the United States." I would like to thank my colleague, Congressman JEFF FORTENBERRY of Nebraska, for introducing this heartfelt legislation.

Mr. Speaker, as a Mother myself, I am extremely proud to stand before you on a day recognizing mothers. Mothers are the strongest link in the family chain. She holds the family together, nurturing both child and husband.

I want to thank my own mother and grandmother for their support over the years. I also want to thank all of the mothers who take care of not only their natural children but also the children in the community, the children in foster care, and children overseas.

The annual number of Texas children in foster care has risen steadily in recent years. In November 2003, there were about 16,000 children in foster care and an additional 5,000 in other care, such as kinship care; 2,146 children were served in emergency shelters and homes; 671 children were served in placements outside the foster care system, such as nursing homes, mental health/mental retardation facilities, hospitals and juvenile justice facilities.

In a study by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, which oversees the Department of Family and Protective Services, they stated that Black children stay in foster care significantly longer, are less likely to be reunited with their families, and wait longer for adoption than white or Hispanic children.

They are everybody's children, and nobody's children. They are the forgotten children in the Texas foster care system. Black, White, Hispanic, Asian—they all need the love of a mother, the nurturing of a family, and the support of their community. Some of them find homes with caring foster parents, or in treatment centers with experienced and caring providers. And some do not.

Some foster children have been moved among 30, 40, or even more all-too-temporary "homes." Some have been sexually, physically, and emotionally abused while in the system; some have run away and joined the ranks of the missing. A few have even died at the hands of those entrusted with their care.

The mission of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, DPRS, now called the Department of Family and Protective Services, is to protect the unprotected—children, the elderly and people with disabilities—from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The system responsible for protecting our foster children sometimes is little better than the homes from which they were taken.

Many of these children are not safe, and their futures are uncertain. They didn't ask to be put in foster care, and many endured great suffering before entering the system.

These children need mothers too. They need families. At a time when we are celebrating all that mothers bring, all that grandmothers bring, and all that a real family brings to the upbringing of healthy and successful children; we must remember the children who do not have mothers and we must reach out.

As we near Mother's Day, let me say thank you to all the mothers near and far, in Congress, in my district, and even working in my office. I celebrate you and your children celebrate you. Thank you for all that you do for your children and for the community.

I urge my colleagues to remember not only their mothers but the other women they called mother in their schools, and in their communities. Let's celebrate mothers and H. Res. 1113.

GENETIC INFORMATION
NONDISCRIMINATION ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, H.R. 493.

I am a cosponsor of this important legislation, which bans genetic discrimination in the workplace and in health insurance on the basis of predictive genetic information. It prohibits insurance companies from denying coverage or increasing premiums because of genetic factors. Also, under this bill, employers cannot consider genetic factors in the process of hiring, firing, or promoting workers.

H.R. 493 is similar to Minnesota law, which I voted for when I was a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives. Minnesota law sets basic privacy protections for the collection of genetic information by Government agencies and private entities. Unfortunately, not all States offer protection against genetic discrimination. This leaves most Americans unsure of how their private information will be protected. National legislation needs to be implemented now, before genetic discrimination becomes more widespread as genetic testing comes into greater use.

Discrimination based on a person's genetic information, just like that based on race or disability, should not be tolerated. Genetic discrimination has the potential to affect every person in the United States. Despite advances in modern medical technology, it is impossible to predict with certainty whether a given individual will actually develop a disease. Patients recognize that few laws exist to prevent health insurers or employers from using their predictive genetic information to deny them coverage or jobs. As a result, fear of such discrimination could cause individuals to refuse potentially life-saving testing or participate in genetic research.

Federal employees are already protected from genetic discrimination by an executive order signed by President Clinton. It is time to extend this protection to the rest of our country.

H.R. 493 will give Americans the security they need to take care of their health needs without worrying that they will face discrimination. This bill has been pending for over 13