

experts, and other activists for keeping up the pressure on the international community to act.

This warrant has not yet resulted in an arrest, nor even in a cessation of hostilities. In fact, President al-Bashir responded to the warrant by expelling over a dozen international aid agencies from the region, further threatening the lives of well over 1 million people who depend on these organizations for food, water, shelter, health care, and personal safety. Such is the measure of the Sudanese government and its leadership. But this warrant is a major step forward. When the international community begins to hold leaders responsible for their unconscionable crimes, we begin to prevent such abuses from occurring in the future.

Madam Speaker, I am under no illusion that this arrest warrant—even if it results in President al-Bashir’s arrest and removal from power—will end the conflict in Darfur. This warrant is yet another step on the long road to ending this conflict and achieving some measure of stability in the war-torn region. But it will require a comprehensive approach combining positive political, economic, social, and even military efforts. The United States, for one, needs to build on the ICC’s momentum by immediately committing to an intense diplomatic effort. I welcome Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s affirmative remarks on the ICC’s warrant, and I further encourage President Obama to appoint a full-time, high-level envoy to the region. We can and we must build on the ICC’s efforts to bring to justice those responsible for the atrocities in Darfur.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RON KLEIN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Madam Speaker, on March 9, 2009, I was tending to a family commitment, for which the timing was not flexible.

Had I been able to vote, I would have voted “yes” on rollcall No. 110; “yes” on rollcall No. 111; “yes” on rollcall No. 112.

HONORING WINTER HAVEN AREA
TRANSIT’S 10TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, the Winter Haven Area Transit (WHAT) began as a three-year pilot program funded jointly by the City of Winter Haven and the Polk County Board of County Commissioners. It is now celebrating its 10th anniversary, marked by a special time capsule ceremony on Tuesday, March 17, 2009.

WHAT served 47,553 riders in its first year and served 589,747 last year. WHAT now provides transportation to Bartow, Eagle Lake, Auburndale, Lake Alfred, Lake Wales, Haines

City, Lakeland and Winter Haven. It has a fully functional state-of-the-art transit terminal serving thousands of riders each day.

The WHAT is operated under the Citrus Connection, which serves Lakeland—another city in my district. The Citrus Connection estimated that riders save \$1,300 they would otherwise spend on car expenses such as gas, title payments, maintenance, insurance, or parking fees. Given the pervasive ridership, the WHAT system puts money back in the pocket of taxpayers who would otherwise use it to unnecessarily sit in traffic.

The WHAT system moves people more efficiently to places of employment, shopping districts, medical appointments, and generally improves the quality of life of local residents.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to Winter Haven resident Larry Murphy, because this system would not have been put in place without his efforts. Mr. Murphy gathered 175 signatures on a petition and continually pushed his case before the city commission for the bus service. His efforts paid off and have been enjoyed by 2,687,618 riders over the past 10 years.

Mr. Murphy’s vision was to help people get where they needed to go. His advocacy is what got the Winter Haven Area Transit buses. His legacy is what keeps them moving forward.

Happy 10th Anniversary to the Winter Haven Area Transit and a great thanks to Mr. Murphy.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FREEDOM
FROM UNNECESSARY LITIGATION
ACT

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Freedom from Unnecessary Litigation Act. As its title suggests, this bill provides an effective means of ensuring that those harmed during medical treatment receive fair compensation while reducing the burden of costly malpractice litigation on the health care system. This bill achieves its goal by providing a tax credit for negative outcomes insurance purchased before medical treatment. The insurance will provide compensation for any negative outcomes of the medical treatment. Patients can receive this insurance without having to go through lengthy litigation and without having to give away a large portion of their award to a trial lawyer.

Relying on negative outcomes insurance instead of litigation will also reduce the costs imposed on physicians, other health care providers, and hospitals by malpractice litigation. The Freedom from Unnecessary Litigation Act also promotes effective solutions to the malpractice crisis by making malpractice awards obtained through binding, voluntary arbitration tax-free.

The malpractice crisis has contributed to the closing of a maternity ward in Philadelphia and a trauma center in Nevada. Several years ago, surgeons in West Virginia actually walked away from their jobs to protest increasing liability rates. These are a few of the examples of how access to quality health care is jeopardized by the epidemic of large, and medically questionable, malpractice awards, and the resulting increase in insurance rates.

ardized by the epidemic of large, and medically questionable, malpractice awards, and the resulting increase in insurance rates.

As is typical of Washington, most of the proposed solutions to the malpractice problem involve unconstitutional usurpations of areas best left to the states. These solutions also ignore the root cause of the litigation crisis: the shift away from treating the doctor-patient relationship as a contractual one to viewing it as one governed by regulations imposed by insurance company functionaries, politicians, government bureaucrats, and trial lawyers. There is no reason why questions of the assessment of liability and compensation cannot be determined by a private contractual agreement between physicians and patients. The Freedom from Unnecessary Litigation Act is designed to take a step toward resolving these problems through private contracts.

Using insurance, private contracts, and binding arbitration to resolve medical disputes benefits patients, who receive full compensation in a timelier manner than under the current system. It also benefits physicians and hospitals, which are relieved of the costs associated with litigation. Since it will not cost as much to provide full compensation to an injured patient, these bills should result in a reduction of malpractice premiums. The Freedom from Unnecessary Litigation Act benefits everybody except those trial lawyers who profit from the current system. I hope all my colleagues will help end the malpractice crises while ensuring those harmed by medical injuries receive just compensation by cosponsoring my Freedom from Unnecessary Litigation Act.

TRIBUTE TO JERRY PATTERSON

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Mr. LATHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Jerry Patterson, a native of Fort Dodge, Iowa, on being inducted into the Iowa High School Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

Jerry, a 70-year-old resident of Fort Dodge has done everything in the game of baseball. He played high school baseball in Fort Dodge, has coached for many years, and has even owned a ball park. Fort Dodge’s baseball field, Patterson Field, is named after Jerry.

Jerry was recently honored in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in front of a crowd of approximately 1,000 people from across the state. Patterson has been inducted to the Hall of Fame in honor of his passion, dedication, and contributions to the game of baseball and Fort Dodge.

Jerry, who has been successfully battling cancer for over 12 years, continues to serve as an inspiration to his community, and his contributions have made a lasting impact across the state. I know that my colleagues in the United States Congress join me in congratulating Jerry Patterson on his induction into the Hall of Fame. I consider it an honor to represent Jerry in Congress, and I wish him and his wife happiness and health in the future.