

fumigation are never going to solve the problem. These tactics merely escalate the conflict and undermine the peace process in Colombia. Until we can move beyond the military strategy of Plan Colombia, we will never solve the drug problem, nor will we bring peace to Colombia.

A TRIBUTE TO SANTA CLARITA,
CALIFORNIA'S "HERO OF THE
WEEK" PROGRAM

HON. HOWARD P. "BUCK" McKEON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 26, 2001

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a wonderful program in the city of Santa Clarita called "Hero of the Week" as well as those individuals who have been honored in the program.

The program is sponsored jointly by the City of Santa Clarita Anti-Gang Task Force and Mad About Rising Crime Santa Clarita Chapter under the direction of Mr. Gary Popejoy. Started by Maria Fulkerson and Lorraine Grimaldo of the Santa Clarita Anti-Gang Task Force, the "Hero of the Week" program focuses on the positive actions of our youth rather than the negative. The program honors students for the constructive choices they have demonstrated. The students from the Santa Clarita Valley Junior and Senior High Schools are recommended by teachers and principals based on their observations of the student exhibiting positive behavior.

The students that are selected exhibit the qualities that we are looking for in future leaders of our nation. These students, many of whom have experienced difficult times in their own lives, have made remarkable improvements through this program. I am pleased to honor these students today here on the House floor.

On May 24th, 2001, the "Hero of the Week" program honored 44 members of my community for their outstanding activities that truly made them heroes in our neighborhood. These students have faced serious obstacles and, in many cases, faltered in the face of adversity. However, none of these students gave up. Their hard work and determination have truly earned them the title "Hero" in our community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude these remarks by listing the students honored by the city. I congratulate them and the sponsoring organizations for such a worthwhile and beneficial program.

HERO OF WEEK HONOREES

Chanine Adams, Nicole Anderson-Melendez, Leonardo Barragan, Samantha Berson, Laura Besenty, Junior Brambila, Marco Cardenas, Cassandra Cabrera, Sonny Castro, Josh Cook, Nick Dawson, Mae Ann Esparza, Jose Flores, Michael Glazier, Alana Comez, Dustin Gustavoson, Kristina Hagen, Julie Henry, Timothy Holmes, Kristyn Kennedy, Milad Khatibi, Michael Kolb, Jason Komen, Mandy Larochelle, Jane Lin, Shady Mansy, Jesse Marshall, Azadeh Mirbod, Ericka Ortega, Michael Ortiz, Kelly Polen, Jonathan Salgado, Cesar Santillan, Tara Stewart, Rafael Urquieta, Victor Vasquez, Antonio Wall, Mena Wasif, Adam Weiler, Lyndsey Wilson, Brandi Wright, Amanda Yaffe, and Dennis Yongmaneeratana.

CONGRESS MUST END LABOR
RIGHTS VIOLATIONS ON AMER-
ICAN SOIL

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 26, 2001

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, years have passed since the Departments of Labor-Interior-Justice and INS first documented widespread sweatshop conditions under the American Flag in the U.S. territory of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (US/CNMI). Years have passed since national media such as ABC's 20/20 first reported that thousands of young, Asian women in the US/CNMI toil as many as 12 hours a day at sub-minimum wages under dangerous and unhealthy conditions. And years have passed since U.S. Congress first had the chance to protect those who work on American soil by finally ending the exemption that has allowed this U.S. territory from following U.S. labor and immigration laws. Yet the Congress has turned a blind eye and allowed this exploitation to continue.

Too many US/CNMI clothing manufacturers continue to show complete disregard for U.S. laws. During the three-year period that ended on June 1, 2001, nearly 60% of the factories inspected by the Wage and Hour division of the Department of Labor had wage violations, and in one case, a single US/CNMI corporation owed more than \$1 million in back-wages to its employees.

The Congress is partly responsible for the conditions that led to these labor violations. As you may be aware, federal immigration and minimum wage laws were not immediately extended to the territory when the Congress first established the US/CNMI. The temporary exemption was intended to help the territory develop its economy with local workers while responding to local concerns that U.S. immigration laws were too lax. However, the opposite has turned out to be the case. The local government has used its local control over its own lax immigration procedures to create a caste system that relegates disenfranchised foreign workers to the most abusive labor conditions and lowest wages. According to 1999 statistics, foreign workers held more than 85% of all private sector jobs, where they worked for sub-minimum wages, while nearly 50% of local residents held government jobs, where starting salaries are more than seven times that of the private sector.

For many years, the US/CNMI has aggressively developed an economy based on the importation of tens of thousands of desperately poor foreign workers from Asia who pay between \$3,000–\$7,000 for what they are told are good jobs in "America." Instead these workers are surrounded by barbed wire as the toil under the same dangerous unhealthy working conditions that are far too common in many of the countries from which they came. This practice of shipping indebted women from their native countries to sweatshops on American soil continues today, and it could easily lead to many more cases of human trafficking. While the Congress took the important step last year of passing legislation that allows for more aggressive criminal prosecution of human traffickers after they have committed that deplorable crime, we must also place im-

migration into the American territories under the control of the Federal government so that we can better prevent human trafficking before it ever happens.

Many of our constituents would be surprised to learn that the garments manufactured in the US/CNMI—in foreign owned factories with foreign labor and foreign fabric—are awarded use of the "Made in USA" label and enter the states both quota and duty free. In 2000, over \$1 billion worth of garments came to the states, depriving the U.S. taxpayers of more than \$200 million in duty fees. We are allowing US/CNMI garment manufacturers to deceive American consumers with the use of this label, and we are providing them with an enormous subsidy as they do it. This cannot continue. We must only offer the benefits of the "Made in the USA" label and duty free importing to those U.S. territories that agree to follow U.S. laws.

While the House Republicans have refused to even hold a hearing on the exploitation of workers in the US/CNMI, I am glad to report that we are beginning to win support from other places. On May 15, 2001, the Bush Administration endorsed the idea of federalizing immigration policy in the US/CNMI in the form of a letter from John Ashcroft's Assistant Attorney General. The Bush Administration endorsement argued that extending Federal rules to the territory: . . . would improve immigration policy by guarding against the exploitation and abuse of individuals, by helping ensure that the United States adheres to its international treaty obligation to protect refugees, and by further hindering the entry into United States territory of aliens engaged in international organized crime, terrorism, or other such activities.

Congress cannot continue to stand by and allow these labor abuses to continue on American soil. Today, I am joined by more than 40 co-sponsors as we introduce the "CNMI Human Dignity Act," which would require that the Americans living in the US/CNMI live under the same laws as all of our constituents in our home districts. This legislation would extend U.S. immigration and minimum wage laws to the US/CNMI. This legislation also includes a provision to preserve the integrity of the "Made in USA" label by requiring that this benefit only be allowed for garments made in compliance with U.S. immigration and labor practices. It also conditions duty-free and quota-free imports from the US/CNMI upon compliance with U.S. laws. In addition, the legislation creates a one-time grandfather provision that allows non-resident individuals who have been long-term employees in the US/CNMI on the date of enactment to apply for permanent residence. Lastly, this legislation would assure that U.S. Customs agents have the authority to board and inspect ships in US/CNMI waters to address the numerous allegations of illegal transshipment of fully completed garments from Asia.

No member of the House of Representatives would tolerate sub-minimum wages and other severe forms of labor exploitation in his or her home district, and we should not tolerate those conditions in the American territories either. I urge you to join me in supporting the CNMI Human Dignity Act.