

percent tax credit for all transit benefits provided to employees, up to \$115 per employee per month. Current law allows businesses, governments, non-profits and employees to purchase tax-free transit benefits. Under the COMMUTER Act, employees could receive up to \$1,380 in free mass transit funds each year, with the employer receiving \$690 in tax credits per employee. This legislation is supported by the American Public Transit Association and all of Chicagoland's public transportation service boards—the Regional Transportation Authority, the Chicago Transit Authority, Metra and Pace.

Forbes recently estimated the average commuter's gasoline cost in the Chicago metro area to be \$6.23 per day. Should businesses take advantage of the tax incentive and provide transit benefits, they would save each of their participating employees an average of roughly \$1,620 per year. As family budgets continue to tighten, an extra \$1,600 to \$3,200 could help ease the burdens of health care and education or help bolster retirement savings.

A new study by BusinessWeek Research Services estimates that 53 percent of employees in Chicago, San Francisco and New York would take public transportation if their employer provided access to current transit benefits. Out of the respondents, 60 percent said their company doesn't provide tax-free commuter benefits.

I believe we must also work to provide long-term solutions to our energy crisis, such as passing long-term tax incentives for research and development of renewable and alternative energy, fuels and vehicles; eliminating the so-called boutique fuels and offering the nation one clean burning fuel; financing energy development projects in China, central Asia and the Gulf to meet Chinese energy needs apart from oil; and increasing fuel economy standards.

But Americans cannot wait ten, twenty or thirty years for the entire restructuring of our energy policy—they need relief at the pumps now. I am proud to offer the COMMUTER Act with Representatives JUDY BIGGERT (R-IL) and PETER ROSKAM (R-IL) and CHRIS SHAYS (R-CT) to help provide that immediate relief. I hope Congress will act swiftly and in a bipartisan manner to pass this important legislation.

REMARKS IN RECOGNITION OF  
JAMES IKEDA

**HON. JACKIE SPEIER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 13, 2008*

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I come to the floor today to honor and praise one of America's truly fine teachers, James (Jimmy) Ikeda. Mr. Ikeda teaches Biotechnology at San Mateo High School and today was awarded one of six Amgen Awards for Science Teaching Excellence.

Mr. Ikeda has dedicated himself to his students and has led the San Mateo Biotechnology Career Pathway since 2003. Under his leadership, the program has become one of the finest in the Nation. Educators from across the country visit Jimmy's program with hopes of duplicating his success in their communities.

Jimmy Ikeda has a wonderful rapport with students, teachers and parents alike. His enthusiasm for science is infectious and his patience with the young people in his program inspires confidence and encourages them to take on further academic challenges.

The Amgen Award comes with a \$5000 grant for Mr. Ikeda, plus an additional \$5000 for San Mateo High School to use for the expansion of their science program, additional science resources, or professional development of science teachers.

Madam Speaker, our country has a tremendous need for more scientists. Teachers like Jimmy Ikeda are a valuable national resource. Our Nation owes him a debt of gratitude and our highest hopes for his continued success.

HONORING DR. NGUYEN QUOC  
QUAN

**HON. ZOE LOFGREN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 13, 2008*

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Dr. Nguyen Quoc Quan, an American citizen who was arrested and detained by the Government of Vietnam on November 17, 2007 while preparing to distribute pro-democracy leaflets. Earlier today, Dr. Nguyen and two others were convicted in a Vietnamese court under the catchall charge of "terrorism" in a trial lasting less than 6 hours. Dr. Nguyen has received a sentence of 6 months time served and will be allowed to return to the United States within 4 days.

I commend Dr. Nguyen Quoc Quan for his courage and dedication to the peaceful cause of spreading democracy to Vietnam, a country in which the government believes that all those who dare to peacefully speak out against it deserve to be classified as "terrorists." His courage and dedication should be an inspiration to others pursuing the same peaceful goals.

CONGRATULATING THE STATE  
CHAMPION ARGYLE HIGH  
SCHOOL UIL TEAM

**HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 13, 2008*

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Argyle High School UIL Team for winning the overall state championship among 3A schools in Texas. In addition to the great team effort put forth by Argyle High School, there were many outstanding individual scores that deserve equal recognition.

The science team took first place while the calculator team finished second overall. Nick Strelke, Erik Katzen, and Thomas Quintana placed second, fourth, and fifth, respectively, in math, while the math team won first place overall. The number sense team also took top honors, with individuals Quintana in first place and Strelke in second. Robbie Ehlers placed second in calculator, and Strelke took fifth. David Graf came in first in biology and third in science, and Kristen Gill took third in computer

applications. Quintana rounded out the team's brilliant showing with a second place finish in both the science competition and the chemistry and physics event.

Argyle High School is well known for having a strong showing in UIL academic competition. This is the second time in three years that Argyle High School has triumphed in its quest for the Texas 3A state championship. Additionally, Argyle High School sent nine students with their team this year, the most they have ever sent to the UIL state academic competition. Before the state competition, Argyle High School placed first overall at both their district and regional meets.

Madam Speaker, it is truly an honor to rise today and commend these students—their commitment to education and competition is apparent. I would also like to thank Argyle High School's teachers and UIL coaches for ensuring that these students have every resource possible to succeed. I am proud to represent these students and teachers in the 26th District of Texas.

THE AMERICAN RED CROSS

**HON. TED POE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 13, 2008*

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, on May 21, 1881, the American Red Cross was founded by Clara Barton. Ms. Barton was a former schoolteacher, clerk in the U.S. Patent Office, and hero during the Civil War where she was nicknamed the "Angel of the Battlefield" for her service to wounded troops.

After successfully lobbying Congress to join and found the American chapter of the International Red Cross and to sign the Geneva Convention, Barton became the organization's first President. She led the American Red Cross for 23 years.

Just over three months after its founding, the Red Cross was called into action. The first major disaster relief operation occurred on August 22, 1881, when the American Red Cross responded to devastation caused by major forest fires in Michigan.

On June 6, 1900, the American Red Cross was given a Congressional charter that mandated the organization to fulfill the provisions of the Geneva Convention, by rendering aid to those wounded during war, providing communication between family members and members of the U.S. military, and administering relief to those affected by disasters during peacetime. The charter also reserves the Red Cross emblem for use only by the Red Cross.

Even though the organization has a Congressional mandate, it is not a federally funded organization. It is a non-profit, charitable organization that receives its funding from public donations.

Today, the American Red Cross is more important than ever in helping Americans who are in need of aid and who are affected by disasters. The organization has six major areas of work that it focuses on today: Disaster relief, community services that assist the needy, communications services and comfort for military members and their family members, collection processing and distribution of blood and blood products, educational programs on health and safety, and international relief and development programs.