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## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

### A TRIBUTE TO THE 2009 ELLIS ISLAND MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

**SPEECH OF  
HON. DAN BURTON  
OF INDIANA  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 2009**

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the 2009 recipients of the coveted Ellis Island Medal of Honor. Presented annually by the National Ethnic Coalition (NECO), the Ellis Island Medal of Honor pays tribute to our Nation's immigrant heritage, as well as individual achievement. The medals are awarded to U.S. citizens from various ethnic backgrounds who exemplify outstanding qualities in both their personal and professional lives, while continuing to preserve the richness of their particular heritage. Since NECO's founding in 1986, more than 2,000 American citizens have received Ellis Island Medals of Honor, including six American Presidents, several United States Senators, Congressmen, Nobel Laureates, outstanding athletes, artists, clergy, and military leaders.

As we all know, citizens of the United States can trace their ancestry to many nations. The richness and diversity of American life makes us unique among the Nations of the world and is in many ways the key to why America is the most innovative country in the world. The Ellis Island Medals of Honor not only celebrate select individuals but also the pluralism and democracy

that enabled our ancestors to celebrate their cultural identities while still embracing the American way of life. This medal is not about money, but about people who really seized the opportunities this great country has to offer and who used those opportunities to not only better their own lives but make a difference in the lives of those around them. By honoring these outstanding individuals, we honor all who share their origins and we acknowledge the contributions they and other groups have made to America. I commend NECO and its Board of Directors headed by my good friend, Nasser J. Kazeminy, for honoring these truly outstanding individuals for their tireless efforts to foster dialogue and build bridges between different ethnic groups, as well as promote unity and a sense of common purpose in our Nation.

Madam Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in recognizing the good works of NECO, and congratulating all of the 2009 recipients of the Ellis Island Medals of Honor. I also ask unanimous consent that the names of this year's recipients be placed into the *Congressional Record* following my statement.

Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA (Ret), Hon. Eduardo Aguirre, Imam Shamsi Ali, Dr. Kaveh Alizadeh, Robert V. Allegrini, Hon. Victor G. Atiyeh, Archbishop Vicken N. Aykazian, Sir Julian Bachynsky, Ralph M. Bahna, George S. Barrett, Edward J. Bergman, Hamid Biglari, Carolyn A. Blashek, Paul F. Boulos, PhD, Lt.Gen. Ted F. Bowlds, USAF, CAPT Patrick C. Burns, USN, Dr. Samia E. Burton, Otto B. Candies, John J. Casey, Ali Cayir, Sant Singh Chatwal, Dr. Walter R. Chitwood, Jr., Joseph Ilhwan Cho, Edward T. Cloonan, Duane E. Collins, David F. D'Alessandro, Shiv C. Dass, Kiran R. Desai, Robert D. Donno, Rayna Dubose, Emilio Estefan, Jr., Charles Fazzino, Sean T. Flanagan, John S. Gonsalves, James B. Hayes, CAPT Gregory P. Hitchen, USCG, W. Andrew Hodge, MD, Forough B. Hosseini, Susan Pien Hsu, PhD, Taffy A. Jowdy, James M. Kalustian, Rabbi Alvin Kass, Fred Kavli, Lisa Kazor, Kevin A. Kistler, Carol N. Lambos, Esq., BG James B. Laster, USMC, Leon Y. Lee, Oh Young Lee, Sandra Lee, Francine A. LeFrak, Nooshin Malakzad, Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, George D. Martin, Hon. Grace Meng, Thomas L. Mills, Esq., Joseph H. Moglia, Dr. Reza Momeni, Dr. Uma Mysorekar, Tavit O. Najarian, ScD, John F. Nickoll, Michael K. O'Malley, Rev. Timothy O'Neill, George Pagoumian, Young J. Paik, Hon. Mary Mitzi Perdue, Moises Perez-Martinez, Natale A. Picco, Jr. John Podesta, Linda Ann Pope, William A. Pope, David M. Puckett, Phil T. Pulaski, Hon. Bijan Rafiekian, Maj. Dan Rooney, USAF, Gaetano G. Scavone, Salman T. Ses, Esq., Dr. Jatin P. Shah, Liu Tee Shuh, Brian J. Smith, Col. Stephen V. Smith, USA, Steven N. Stein, Carol K. Strauss, Chester A. Szarejko, Oscar S. Tatosian, Joseph J. Thomas, DDS, William H. Tilley, Lenny Tilman, Lana Todorovich, Chiling Tong, Pauline A. Turley, Anthony M. Valletta, Kathleen Waldron, PhD, Kevin M. Wall, The Venerable Lama Pema Wangdak, Jeffrey N. Watanabe, Esq., Gary E. Weksler, Sally Tsui Wong-Avery



**Dan Burton**  
**Member of Congress**