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House of Representatives

PROMOTING A MORE COMPASSIONATE HUMANITARIAN VISA!

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about a very important bill, H.R. 714, that I just reintroduced, the Visitors Interested in Strengthening America (VISA) Act of 2011. The bill would grant humanitarian visa waivers to children and their parents for one day in order to attend a medical appointment, an education or cultural event.

In the past, the Port Directors at the border had the authority to grant humanitarian visa waivers to certain children and their accompanying parent. Now, children who come without a visa must be turned away. The fee to enter into the United States for 24 hours is an insurmountable sum of money for these poor children and their families. These children pose no threat to our national security. They are merely trying to receive medical treatment or to enjoy a school field trip to one of our Nation's numerous tourist attractions.

This legislation does not affect the number of legal or illegal immigrants living in the United States—the children and accompanying adults visit for one day and then return to their homes. It gives Port Directors the authority to use their discretion, and issue waivers to children that pose no security threat to our country.

This is commonsense legislation that allows us to cultivate relations with our Mexican neighbors, while keeping those who would do us harm out of our country. I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this critical legislation, by cosponsoring the VISA Act.