

85 year-old Medicare patient wishes to use an electric wheelchair because it helps her get around better, she ought to be assured that Medicare will cover up to the amount for a basic model.

During last year's debate on health care reform, one of the comments I heard most often from the families of northeast Ohio was concern about restrictions on patient choices. Health care is too personal to allow choices to be determined by Government bureaucrats.

This legislation would ensure beneficiaries true choice of medical equipment such as wheelchairs, hospital beds, walkers and other aids. In addition, the bill includes measure to protect beneficiaries from high pressure sales and allows the Health Care Financing Administration [HCFA] to establish guidelines for the purchase or rental of upgraded equipment.

Restrictions on coverage for medical equipment were established in response to fraud and abuse in the program. However, these restrictions have become outmoded and inflexible. This legislation would protect older Americans from the hard sell by equipment suppliers while providing the flexibility in their equipment choices.

It is not my intent to allow the industry to oversell grandma on the luxury models of all equipment, but we need to have some common sense about Medicare coverage. Why shouldn't Medicare beneficiaries have access to equipment that all Americans do? Why should they be penalized?

Furthermore, while this legislation ensures that additional choices are available to the elderly, this bill is revenue neutral to the Medicare Program. Medicare current covers medical equipment at a standard level. My legislation would simply ensure that Medicare beneficiaries could choose an upgraded model and be reimbursed from Medicare at the standard level. Thus, the U.S. taxpayer will pay no more for this choice legislation.

I urge my colleagues to join in cosponsoring this necessary legislation.

THE PASSING OF AN AMERICAN HERO

HON. RON WYDEN

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 7, 1995

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. Speaker, let us take a moment today to remember one of the great advocates for justice who died at the age of 89 on April 22—my friend and Gray Panthers colleague, Margaret Eliza Kuhn. I had the pleasure of knowing Maggie for 20 years. She was the inspiration for the Oregon Gray Panthers, pioneer advocacy organization that has worked to bring seniors and young people together in Oregon since 1975. Maggie is truly an American hero.

Maggie Kuhn founded the Gray Panthers in response to her forced retirement. Her goal was simple: unite the generations to serve as advocates for fundamental social change that would reduce injustice, discrimination, and oppression in our society.

Maggie was given a sewing machine to celebrate her retirement, a seemingly appropriate gift, but she never even found time to open it. She was too busy. Instead, she served as a tireless champion for those without a voice in our society.

Maggie Kuhn led the fight to root out discrimination against older Americans. Kuhn thought it was absurd to waste the valuable talents of older Americans, and helped to shatter the myth that growing older is synonymous with powerlessness, decrepitude, and weakness.

Kuhn saw a natural connection between young and old. She said that the mind needs exercise to stay healthy. Kuhn encouraged seniors to return to school. She encouraged older Americans to teach children, based on their vast life experiences.

Maggie Kuhn and the Gray Panthers have always had an aggressive agenda of social action. Maggie refused to let government and society stunt the productivity of seniors by forcing them to retire at age 65. She argued that forced retirement damages self-esteem and leads to feelings of uselessness. She felt it was unconscionable that this physical and psychological damage could be forcibly imposed as a person ages. Maggie fought mandatory retirement until she won.

Maggie Kuhn would be outraged today by the recent attacks on the role of seniors in our society. When talking about Medicare much of the media says seniors, not out of control health costs, are the problem. When talking about Social Security, seniors, not the use of the Social Security surplus to fund other programs, are again described as the problem. When it comes to the economy, again seniors are described as the problem and held out as takers, not producers.

The fact is millions of seniors are producers, not takers, and Maggie led the way for older people to use their skills to make our communities better places every day. Seniors are part of the solution, not problems as so often portrayed in today's media.

Older Americans are making valuable contributions every day in many ways around the country. Stop in at your local blood bank, school lunch program, or your favorite charity. You'll see that seniors are the glue that holds these programs together. They are the National Senior Service Corps, the Peace Corps, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program [RSVP], and AmeriCorps. Just look around—seniors are helping—because Maggie Kuhn helped open the doors for older Americans.

Maggie's credo was age and youth in action, and I'm pleased that this House is beginning to understand the need for policies that bring the generations together. Recently, the House voted for my amendment to promote kinship care, which gives seniors and other adult relatives the opportunity to support and raise children, as an alternative to forcing children from broken homes into foster care run by strangers. Enacting a national plan to promote kinship care would be an ideal way to honor Maggie Kuhn, who led the fight to bring younger and older people together.

Maggie hated waste and foolish bureaucracy. Democrats and Republicans alike can work together to reduce fraud and waste in vital government services and protect consumers. In support of this objective, Congress should pass the bipartisan legislation introduced by the chairs of the House Older Americans Caucus that would attack fraudulent and unethical practices in the sale of private long-term care insurance.

In the days ahead, Congress will debate many important issues of social justice. Let us remember Maggie Kuhn's life and support

government policies that empower and liberate our citizens.

Maggie Kuhn led a life of unselfish service to others. She felt that the greatest sin was to waste time and to waste human potential. She lived her life to the fullest. Millions of Americans, young and old, have been touched by her work.

Maggie Kuhn was once asked how she would like to be remembered. She recited her favorite epitaph: "Here lies so-and-so, under the only stone she left unturned."

Maggie Kuhn, a true American hero, will be much missed.

BIENNIAL CONGRESSIONAL REFORM

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 7, 1995

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing a resolution providing for the biennial review of the structure and organization of Congress.

One of my major conclusions from my work last Congress on the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress is that the institution is better served if congressional reform is treated more as an ongoing, continual process rather than something taken up in an omnibus way every few decades. Congress has set up three major bipartisan, bicameral reform efforts in recent times—the 1945, 1965, and 1993 Joint Committees on the Organization of Congress. All three panels were given extremely broad mandates—to look at virtually all aspects of Congress in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The panel last Congress took up everything from committee jurisdiction reform and the congressional budget process to ethics reform and congressional compliance with the laws we pass for everyone else. We conducted scores of hearings, heard from hundreds of witnesses, looked over thousands of pages of testimony, considered hundreds of reform ideas, and issued reports totalling several thousand pages.

In my view, it would be far preferable to have the House take up a congressional reform resolution each Congress:

First, the task would be much more manageable. Members would be able to focus attention on the key reform issues of the day, rather than consider the entire range of procedural and organizational matters over from previous Congresses.

Second, political tensions would be lessened. Letting systematic institutional reform slide for several years only allows problems to fester and heightens partisan tensions.

Third, continual attention to reform is needed. We live in a rapidly changing world and need to keep the institution of Congress up to date on a regular basis.

Fourth, public confidence in Congress would be bolstered. Regular, systematic reform of Congress should help improve its operations and remove unnecessary impediments to legislative action.

Thus I strongly favor bringing a congressional reform resolution to the House floor every Congress, and letting Members work their will on the major reform issues of the