

Benicia Middle School was one of 27 middle schools and 17 high schools nominated in the state, representing the upper 2 percent of all junior and senior high schools in California.

Jim Krouscas, a physical education teacher and president of the site council at the middle school, attributed the blue ribbon award to the community and parental support, students, and, particularly, veteran teachers.

"This award started 20 years ago when these teachers decided Benicia Middle School would be a school of excellence and not mediocrity," said Krouscas.

Superintendent Annette O'Connor said, "Everyone contributed to making Benicia Middle School the fine institution of learning it has become.

"I am proud of the whole staff and pleased to show the community that we are recognized as exemplary wherever we are reviewed."

Mayrene Bates of the Solano County Office of Education said the blue ribbon selection is due to the people behind the scenes.

"Things like this don't just happen," she said.

Hiltman hopes the honor leads to an even stronger support for the school, through financial or technical assistance.

"We'd like to attract a large corporation to form a blue ribbon partnership to support the school," she said.

The entire middle school staff participated in the application, although principal writers were Hiltman, Linda Cole, district director of instructional services, and teachers Russell Ho, Sherry Knight, Kathy Maloney, Rami Muth, Greg Reed, and Kathy Wright.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE LAWRENCEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING TEAM

HON. GLENN POSHARD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. POSHARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Lawrenceville High School wrestling team, which grappled its way to a stellar 22-3 record and the State finals. Despite not taking the title, the season was a remarkable success, as the wrestlers combined with the school's basketball team to be the only high school in Illinois to have two teams participate in their respective State tournaments. I would like to congratulate the wrestling squad on a job well done. They carried themselves with dignity and are outstanding representatives of their community.

Wrestling is a team sport that is comprised of numerous individual battles. The mental discipline required is monumental, for not only must the athlete concentrate on his opponent, but he must be aware of his team's standing in the meet. Combined with the rigors of having to make weight and the intense conditioning required to participate, these student-athletes are a truly dedicated unit. The Indians captured titles at the Lawrence County, Cumberland Holiday, Argenta Oreaana, and Mattoon tournaments before claiming the North Egyptian conference and sectional crowns. Led by a strong corps of seniors, Lawrenceville returns four juniors as well as four sophomores, and should be primed to make another run at the State championship next season. Head coach Jim Dunn prepared his team expertly, and was ably assisted by coaches Terry Hoke and Keeley Meek.

Mr. Speaker, Lawrenceville has a fine athletic tradition that is embodied by its wrestling team. I am glad that these students have gotten to participate in such a first-rate program, and that they have worked hard to maintain these high standards and fulfill their potential. That is the true measure of success. I am proud to represent Lawrenceville in the U.S. Congress. The 1995-96 Lawrenceville High School wrestling team: Jeremy Harrington, Cory Jones, Chris Seed, Ryan Seitzinger, David Stanker, Alan Couch, Oliver Glenn, Cohn Cognat, Chris Gray, Nathan Hill, David Sechrest, Eric Seitzinger, and Sam Sanders. Statisticians are Jamie Dunn, Jodi Taylor, and Lisa Weyer.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ESTEBAN EDWARD TORRES

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. TORRES. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent on official business for certain votes on Friday, March 29, 1996. Had I been present on the House floor I would have cast my votes as follows: Roll No. 108: Nay on ordering the previous question on H. Res. 394; Roll No. 109: Yes on approving the journal; and, Roll No. 110: Nay on agreeing to conference report H. Rept. 104-481.

HONORING CONTINENTAL NEWS- PAPER FOR 13 YEARS OF SERV- ICE TO THE HISPANIC COMMU- NITY

HON. ROBERT MENEDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. MENEDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Continental newspaper on its 13th anniversary of dedicated service and commitment to the U.S. Hispanic community.

Under the direct influence of its main advisors, Mario Ciria Jr. and Ofelia Dones, the paper has emerged as one of the Nation's leading information sources for the Hispanic community. Ms. Dones is the only female publisher of a weekly Hispanic newspaper in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area. Together, Mario, Ofelia, and their gifted staff have worked to produce a highly enlightening and entertaining source of information for members of the Hispanic community on a weekly basis.

Continental has established a strong and diverse base of support, and it serves a vast area that covers New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Florida, and Pennsylvania. Continental's reporting efforts center around its main office in Union City, NJ. However, the paper is widely read in New York City and the paper's roots are a product of the city's interest.

Continental prides itself on its fair and accurate coverage of events and issues of interest to its readers. The newspaper's editorial section has frequently taken a bold stand against the brutal dictatorship now enslaving the island of Cuba. Many of its journalists have uncovered horrifying stories of human rights violations by the Castro tyranny and thus have

incorporated a strong stand against the Castro regime.

Moreover, Continental has long been dedicated in its effort to convey essential information to members of the Hispanic community. It is because of this dedication and public service that I am proud to honor this very deserving news source.

HEALTH COVERAGE AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. JENNIFER DUNN

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 28, 1996

Ms. DUNN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Health Coverage Availability and Affordability Act of 1996. This legislation solves the health insurance problems most common among my constituents in Washington State—eliminating job lock and preexisting conditions while keeping the costs of premiums down.

A critical component of our efforts to keep the cost of health insurance down is the set of provisions to reduce fraud and abuse in our Nation's health care system.

According to the General Accounting Office, each year as much as 10 percent of our Nation's total health care expenditures are lost to fraud and abuse. With annual health care costs in the United States approaching \$1 trillion, fraud and abuse is robbing taxpayers and policyholders of about \$100 billion each year.

Let me repeat that because it is an important fact: fraud and abuse is costing our constituents about \$100 billion each year.

Despite the enormity of the problem, the GAO concluded that "only a small fraction of the fraud and abuse committed against the health care system is identified."

The Department of Health and Human Services has estimated that Medicare and Medicaid programs alone lose as much as \$31 billion annually to fraud and abuse.

And who pays? Patients, that is who. And in the case of Medicare and Medicaid, taxpayers pay for health care fraud and abuse in the form of higher health care costs and higher premiums.

For all these reasons attacking fraud and abuse is an essential component of the measure before us today.

For instance, we get tough on fraudulent and unscrupulous suppliers and providers who game the system in order to reap billions of dollars.

Through the establishment of the Medicare Integrity Program, we greatly increase Medicare's ability to prevent payments for fraudulent, or erroneous claims, and to identify illegal billing schemes early to avoid large losses.

We provide incentives for individual beneficiaries to report fraudulent, abusive, or wasteful claims practices.

Under the bill, a Health Care Fraud and Abuse Account with the Federal hospital trust fund is created. Moneys derived from the newly coordinated health care antifraud and abuse programs will be transferred into the trust for the expressed purposes of fighting fraud and abuse.

This new funding is vital because there has been a 45-percent drop in per claim spending