

they been properly before the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I strongly object to their presence in the appropriations bill conference report.

The conference report creates an unprecedented benefits entitlement for children with spina bifida, on the basis of what can at best only be called questionable scientific foundation.

Worse than that is the way it has been paid for.

The appropriations bill reverses the Supreme Court's Gardner decision.

This is not simply an offset.

It is legislative savings that should be controlled by the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and it is more than what is needed to pay for the new entitlement.

Thus the VA Committee loses control over \$500 million.

That's the difference between the costs of this brand-new entitlement and savings from repeal of Gardner.

It's the price for rushing these provisions through the appropriations process instead of the committee of jurisdiction.

The appropriations bill strips the House Veterans' Affairs Committee of our plan to achieve significant savings without hurting higher priority veterans' programs, and denies veterans the potential of using that \$500 million for other benefits improvements for service-connected veterans.

Frankly, we should be able to do better for these men and women who served us in uniform.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DAVID FUNDERBURK

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 26, 1996

Mr. FUNDERBURK. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, September 24, 1996 I was unavoidably detained and missed several votes. Had I been present, I would have recorded my vote as follows:

Rollcall vote number 426 on agreeing to the VA/HUD conference report—I would have voted "aye."

Rollcall vote number 427 on agreeing to H.R. 3452, the Presidential and Executive Office Accountability Act—I would have voted "aye."

Rollcall vote number 425 on agreeing to House Resolution 525 providing expedited procedures for the remainder of the second session of the 104th Congress—I would have voted "aye."

#### AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY: THE END OF DEPENDENCY ACT

HON. PHILIP M. CRANE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 26, 1996

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, today I join my colleagues Congressman JIM McDERMOTT and Congressman CHARLIE RANGEL in introducing legislation that will fundamentally shift how the United States approaches our relations with the 48 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. For

many years, the United States has supported a variety of foreign assistance programs that have sought to aid the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Unfortunately, traditional foreign aid has not led to the level of economic development that we would all like to see on the African continent. In the long run, private sector investment and development must serve as the catalyst for the countries of sub-Saharan Africa to compete in the global marketplace and to improve the standard of living for their people. Unfortunately, the region's immediate potential does not seem to be reflected either in the investment decisions of individual businesses or in the U.S. Government's export development priorities, including high-profile trade missions.

In this context, I believe that it is time for us to reexamine the nature of our relationship with sub-Saharan Africa and to focus our attention on ways to facilitate private sector trade and investment in the region. In 1994, Congress took an initial step in this direction by asking the President to develop "a comprehensive trade and development policy for the countries of sub-Saharan Africa" as part of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act. The first of the five annual reports required under this provision was submitted by President Clinton earlier this year. The President's report, in turn, has generated a broader discussion among many of my colleagues, the business community, and the public on the future direction of U.S. economic relations with sub-Saharan Africa.

Throughout this year, I have been pleased to work with Congressman JIM McDERMOTT and Congressman CHARLIE RANGEL toward developing a bipartisan proposal to facilitate the economic development of sub-Saharan Africa by expanding our trade relations with the region. On August 1, 1996, the Subcommittee on Trade of the Ways and Means Committee held a hearing on this issue to look more closely at how we might elevate the priorities of business and government toward sub-Saharan Africa and pursue mutually beneficial trade expansion efforts. The legislation that we are introducing today is the culmination of our work on this issue in the 104th Congress and will serve as the basis for further action on this issue by the Ways and Means Committee next year.

Among other things, the "African Growth and Opportunity: The End of Dependency Act" calls for the negotiation of a free-trade agreement with the countries of sub-Saharan Africa that take appropriate steps to reform their economies. Moreover, to put momentum behind these negotiations and to focus greater attention on the region in the private sector, the bill calls for the creation of a United States-sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum. This forum will provide regular opportunities for policy leader and heads of state to meet to discuss issues of mutual interest and to keep the trade negotiations on track. Finally, our proposal will create privately managed equity and infrastructure funds to encourage private institutional investors in developed countries to pool their resources to make investments in established businesses and infrastructure projects in sub-Saharan Africa.

With a combined population of nearly 600 million people, sub-Saharan Africa can and should become a major export market for United States goods and services. In my view, the

active participation of the global marketplace is essential to creating the economic and investment opportunities that will stimulate the conditions for developing countries to emerge as business partners, rather than aid recipients. By giving sub-Saharan African countries a trade and investment alternative to foreign aid, this important legislation will encourage the type of economic and political reforms in the region that will ultimately make traditional assistance unnecessary.

#### THE NEED FOR CONSUMER GRIEVANCE RIGHTS IN MANAGED CARE

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 26, 1996

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, today I introduced a comprehensive bill to improve consumer and provider rights in managed care plans. I introduced the bill late in this Congress so that everyone has the opportunity to review the bill over the autumn and suggest changes and improvements, prior to its reintroduction in the 105th.

One major section of the bill requires the timely consideration by managed care plans of patient appeals. The Medicare agency is very concerned about this area of consumer rights and is proposing a rule to better protect patients. Depending on the strength of the HCFA rule, the need for the appeals and grievance section of my legislation may be fully or partially addressed.

The following news articles from the Bureau of National Affairs of September 18 and 19 describe why this is such an important issue. As Bruce Fried, head of the Office of Managed Care states so well: The appeal and grievance process is "fundamentally the most important protection our beneficiaries have."

#### VLADECK URGES MANAGED CARE GROUPS TO IMPROVE APPEALS PROCESS

Increasing numbers of health care consumers are feeling powerless in the face of decisions made by their managed care organizations, Health Care Financing Administration Administrator Bruce C. Vladeck said Sept. 17 in urging such groups to improve their beneficiary grievance and appeals process.

Speaking at the annual meeting of the American Association of Health Plans, the nation's largest managed care group, Vladeck said Medicare managed care organizations should ensure Medicare enrollees are aware of their health care coverage appeals rights; should establish systems that do not deter, and even solicit coverage questions; and should employ staff that are well-versed in Medicare regulations.

As managed care has grown, "there is an increasing perception among consumers that they are voiceless and powerless in the system," even though they had little or no appeal rights in the fee-for-service system, Vladeck told conference attendees.

He urged AAHP members to voluntarily upgrade their appeals and grievance process to parallel HCFA's on-going review of what is required managed care groups to provide enrollees in this area.

"If it doesn't happen spontaneously, we will make it happen," he warned.

#### HCFA OFFICIALS WARN HMOS TO PROVIDE GOOD GRIEVANCE PLANS; RULE IN DEVELOPMENT

Health maintenance organizations that do not provide adequate grievance and appeals