

currently provides trained personnel to identify and report changes in his condition. It is this provision of personal care that enables him to stay at home rather than being forced out of the home that he has lived in for 45 years and into a nursing home.

Tomorrow he will no longer be able to receive personal care at home because venipuncture will no longer be a qualifying skill.

Unfortunately, home health agencies across Tennessee and the rest of the Nation are familiar with cases just like this one. Their diseases may be different, but their circumstances are alike.

As a result, I am an original cosponsor of H.R. 2912, the Medicare Venipuncture Fairness Act of 1998, sponsored by the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL). This legislation would secure continued home health services to these beneficiaries. In addition, it would require a study by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to document any abuses in the venipuncture benefit and recommend to Congress the appropriate use of venipuncture under the Medicare home health benefit.

Some health care policymakers are concerned that venipuncture coverage has led to abuse of the home health care service. While I remain concerned about the millions of dollars that are being inappropriately spent because of the fraudulent and abusive billing practices of some home health care providers, I feel strongly that the patients are not the ones to be penalized. Individuals and institutions who knowingly defraud the government by submitting improper Medicare claims should be punished. However, it is inexcusable to penalize sick, disabled, elderly people who are innocent victims. I will continue to fight to see that this matter is addressed appropriately while allowing much needed home health services to continue for those who have an undisputed need for this care.

Mr. Speaker, I hope very strongly that the Health Care Financing Administration will revisit this issue. I think they are wrong. In the best interest of America and these people that need this service so badly, that they revisit it and extend the time and let these people get the care that they badly need at home.

FURTHER TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE RONALD V. DELLUMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I come to this floor today to pay homage to a great man, a great Californian and a great American, my colleague, my friend, the Honorable RONALD V. DELLUMS.

The gentleman from California (Mr. DELLUMS) has served 31 years in public

life, the last 27 in the U.S. House of Representatives, with distinction and honor. When he came to this House 37 years ago in 1971, he wore bell bottom pants and an afro perhaps larger in scale than the dome of this Capitol. Not surprisingly, he was immediately labeled as an untrustworthy radical and militant, the victim of stereotypes to which African Americans have long been accustomed. But he was here to represent his East San Francisco Bay area constituents, whose commitment to a full employment economy, equality, civil rights, quality education and peace with justice has been and remained steadfast throughout his career.

What those who stereotyped him failed to recognize was that they would be dealing with a distinguished, principled, educated man who diligently and strategically worked to understand the rules and customs of this House and to learn how to work within the construct of this House. Through his work and example, we who are new Members learned many lessons from RON DELLUMS. Policy development and lawmaking is a marathon, not a sprint. To be successful, we must be prepared to meet those who hold different points of view than our own and meet them on their own terms, carefully listening to their arguments, and struggle to find common ground and mutuality of interest.

In offering this advice, he never told us what we should do, but instead suggested what he would do. He taught us to plan and prepare, to thoroughly understand the nuts and bolts of an issue. And finally, he said, never forget the people who sent you here, the constituents who invested in us the power to represent them. They are the reason we are here.

Congressman RON DELLUMS is revered on both sides of this aisle because of his integrity and his commitment to progressive ideas. He was always on the cutting edge of the issues. California will miss him in the ninth district, but the State has been enriched by RON DELLUMS. While he towers above most of us physically, this attribute is matched by his intellect, faith in the process and optimism for peaceful resolution of conflict.

Mr. Speaker, I came to Congress during the midterm of the 104th Congress, having won a special election. My path to Congress did not provide me the opportunity to bond with the Members of my class during the heady days which normally follow a general election victory. I did not have orientation for Members-elect, as is the practice of getting acquainted with your colleagues before sitting for a new Congress. Nevertheless, RON DELLUMS' gentle smile, kind words and unreserved support, willingness to listen without prejudice and accessibility qualities have contributed to my development as a Member and my ability to better represent the constituents of my California's 37th Congressional District.

Congressman RON DELLUMS' intellect, keen grasp of the issues, knowledge of the process and impeccable style are attributes to the people of California's Bay area, the United States House of Representatives and the Nation which will mostly miss him. And while we will miss him, we all recognize that life goes on, and the only constant in life is change.

□ 1930

RON DELLUMS' contributions to this House, indeed his greatest legacy, will be that he used his service in Congress as an instrument for change in the pursuit of jobs, peace and justice.

I wish him the very best as he pursues his future endeavors and wish to convey my thanks as a colleague, a friend, and an American to his family for their sacrifice and generosity in sharing this unique man with us. And I thank my brother, the honorable RONALD V. DELLUMS, for his friendship and his unreserved brotherly support on my behalf.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE RONALD V. DELLUMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LUCAS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WATT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WATT of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I have neither the eloquence or the thoughtfulness to find the right words to express my feelings for my colleague, RON DELLUMS, who is leaving this House this week. How does one say "thank you" to someone who has had their phones tapped, who has been subjected to experiences in committee, on the floor, that we could not now imagine as Members of Congress?

About 15 years ago, when I was not involved in Federal politics at all, to the extent I had any involvement in politics it was at the local or State level, most of my time was being spent making a living learning how to practice law, someone invited me to attend in Washington a Congressional Black Caucus weekend. It was at that weekend that RON DELLUMS was the keynote speaker. He spoke for about 45, 50 minutes, and the entire audience never uttered a peep. It was at that point that I started to admire and respect RON DELLUMS.

Fast forward to 1992 and imagine how it felt to me to be elected to Congress and to have the honor and privilege of serving with this powerful man; to have him come to me and say, I have heard you speak on the floor and I like your passion, when I had admired his passion for so many years; to receive from him constructive suggestions about how to be an effective Member of Congress; to receive from him constructive suggestions about how to express myself on the floor, when I had heard him be one of the few people who could rise on the floor of Congress and actually change opinions of his colleagues during the course of a debate.

Those are the things that I am indebted to RON DELLUMS for.

But my respect goes beyond that. My admiration goes beyond that, because RON has been willing to share with people and to spend time with young people. I will never, ever forget eating lunch in one of the House facilities here with my son and a friend of his from his college class. We had almost finished eating when RON entered the dining room, and RON came over and sat down with us as we were about to leave, we thought. And about an hour later he was still mesmerizing these two college students with stories about how he had gotten involved in politics, how he had come to understand the principles and commitment that one has to make to gain the respect and admiration of others, and how he valued the opportunity to serve his constituents and the people of America.

There is nobody in this body that I admire and respect more than I admire and respect RON DELLUMS. I am going to miss him immensely. It has been wonderful over the last several days to hear the tributes that have been made to RON DELLUMS and to learn more and more about this powerful, beautiful man.

I wish him well. I wish him success in everything that he endeavors. I understand the circumstances under which he is leaving this body, and I hope that he will have much success with those circumstances. I just simply want to take this moment to express my respect and admiration for this powerful, powerful man.

HEALTH CARE IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to discuss what I believe is a very important issue and need in this country, and I could first start speaking generally about the value of good health care and how health care touches all Americans, how health care is bipartisan, not a respective race or agenda or region. It really is the desire of all people to have good health care, good and safe and viable and, yes, reasonable health care.

But even as we talk about reasonable health care, I think it is important that that word be put in the context of the right kind of medical professional-patient relationship and interaction. Just a few hours ago there was an extensive debate on the floor of the House regarding attorneys' fees for the White House Task Force on Health. During that debate I indicated that I thought my colleagues were moving in the wrong direction, a punitive direction rather than a helpful direction, and, in fact, the question of who should pay attorneys' fees for a challenge to that task force really begs the question

and really took up the time of the American people in the wrong way.

We passed no effective health legislation by that vote. And I voted against it because I thought that it simply missed the point of the House Health Task Force that, in fact, did not conclude with a decision as to which type of health care this whole Nation would buy into, but they did do something very important. They put in the minds of the American people that we had a health system that needed repair and, in fact, all was not well and there were other options that we might look at.

Whether it was universal service or access universally to health care, or whether or not it had to do with physician assisted plans, or whether or not it had to do with the professional health maintenance organizations, which have now about taken over the country, it still raised the debate. And, yes, it talked about the importance of making sure that all aspects of our community, our children, our infants, our senior citizens, our working families had access to health care. And today we find that we do have and still have a broken system.

Many of us can rise to the floor of the House and share personal stories. For example, my father, who suffered from cancer, not unlike many families in America, a senior citizen who, in fact, had been healthy every day of his life and was shocked that there was now something wrong with him. In the family's eyes there was nothing wrong with him. He was ill and we wanted him to be better. But in his mind there was something wrong, and we needed a sensitive and responsive health maintenance organization. I am sorry to say we did not get that.

How many times I have heard from constituents who indicate that it seems like the question of cost was more the priority of their health maintenance organization than it was quality of service and the wellness of the patient.

I do not believe Congress can proceed any further without assessing the need for better health care and good health care. We already have noted that 88 percent of the American public supports a consumer Bill of Rights as it relates to HMOs. Eighty-two percent support tax breaks and grants and subsidies for child care that also has an impact on how our children are cared for and also a better quality of life. But always the health care rises to the level of importance.

The attractiveness of a tobacco settlement focuses on opportunities to improve the health of Americans, to ensure that we diminish the opportunity for Americans to suffer through smoking and the illnesses that come about. But no matter how much we tell Americans to be healthy and to participate in wellness programs, if we have a broken health system, if we have HMOs that are governing and controlling all of the health systems around this Nation with little sensitivity to the im-

portance and the sacredness of the patient-physician relationship, or the patient-professional medical practitioner relationship, then we do not have a system.

So Americans are very interested in this consumer protection Bill of Rights, and I believe we must drive this to the end and it must be passed. And so I call upon my colleagues and the leadership of this House, the Republican leadership, to let us stop dividing along the lines of party when it comes to health care. No one in America goes to their physician and asks for their voting card. They want a good physician. They want the kind of physicians who carefully guided into this world those wonderful septuplets in our Midwest now, as we watch each healthy baby leave the hospital.

Those two young physicians, young women, in fact, might I say, cared enough about those lives and the good health of both the mother and those babies to meticulously and carefully and without any question of cost to proceed to bring and to help as God's creations were being born.

And so it is important that we understand what Americans want. No, they do not want fraud and abuse. But if there had to be a question of whether or not they could readily and carefully and with expertise help bring those septuplets into this world, help them be born, help create a unique time in history, I do not think Americans would want HMOs standing outside the door of that young couple saying, well, you know, you have to make a decision.

□ 1945

The cost is too much to get and to have septuplets. What an outrageous thought. But that is what many Americans are feeling with the kind of HMOs we have in America. Calls being made to incorporate institutions by physicians and physicians saying, "No, they cannot have that transplant. How old are they? There is not enough money in their coverage. How old are they?" And as the decision is being deliberated and the arguments are being made long distance, someone, your loved one, is dying. Americans are saying, enough is enough.

I am gratified that we have this opportunity to fix this system, that we have not gone too far. Coming from an area that has the Texas Medical Center and premier hospitals, in particular one that I happen to serve on the advisory committee for prostate cancer, M.D. Anderson, I know that most of the health officials want to do their job efficiently, effectively, with great recognition of cost; and they want to save lives; and they want to go to any length to save lives. We must give them that opportunity. Our HMOs are stifling good health care in America.

Oh, yes, there are some that provide easy access by way of the cost that one pays for an office visit. But, in many