

the court and to the citizens of Los Angeles. Thank you, Sherman, for your many years of public service.

HOME HEALTH CARE

HON. DEBBIE STABENOW

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 5, 1998

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as an advocate for the vital services home health care provides to many of our nation's citizens and their families—people whose voices are not always heard on Capitol Hill. We all recall the stories from the news last year of the bad actors who abused the Medicare system and provided inadequate care to their patients. Unfortunately, the reprehensible actions of a few home health care businesses lead to dramatic changes in the Balanced Budget Act that will impact the quality of care of all individuals whose doctors and families have decided that home care is the necessary course of action. Although it is critical to curb abuse, we must be careful that we do not inadvertently cause harm to the small businesses who have always provided and who will continue to provide quality care to many people in our communities.

I am very concerned that as of today, home care providers will no longer be reimbursed if they visit a patient solely to draw blood. Section 4615 of the Balanced Budget Act states that this is a non-vital service to provide to homebound patients. What about the blind diabetic who needs a blood sugar reading? What about the cancer patient or AIDS patient who is confined to a bed and whose continued treatment relies on blood tests? This provision of the Balanced Budget Act must be reversed or at least modified to allow the needs of the patient to determine the need for this health care service. As of today I am a co-sponsor of the Venipuncture Fairness Act, H.R. 2912, sponsored by my colleague, NICK RAHALL. H.R. 2912 will reinstate payment under Medicare for home health visits made to provide the important service of drawing blood. I urge my colleagues to immediately join the Venipuncture Fairness Act as co-sponsors and to work to ensure swift passage of the bill so that homebound patients do not suffer a life-threatening gap in care.

Other efforts are underway in Congress to reverse decisions made in the Balanced Budget Act that inadvertently cause harm to the home care providers. This Wednesday I will join Congressman JIM MCGOVERN as an original co-sponsor of a bill to protect effective home health care agencies from last year's cutbacks. The bill will delay the implementation of the interim payment system for home health services and provide for a later base year for the purpose of calculating new payment rates. It is our hope that the bill will allow continuation of quality home health services in communities throughout the country.

Another obstacle stands in the way of home health care companies staying in business. The Balanced Budget Act provisions regarding surety bonds is being misread by the Health Care Financing Administration. It is reasonable to ask home health care businesses to secure a surety bond at an affordable cost. The Balanced Budget Act set that cost at \$50,000 or

15% of an agency's previous year's Medicare revenues. It was assumed that a \$50,000 surety bond would be too expensive for some agencies, hence the provision for 15% of revenues was included to ease the burden on smaller operations. I have now discovered that the Health Care Financing Administration is requiring all home health care providers to get a surety bond for 15% of the previous year's revenues. For some companies, this could be as high as half a million dollars, a far cry from the original \$50,000 Congress intended. I will be circulating a letter to send to the Health Care Financing Administration urging them to implement this provision of the Balanced Budget Act according to the original intent of Congress. I urge my colleagues to sign the letter and send a strong message to the Health Care Financing Administration.

Home health care is a critical part of the health care system for thousands of Americans. Citizens, who would otherwise be required to be in nursing homes, are able to live independently or with family members because of the support services provided by home health care professionals. It is critical that our policies make sense for the thousands of qualified and dedicated home care agencies in America while we focus our energies on those who abuse the system and waste taxpayer dollars. I urge my colleagues to join with me in taking appropriate actions to meet both important goals. Thank you.

ANDERSON HIGH SCHOOL INDIANS
BASKETBALL TEAM

HON. DAVID M. McINTOSH

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 5, 1998

Mr. McINTOSH. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to recognize the boy's varsity basketball team of Anderson High School. These distinguished and courageous young men traveled to Washington D.C. and won an exciting game against DeMatha High school in the Washington Classic right here in our nation's Capital.

The determination shown by the team is a tribute to the rich tradition of Hoosier basketball. The Indians demonstrated a level of achievement which can only be attained when individuals dedicate themselves to a team effort. Their awesome victory was indeed a remarkable performance.

The game also had special significance for the two coaches. Both men have undergone successful liver transplants and the tournament raised awareness for this important procedure. The evening was a true testimony to the fact that anything is possible with a positive mental attitude.

Let me join everyone involved with the team's trip and winning season—the fans, parents, teachers and students in saying that we are all very proud of you! Congratulations.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE
OF ED BLACKBURN

HON. JIM DAVIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 5, 1998

Mr. DAVIS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a man who changed the face of law enforcement in my community of Hillsborough County and in the entire state of Florida—Ed Blackburn.

Mr. Blackburn was elected sheriff of Hillsborough County in 1953 at a time when organized crime tied to gambling was pervasive in the community. Sheriff Blackburn joined with nearby counties to stage gambling raids in an effort to break up the syndicate. Together, they were successful in turning back crime. He worked with other sheriffs to found the Florida Sheriffs Bureau—the precursor to what is the Florida Department of Law Enforcement today. The sheriffs bureau was the first effort to coordinate law enforcement across the state.

Sheriff Blackburn won a seat in the Florida House of Representatives in 1968 where he became a champion of law enforcement. He also served as an interim director of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement in 1979. During that time, he persuaded the Florida Legislature to fund a statewide crime laboratory. The crime lab is an essential tool for investigators as they work to establish concrete evidence against criminal suspects.

There is another important legacy of Ed Blackburn—the Florida Sheriff's Youth Ranch. As a former law enforcement officer, Mr. Blackburn knew well that early efforts to steer youth away from a life of crime was as important as locking up a wrongdoer. Mr. Blackburn helped found the ranch and also served as its executive director. He saw firsthand countless lives transformed at the youth ranch.

Mr. Blackburn recently passed away. I rise today in appreciation for Mr. Blackburn's years of selfless public service to his community and his state.

RONALD REAGAN WASHINGTON
NATIONAL AIRPORT

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT E. ANDREWS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 4, 1998

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2625) to redesignate Washington National Airport as "Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport":

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, I hope someday in the near future to vote for a bill designating an appropriate memorial to President Reagan. But the proposal before us this week, to rename Washington National Airport, is not that proposal. I oppose this renaming of the airport, and I want to explain my reasons.

This bill violates one of President Reagan's most cherished values: federalism. The federal government should not carry out responsibilities which can be handled by state or local governments. The renaming of Washington National Airport would be in direct opposition