

For years, we have been telling the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) to be a more prudent purchaser of health care. Now, we need to provide them with the tools to act more like a private company and hold Medicare contractors accountable.

Specifically, the Medicare Contracting Flexibility Act would enable HCFA to contract with other types of companies besides health insurers to process claims for the Medicare program. Right now, the pool of potential contractors is limited and has been steadily diminishing, leaving HCFA at the mercy of the few contractors that remain. If one fails or has difficulty processing claims, HCFA is hard-pressed to find a replacement.

This problem is especially evident in HCFA's inability to bring its contractors into compliance for the year 2000. Although several contractors are not yet in compliance, HCFA appears to have little leverage in forcing contractors to make the necessary system adjustments. This means that January 1, 2000, Medicare's claims processing system could malfunction, wreaking havoc throughout the provider community.

The Medicare Contracting Flexibility Act would enable HCFA to solve this short-term problem by expanding the pool of potential contractors and fostering more competition among companies so that HCFA could get the best value and service for each taxpayer dollar spent.

The Medicare Contracting Flexibility Act would also give HCFA the ability to solve long-term problems by laying the groundwork for other changes to the contracting program. For example, HCFA could set performance standards for contractors, or combine claims processing for Medicare Parts A and B under one contractor, as opposed to having two separate entities.

All of these changes would translate into better, more effective service for the Medicare program, and ultimately the nation's 39 million Medicare beneficiaries. I urge my fellow Members of Congress to join with me in passing the Medicare Contracting Flexibility Act. Together we can ensure that HCFA has the tools to be a more prudent purchaser of health care.

CONGRATULATING THE NOAA
CORPS ON ITS 81ST ANNIVERSARY

HON. CONSTANCE A. MORELLA

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 1998

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 81st anniversary of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Corps. Known as "America's Seventh Service," the officers of the NOAA Corps are an integral part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and they serve with distinction throughout this multi-disciplinary scientific organization. I am proud to congratulate the NOAA Corps for 81 years of dedicated service to our Nation.

The NOAA Corps was designed to allow flexibility in the assignment of professionals to remote, hazardous, or otherwise arduous duties throughout the wide range of vital environmental and stewardship activities encompassed by NOAA. Corps officers today com-

bine such unique qualifications as: research ship and aircraft operations; technical expertise with advanced academic backgrounds in hydrography, geodesy, fisheries sciences, meteorology, and oceanography; and leadership in technical program and data management contributing to the coherence, integrity, and effectiveness of the administrative structure of NOAA.

The dedicated scientists, engineers, and officers of the uniformed NOAA Corps have a long and decorated tradition of providing mobility, flexibility, operational, and professional skills in a unique response capability to our Nation. The Corps houses experts in nautical charting and hydrographic surveying. These functions are vital to our national interest in ensuring the continued safe navigation of trade. NOAA Corps pilots provide critical operations when conducting low-altitude penetration missions of hurricanes and tropical storms in support of weather research and prediction. Corps officers supply the data collection and management that are requisite to ensuring accurate fisheries stock and turtle and marine mammal assessments.

The Corps has contributed over the recent decades in providing valuable scientific and engineering skills, especially in times of national emergencies. The Corps made important contributions during both Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. NOAA provided ship, aircraft, and technical skills during the Gulf War to assess the oil-based environmental damages caused by Iraq. Shore personnel contributed scientific expertise in hazardous materials management, while a NOAA ship carried scientists in the Gulf to evaluate the extent of environmental damages. Also, NOAA Corps officers and ships provided crucial survey support in response to the TWA Flight 800 recovery effort. The Corps swiftly located the wreckage of TWA Flight 800 and created highly detailed map products that greatly facilitated the retrieval of wreckage by Navy divers.

Today, the NOAA Corps expertly performs its missions, whether in charting our Nation's coastline, assessing our fisheries stocks, or flying into hurricanes for scientific research. NOAA Corps officers serve in NOAA research laboratories and program offices throughout the Nation and in remote locations around the world. These officers remain ready to apply their science and service skills to the many problems facing the United States in the management and study of oceanic and atmospheric resources.

I extend my warmest congratulations to the men and women of the NOAA Corps on this 81st anniversary. The expertise and flexibility that the Corps has demonstrated in the past will serve the Nation for years to come. The NOAA Corps has reached a celebrated milestone, and I wish it an even greater future.

HONORING REVEREND WILLIE H.
UPSHAW, D.D.

HON. ELIOT L. ENGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 1998

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, the City of Yonkers and especially the Mount Carmel Baptist Church are fortunate to have a pastor such as

the Reverend Willie H. Upshaw. Dr. Upshaw has been pastor of the Church for 31 years, since 1967. It was under his guidance that the membership grew from 150 to more than 2,500.

Dr. Upshaw was born in Alabama and began his journey in the church early in life as an active member of the Galilee Baptist Church. In 1957 he moved to New York where he was licensed to the ministry and, in 1967, ordained.

That same year Dr. Upshaw became Pastor of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church where he sees to the needs of his flock by visiting and praying with the sick and shut-ins, dedicating infants, bringing the Gospel to persons at nursing homes and prisons and helping those in the community who look to him for guidance and counsel.

Dr. Upshaw served as Executive Vice President of the Yonkers Council of Churches, as President of the Ministerial Fellowship of Yonkers, as a member of the Central Hudson Baptist Association, the Central Hudson Baptist Retreat, and the Board of Directors of Yonkers General Hospital. He has received the Community Service Award and was recognized by the American Heart Association for unparalleled dedication to the Heart Healthy Education Project. Dr. Upshaw and his wife Carolyn have two children and two grandchildren.

He personifies the good that one man can bring to a community. I salute him for the good work he has done for all of us.

RECOGNIZING THE COLORADO
GUNSMITHING ACADEMY

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 1998

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, as the Congressman representing the Fourth District of the State of Colorado, I am proud to have constituents like Earl and Charlene Bridges who run the Colorado Gunsmithing Academy in Lamar, Colorado. These individuals set the standard for integrity and craftsmanship for small business in America and I am grateful for their contribution to not only the state, but the entire nation. I submit the following article detailing the success of the Colorado Gunsmithing Academy for the RECORD.

STUDENTS SAY LAMAR ACADEMY GIVES THEM
GOOD SHOT AT A JOB

(BY KIT MINICLIER)

LAMAR—Students at the Colorado Gunsmithing Academy of Lamar start by building their own rifles from scratch.

The approach enables them to learn patience and development skills in stockmaking, metalsmithing, welding and other disciplines while building their own single-shot rifle.

It is theirs to take home, and many use them to demonstrate their expertise when applying for their first job in their new profession.

Only 4½ years old, the academy is already developing a national and international reputation, attracting students from Connecticut to California and from Norway, Sweden, Australia and Holland.

It is one of three gunsmithing schools in Colorado. There are only 17 in the nation,