

TRIBUTE TO LOUIS STOKES

SPEECH OF

HON. TONY P. HALL

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 23, 1998

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the dean of the Ohio delegation, my good friend Representative LOUIS STOKES. LOU has served his constituents in Cuyahoga County with enormous distinction for the past 30 years. When he retires after the November election, he will be sorely missed. It has been an honor for me to serve with him for the past two decades.

LOU has been a member of the Appropriations Committee for 28 years and was the Chairman and then Ranking Member of its Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies. He is a former Chairman of the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, the House Intelligence Committee, and the Special Committee which investigated the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In all of these posts, he served with dedication, dignity and fairness.

LOU STOKES was the first African American elected to Congress from the State of Ohio. He was also the first African American to serve on the Appropriations Committee. He was one of the founders of the Congressional Black Caucus.

LOU has never forgotten his roots. Because he grew up in public housing, he knows that public housing need not breed despair and hopelessness. He served in the Army during World War II, and as a result has been a steadfast proponent in behalf of the interests of our Nation's veterans. He used the GI Bill to obtain a legal education and became a distinguished lawyer who argued and won a case before the United States Supreme Court.

In Congress, he has fought untiringly to provide legal protection for the poor through the Legal Services Corporation. He has sponsored landmark legislation in education such as the Federal TRIO programs for disadvantaged students, and in health to improve the delivery of health care services to minorities.

Just earlier this week, President Clinton signed into law a bill that LOU sponsored to establish the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom within the National Park Service.

LOU comes from an illustrious family. His brother Carl was the first African-American mayor of Cleveland and he was Ambassador to the Seychelles. His daughter Angela is continuing the family tradition by being elected as a judge.

I shall miss LOU. I wish him, his wife Jay, his four children and his seven grandchildren the best of luck in the future.

CONGRESSIONAL RECOGNITION OF
DON D. SYKORA**HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 27, 1998

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. Don A.

Sykora, whose contributions to the city of Houston and its citizens will not be forgotten. Mr. Sykor's personal dedication to Harris County spanned over 40 years, during which epoch he served as benefactor in both the business and civic sectors of society. Mr. Sykora's exemplary dedication and selflessness provide a beacon to which all should fervently strive.

Don Sykora was most notably known for his extensive tenure with the Houston Lighting and Power Company, which began in 1956. His service to the HL and P, and later Houston Industries, displayed his prowess as an executive, displaying incredible vision throughout his stay. An example of his ground breaking leadership came amidst the energy/oil crisis of the 1970's. As Vice President of Marketing for Houston Lighting and Power, Mr. Sykora passionately advocated the need for energy conservation long before environmentally conscious behavior became fashionable. It was this visionary guidance that garnered him the highest positions of authority within both organizations for which he worked. He ascended to the position of President both with the Houston Lighting and Power Company and at Houston Industries, in 1982 and 1983 respectively.

Mr. Don Sykora's contributions to Houston cannot be restricted to those in the business arena, for any time not spent at his executive positions, was dedicated to his family and community. Mr. Sykora's civic dedication to his environment ranged from his position on the Chamber of Commerce to his work with the Houston International Festival.

Don Sykora's tireless resolve and contributions to the improvement of his community for posterity, deserve the utmost praise and recognition. On behalf of the citizens of Harris county and the United States of America, I thank Don Sykora.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MEDICARE
HOME HEALTH BENEFICIARY
PROTECTION ACT OF 1998**HON. NICK RAHALL**

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 27, 1998

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Medicare Home Health Beneficiary Protection Act of 1998, on behalf of myself, and Mr. MERRILL COOK of Utah, Mr. BOB WISE of West Virginia, and Mr. J.C. WATTS of Oklahoma.

Last November I introduced another bill linked to changes made in the way home health agencies would be reimbursed for services they provide to homebound seniors and other frail and disabled persons, in their homes, by the Medicare program.

The bill I introduced late last year is called the Medicare Venipuncture Fairness Act, H.R. 2912, and it seeks to restore a home health benefit known as venipuncture—the drawing of blood samples—to Medicare enrollees who were receiving this care provided by home health providers, in consultation with the patient's own physicians. This home benefit, so important to the stability of homebound patients, was terminated by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. As a result, many former venipuncture patients have entered nursing

homes, and hospitals, and some have died from having their health and well-being compromised because of the loss of this vital service.

Today, I find myself again trying to assist the home health agencies and their needy patients, by introducing a three year moratorium on the Interim Payment System—or IPS—also imposed on the industry under the BBA of 1997.

Under the BBA, the Health Care Financing Administration, or HCFA, was directed by Congress to replace cost-based reimbursement for home health services with Prospective Payment System (PPS), to become effective in October, 1999. This Interim Payment System (IPS) was imposed while HCFA prepares to implement the PPS late next year, imposing new per beneficiary caps on home health agencies. HCFA Administrator Nancy-Ann Min DeParle has recently stated that her agency cannot meet the PPS deadline of October 1999.

While there is no question of the importance of providing a transitioning procedure for home health benefits into a PPS, to ensure that all such agencies are cost-effective as they deliver services to the homebound, usually elderly, frail patients, it is our solemn duty to also protect eligible, elderly Medicare beneficiaries.

It is quite evident to me that the current IPS, coupled with HCFAs interpretation of the surty bond status, is gravely threatening access to these invaluable services throughout our nation. Quite simply, the IPS is fatally flawed.

While we all seek to drive out those who would deceive and defraud the elderly and the Medicare Program, by devious, fly-by-night home health providers, I am deeply concerned about a punitive IPS, which is now in effect, which is driving good, caring, quality providers out of business. Nationwide, over 1000 home health providers have closed or stopped accepting Medicare patients. There are few resources available to former patients except nursing facilities, which are much more expensive but which Medicare does not have to pay for, or emergency rooms at local hospitals if a beneficiary's health destabilizes—another expense that must be borne by Medicare.

Since last November I have sought intervention from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the President, and among my colleagues, urging them to take action to stop the demonizing of home health providers by allowing HCFA to continue to misinterpret the intent of Congress, and to continue to impose more and more punitive measures upon the home health care industry.

Since last November I have sought to impress upon my colleagues, HHS and the White House, that HCFA is over-regulating these industries a majority of which are caring providers. Yet HCFA continues its arrogant disregard for Congressional intent, and our constituents—the elderly, the frail, the disabled—leaving them to find other sources of care as agency after agency is forced out of business.

Today, let me say again that fraud and abuse in the Medicare system must be ended—but it is also noteworthy that in its zeal to find criminals, HCFA appears to have written and enforced regulations that treat all providers as criminals or potential criminals.

It is time for Congress to now impose a moratorium on the IPS. My bill not only accomplishes this equitable goal, but it also puts