EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

THE NEED FOR A BETTER HEALTH CARE ACCREDITATION SYSTEM

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, human rights violations are occurring every day in the United States—worse yet, the victims and the Federal Government are funding these atrocities. While many nursing homes do an excellent job, all too many nursing homes throughout the country are not providing adequate care for elderly patients. As the proportion of older Americans in the population continues to grow and the number of those requiring long term care also rises, we must find a better way to improve quality in nursing homes.

A Special Report on Nursing homes in the October 12, 1998 edition of USA Today profiles the devastating conditions in some Florida nursing homes. According to the article, the Brian Center in Tampa exemplifies the neglect which is all too frequent in the nursing home industry. More than a dozen ''residents' rights'' lawsuits, including a class-action claim, are pending against Brian Center of Tampa. These lawsuits accuse Brian Center and its succession of owners and management companies of systematic fraud, abuse and neglect orchestrated to inflate profits at the expense of vulnerable patients.

As the USA Today article describes, enforcement lawsuits against nursing home owners take up to four months to be heard in court, and an additional month to be decided. Fines are limited to $5,000 per violation. Nursing homes only need to prove that they have improved the conditions of the home by the time of the hearing to defeat the enforcement lawsuit.

There is no substantial punishment for nursing homes which fail to adequately care for their patients. Further increasing the likelihood of poor care, government and private authorities like the Joint Commission on Accrediting Health Care Organizations do not effectively inspect facilities to identify existing problems. The date of annual inspections are rarely varied by more than a week, allowing nursing homes to present a positive example for the inspectors and then return to a poor standard once the inspection was finished.

The Brian Center and similar examples point out the problems with the Joint Commission on Accrediting Health Care Organizations, the national organization responsible for approving hospitals and nursing homes for medicare coverage. The October 19, 1998 edition of The Wall Street Journal contains a succinct description of the problems with the current accreditation and ranking process for HMO's, ''Who's on First?'' by Nancy Ann Jeffery. Both JCAHO and National Committee for Quality Assurance accredit HMO's, but each uses a different standard. JCAHO itself provides multiple accreditation plans which allows each plan to measure their most positive indicators.

Using different standards for different accreditation renders the results of such accreditations useless. The rankings by JCAHO and NCQA are not standardized so comparing accreditation reports among provider groups is difficult and/or meaningless.

The Wall Street Journal article also identifies the key flaw in the JCAHO type of accreditation: conflict of interest.

> When it comes to policing health-care quality, some groups are afraid to bite the hand that feeds them. In 1994 the Joint Commission rolled out a set of standardized performance measures off hospitals, at a cost of more than $5 million, creating a much sought-after single yardstick for comparing one hospital with another.
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> There was just one problem: Some hospitals would look bad. The hospitals balked. So the Joint Commission, with a board dominated by the hospital industry and medical associations, backed off the plan.[1]

The Federal Government needs to improve the oversight of accrediting organizations to ensure that they are protecting the consumer, and providing useful material.

A TRIBUTE TO ANGELA RAISH

HON. HEATHER WILSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Mrs. WILSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Angela Raish and to let this Congress know about a loss that we as a Congress will soon suffer. Ms. Raish has been the personal secretary and scheduler to New Mexico Senator PETE DOMENICI. She has served for 21 years as the Senator's ''vero braccio destro'' or right hand.

Her pleasant manner and dedication to the Senator and to the people of New Mexico is unparalleled. She worked selflessly to ensure everyone in the office did the best work possible for the Senator and the people of New Mexico. To give you an idea of what an impact she made, her retirement celebration was hosted by the Senator and Nancy Domenici as well as former Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker, former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole and former Senator Sam Nunn, a Georgia Democrat.

Raish who grew up in South Dakota, joined DOMENICI's staff in 1977. Truth is, she probably knows more New Mexicans than the Senator does. And all of them adore Angela. Along the way she helped hundreds of people with her warm, caring manner. Dedicated, loyal public servants make up the majority of people working on Capitol Hill. But, Angela Raish has set the bar at the highest level to which others should aspire.

[1] Jeffery Nancy Ann, The Ratings Game: Who's on First? The Wall Street Journal. October 19, 1998 pg. R16.

HONORING THREE OF LANSING'S UNSUNG HEROES—THE LANSING COMMUNITY ROLE MODEL CELEBRATION

HON. DEBBIE STABENOW

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, on October 17, 1998, at our Lansing Community Role Model Celebration, I will be pleased to honor three of Lansing's unsung heroes. These women are true community volunteers, who, through their own dedication, commitment, and hard work have made our community a better place.

Mrs. Grace L. Demps, who has lived in Lansing since she was 6 years old, is a lifelong community volunteer. She has spent the last ten years making holidays dinners for hundreds of needy families. Mrs. Demps organizes and prepares these wonderful holiday feasts out of her own home. She solicits food donations and pays for the remainder of the supplies out of her own pocket.

Mrs. Demps has received the Sojourner Truth Award from the National Association of Negro & Professional Women's Club, and the Outstanding Community Service Award from the women of Union Baptist Church, Mother of the Year from her own Messiah Community Baptist Church, where her son, Rev. Lawrence Hinton presides. She is a member of the Greater Lansing Nurses Guild and the Lansing Association Women's Clubhouse.

Mrs. Demps recently retired as a 25-year employee from the City of Lansing Traffic Department. She is married to Willie Demps, and is the mother of 6 children, 35 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, and 5 great-great-grandchildren.

Ms. Geri Roossien, who will be 66 on October 22nd, has used her own painful experiences with addiction to help many others through her job as a Substance Abuse Counselor at Cristo Rey Community Center, where she has been working since 1980. Although she retired on June 1st of this year, she is still involved in fundraisers and activities at the center.

Ms. Roossien is very close to her only daughter, Jannus, and her husband, Rob, and their two wonderful children.

Ms. Roossien served on the City of Lansing Human Resource Advisory Board from 1983 to 1996. She was also secretary for the Michigan Indian Benefit Association Board of Directors, a member of the Lansing Indian Center Youth Advisory Committee, the Native American Community Group, the Ingham County Women's Commission, the C.I.R.C.L.E. group, and the Indian Children's Christmas Party Committee. She is an integral part of many local political campaigns and activities in the Lansing community.

Mrs. Georgia Brown has been one of Lansing's most dedicated and committed community activists. She is an Honorary Life Member of the National PTA, a Life Member of the

NAACP, a life member of the National Council of Negro Women, a member of Lansing Association Women's Clubhouse, and Valiant Lady Church Women United. She is a long-time member of Trinity AME, and was a Sunday school teacher for many years, and worked with the Old Newsboys, an organization that raised money to give shoes and boots to hundreds of needy children. Mrs. Brown continues to volunteer at Sparrow Hospital's surgical wing where she has been a cheerful and dependable fixture for almost 15 years. And, Mrs. Brown, in all of her years of voting in public elections, has missed only 4 votes, and all of those were missed for family emergencies.

Mrs. Brown has been married to her husband Robert Brown for 68 years and is the mother of 8 children, 19 grandchildren, and 24 great-grandchildren.

Our community has been enriched by the contributions of these selfless volunteers. As we gather on Saturday, many generations of Lansing residents, we will celebrate our community role models, Mrs. Grace L. Demps, Mrs. Geri Roossien, and Mrs. Georgia Brown.

CONGRATULATIONS TO NAOMI LAUTER

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, a young nation with a long and honorable history, Israel has been a symbol of hope and a land of opportunity for millions of Jews throughout the world. Surviving six wars, constant terrorism, and severe economic boycotts, Israel's 600,000 citizens have shown the world what it means to be committed to one's homeland. And like Israel, Naomi Lauter's independence, determination and strength have helped to build AIPAC into the leading organization for Jewish concerns.

I would like to congratulate Naomi Lauter on 16 years of incredible leadership as the Western Regional Director of AIPAC. Naomi's commitment to AIPAC and her vision has been unwavering and inspiring for all those who have worked with her.

The Jewish community has been served well by Naomi's spirit, innovation and devotion to Israel and pro-Israel legislation. Naomi has helped build AIPAC into what it has become in the Pacific Northwest, focused, effective, and powerful. We are all grateful to her for the work she has accomplished during her years of involvement with AIPAC.

And we look forward to her involvement for years to come. While Naomi is leaving as the Regional Director, we should all be grateful that she is not leaving AIPAC altogether. Becoming its National Consultant, AIPAC is fortunate to be able to rely on her insight and institutional knowledge of this great organization.

Every Jewish American can take pride in her dedication to bringing together persons of any political persuasions to sit up and take notice for Jewish and pro-Jewish communities.

Thank you Naomi for your service to AIPAC. We are thankful for your work, and look forward to a continuing friendship and wish you a successful future.

AS GAMBLING SPREADS THROUGHOUT THE STATES SO DOES GAMBLING ADDICTION

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, as the 105th Congress prepares to adjourn, I want to bring to the attention of our colleagues an important issue which, unfortunately, hasn't seemed to register with many of America's leaders. But it's one that needs our focused attention, and that's gambling.

Twenty years ago, if you wanted to gamble you had to go to Atlantic City or Las Vegas. But today, gambling has spread in one form or another to most of the 50 States. There are only two States which have completely banned gambling, and that's Utah and Hawaii.

One reason for the incredible rate at which gambling is spreading is through the proliferation of gambling casinos in many States. I certainly respect Native American Indians, but I'm really concerned about the number of gambling establishments on tribal lands.

For those of us who say we really care about Native Americans, we need to show our concern about what gambling is doing to them. A new University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research study found that Native Americans in Montana have a compulsive gambling rate that is double the rate of other adults in the State. My point is that as gambling spreads throughout the States, so does gambling addiction. Montana is just one State that has a real battle on its hands. The Montana study found that 78 percent of Montanans gamble, and that figure is regardless of income, education, age, sex, and marital status. Compulsive gambling rates are on the increase, the study also said, up from 2.2 percent of the adult population six years ago to 3.6 percent now.

First, gambling is corrupting the political process. I have mentioned before my concern about the incredible amounts of money the gambling interests are pouring into the political process. Both sides are taking the money—Republicans and Democrats. And we are reading news reports more frequently than ever about one government official after another being investigated for gambling-related corruption, from an ex-governor and his son to even a member of the President's cabinet.

Second, it's hurting local businesses. People only have so many extra dollars to spend on food and entertainment. If they're spending their disposable income at the new casino in town, that's money that the local restaurant doesn't get, or the movie theater, or local retailers. Local business is being cannibalized by the casinos. Mom and pop restaurants can't compete with the discounted and even free meal deals at the gambling operations.

Another thing that happens when gambling comes to town is that crime goes up. The U.S. Treasury Department has been increasingly concerned at the way casinos attract criminal elements and suspicious activity, especially money-laundering and has proposed new regulations that would require casinos and card clubs to report to Treasury any suspicious transactions of $3,000 or more. Of course, the casinos are fighting these regulations tooth and nail. But the fact is, a cash-heavy criminal can find a safe haven in a casino. Drug dealers, armed robbers, embezzlers—these kind of people can walk in, buy a few thousand dollars worth of chips, then turn them in for a casino check later that night and can go relatively unnoticed.

Just a few months ago, four employees at some casinos in Atlantic City were arrested in a sting operation as they allowed undercover agents to launder more than $400,000 in what they allegedly believed was drug money. so the Treasury Department is concerned for good reason.

But crime is not the only issue. We are in a period of record bankruptcies all across the country, so much so that we had to appropriate money to pay for more bankruptcy judges. Studies have shown a significant link between gambling and bankruptcy, even geographically. Where there are more gambling facilities, there are more bankruptcies. This is an issue that must be addressed. It is out of control. Just the other day, a federal judge in Memphis said that because a woman had a gambling addiction problem, she didn't have to pay back the $8,200 in gambling debts she ran up on her credit card just before she filed for bankruptcy. Is there any doubt that the gambling issue must be addressed if we're talking about bankruptcy reform?

But not only bankruptcies increase when gambling comes in. Tragically, so do suicides, The American Association of Suicidology published the study ''Elevated Suicide Levels Associated with Legalized Gambling'' in the Winter 1997 issue of its journal Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior. The study, which was conducted by Dr. David P. Phillips of the University of California at San Diego, found that there is a link between gambling and suicide.

> Las Vegas, the premier U.S. gambling setting, displays the highest levels of suicide in the nation, both for residents of Las Vegas and for visitors to that setting,
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> the study said.
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> In general, visitors to and residents of major gaming communities experience significantly elevated suicide levels. In Atlantic City, abnormally high suicide levels for visitors and residents appeared only after gambling settings were opened. The findings do not seem to result merely because gaming settings attract suicidal individuals.

But how do people get to the point where they're ready to take their own lives? It can actually start at a very young age. We're seeing and hearing more and more these days about how gambling is hurting young people. And by ''young,'' I'm talking about small children. Some critics, including Ed Looney, executive director of the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey, say that amusement arcades teach children that gambling is okay, and that it opens the door for later problems.

According to an article last month in the Las Vegas Review-Journal, gambling cities such as Las Vegas have tried to fashion themselves into ''family-friendly'' entertainment by providing casino arcades. But most of the games in the arcades, the article says, are gambling devices. The biggest difference between what's happening to the parents on the casino floor and what's happening to the kids in the casino arcades, the article says, is that ''the kids are ripped off even more than the adults.''

''These are not pinball machines or video games to afford entertainment time for the -