

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

THE LOW-INCOME MEDICARE BENEFICIARY ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1999

HON. KEN BENTSEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 8, 1999

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I have introduced legislation, H.R. 854, the Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary Assistance Act of 1999, to help more seniors enroll in Federal programs that pay out-of-pocket Medicare costs for low-income seniors.

Medicare has been one of the most successful Government programs in our Nation's history, helping to improve health care and reduce poverty among senior citizens since it was created in 1965. However, even with Medicare, America's senior citizens continue to pay thousands of dollars in health care expenses out of their own pockets each year. These expenses include the \$45.50 monthly premium for doctor's visits, as well as doctor and hospital costs that Medicare does not cover. Many seniors on fixed incomes simply cannot afford these expenses.

In order to protect these senior citizens, the Federal Government and the States have established several programs under Medicaid that pay out-of-pocket costs for low-income seniors. These two programs, the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary program pays Medicare premiums, deductibles, and coinsurance for hospital stays and doctor visits. This program pays the current Medicare premium of \$45.40 per month, the 20 percent share of doctors' bills that Medicare does not pay, and the initial \$768 deductible for hospital stays. This program is available to individuals and couples with annual incomes up to \$8,292 and \$11,100 respectively (100 percent of the Federal poverty line). The second program, the Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary program pays the monthly \$45.50 Medicare premiums for doctor visits. This program is available for individuals with annual incomes between \$8,293 and \$11,111 and couples with annual incomes between \$11,101 and \$14,892 (135 percent of the Federal poverty line).

A recent Families, USA report found that between three and four million eligible seniors are not enrolled in these programs. This represents almost 40 percent of those eligible who are not receiving the help they need. It is unconscionable that so many seniors, often widows with limited means, are not receiving this vital assistance to which they are legally entitled. Clearly, we must do a better job of reaching out to seniors and making it easier for them to apply for this assistance.

My legislation includes two initiatives to help eligible seniors enroll in these programs. First, my legislation directs the Social Security Administration to automatically enroll seniors in these programs based on the income information available to Social Security. Under this 60-day period of presumptive eligibility, sen-

iors will receive these benefits while the State agencies make a final determination of eligibility. My legislation would also require State agencies to provide the Social Security Administration with the necessary administration forms to properly enroll these senior citizens. Second, my legislation would double the current outreach budget of the Social Security Administration from \$6 million to \$12 million. With more funding, it is hoped that the Social Security Administration will find innovative methods to contact low-income senior citizens.

My legislation would also ease the administrative burden that States face to enroll these eligible senior citizens. Under current law, eligible senior citizens must contact their local State agencies in various locations and fill out the necessary paperwork. I believe that the Social Security Administration, a Federal agency, is well-suited to contact these individuals and couples through their network of Social Security offices throughout the Nation. In addition, this legislation would ensure that Federal officials are working cooperatively with state officials to increase enrollment in this critical program.

I believe that my legislation will fulfill a simple goal: helping low-income senior citizens afford and obtain the health care they need. I urge my colleagues to support this vital legislation and work for its passage this year.

CONGRATULATING BRUCE OBBINK,
AGRICULTURALIST OF THE YEAR

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 8, 1999

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Bruce Obbink, recipient of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce Agriculturalist of the Year award for 1998. Mr. Obbink has been an active member of the agricultural community for many years.

Bruce Obbink has served on the California Table Grape Commission since 1968, most recently as its president. The Commission is the promotional branch of California's fresh grape industry and represents 100 percent of the state's 700 table grape farmers. As president, Bruce is responsible for a budget that exceeds \$13 million and for oversight of the Commission's key programs including advertising, communications, community service, international marketing, merchandising, and research. He has traveled extensively in the Asian, European, and South American markets successfully promoting the California fresh grape industry.

Mr. Obbink lives in Fresno, California, and was raised in the Midwest. He is a graduate of Missouri State University and was a naval aviator from 1956 to 1962. He was director of education for the Council of California Growers and the Agriculture Education Foundation from 1962 to 1968. Bruce Obbink has generously served a number of Ag organizations.

He is a member of the National Project to Develop a Strategic Plan for Changing the American Diet, has been appointed by Governor Wilson to serve on the Exotic Pest Eradication Task Force, is past president of the Cal-Ag Committee on International Trade, past chairman of the board of the Produce Marketing Association, past president of the Produce for Better Health Foundation, and has participated in several Harvard Business School education programs.

Bruce Obbink has been consistently recognized and honored for his service to the agricultural community. He was named Produce Marketer of the year by The Packer, a national produce industry publication, selected by Public Relations Quarterly as one of the 100 outstanding public relations executives in the United States, and received the Produce for Better Health Foundation's first-ever Outstanding Contributor Recognition Award. He was presented with the California Grape & Tree Fruit League's Mentor's Award for his service to the grape industry, and named the American Society for Enology and Viticulture's 1998 Merit Award recipient for recognition of his many contributions to the industry through his role with the California Table Grape Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize Bruce Obbink, the Fresno Chamber of Commerce Agriculturalist of the Year. The California Agriculture industry has been well served by Mr. Obbink's tireless dedication. I invite all of my colleagues to join me in wishing Bruce Obbink many years of continued success.

TRIBUTE TO REV. DR. EUGENE B.
GREEN

HON. DAVID D. PHELPS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 8, 1999

Mr. PHELPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Rev. Dr. Eugene B. Green, who passed away Feb. 26, 1999 in Decatur, IL. Dr. Green was a tireless advocate of community and youth projects in Decatur. He was born on Aug. 8, 1925 in Chicago, and married Dorothy L. Coleman-White on Christmas Eve in 1964, and he and his wife had two sons, Steven and Edward. He also served his country in the United States Army from 1954 until he received his honorable discharge in 1957.

Dr. Green's awards and commendations are too numerous to list, but we counted among his greatest accomplishments an invitation to the White House, meeting with the Speaker of the House, and serving as a guest chaplain for the United States Senate. Hailed as one of Decatur's most tireless community and youth advocates, Rev. Green was an active participant with the Boy Scouts of America. He initiated the One Church, and the One School program that has become accepted in the Decatur Public Schools. He was also an advocate of the One Church, One Child program

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

which encouraged church members to become adoptive or foster parents for children in need. He was also a member of the Decatur Anti-Violence Task Force and worked to curb the devastating influence of gang activity on the youth of Decatur. He has also worked very closely with the Human Rights Commission, NAACP, and the public schools. He was a dedicated pastor at the Trinity CME church for 14 years, and while leading the church he also was president of the Ministerial Alliance and a member of the Decatur Interfaith Union.

It is clear that the Rev. Dr. Eugene Joseph Bert Green was an exceptional man and leader and he will be missed by all who knew and respected his life and work. His passing was a great loss not only for his family and the City of Decatur, but for all people who strive to make the world a better place for all mankind. He will be sorely missed, but never forgotten.

TRIBUTE TO RAYMOND C. FISHER

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 8, 1999

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a constituent and a truly outstanding member of this Administration, Raymond C. Fisher. Mr. Fisher was selected as the 1999 Distinguished Alumnus at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Public service has been a hallmark of Ray Fisher's distinguished career that was recognized by UCSB. During his 30-year legal career, he has also served as president of the Los Angeles City Civil Service Commission, Deputy General Counsel to the Christopher Commission, and chair of the Los Angeles Police Commission. Mr. Fisher's dedication to practicing law in the public's interest is especially reflected in his service as a special assistant to the Governor of California, and as past president of the Constitutional Rights Foundation.

His lifetime of public service was recognized in a ceremony on February 20th, yet his work continues. Ray Fisher is now serving as an Associate Attorney General, and his office oversees a broad range of divisions, including antitrust, civil rights, legal counsel, and taxation. The Justice Department is well served by both his character and his concern for the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, I ask you to join me and the University of California at Santa Barbara in celebrating Raymond Fisher's distinguished legal and public service career. We look forward to his continued leadership role at Justice for many years to come.

A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE JOHN MEYER, DEVOTED TO GOD, FAMILY, AND COUNTRY

HON. CARRIE P. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 8, 1999

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the late John Meyer of Maryland on the tenth anniversary of his death in March, 1989. Mr. Meyer shared an interest that I hold

close, that of the welfare of America's aging veterans.

As an employee of many years' standing at the Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen's Home on Harewood Road in Washington, D.C., Mr. Meyer's compassion and quiet, hard work earned him the friendship and respect of the veterans. Their bereavement at Mr. Meyer's tragic death on March 24 at age 26 after an automobile accident was expressed in a touching manner. The veterans arranged to attend Mr. Meyer's funeral by the busloads. The Easter Monday funeral service overflowed with family, friends, and flowers.

John Meyer also worked at the United States Department of Agriculture's Research Farm in Beltsville, Maryland, where he was a valued employee. Mr. Meyer was the proud father of his daughter, Angela Grace; an attentive husband to his wife, Jayne; a beloved son of his parents, Angela and Jacob Meyer; and a devoted brother to James and Donald. He also was survived by his loving grandmothers, Rose Zerega and Eloise Kramer; and by his aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends, who treasure his happy memory.

John Meyer lived the ethos of devotion to God, family, and country. His example of solid American citizenship has left an indelible impression on those who knew him.

A TRIBUTE TO WAWONA FROZEN FOODS

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 8, 1999

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Wawona Frozen Foods, recipient of the 1998 Baker, Peterson & Franklin Ag Business Award.

Wawona Frozen Foods is an organization whose achievements and impacts have significantly contributed to the Ag industry and the Central Valley. The Baker, Peterson & Franklin Ag Business Award honors a service or product-related agribusiness or farming entity, with headquarters in the central San Joaquin Valley. The Award recipient is selected by a committee representing the AgFRESNO Advisory Board, National Ag Marketing Association and the Agriculture department at Baker, Peterson & Franklin.

Wawona Frozen Foods grows and processes California freestone peaches and strawberries into fresh frozen fruit products and baked fruit pastries. From a modest beginning 35 years ago, with 60 part-time employees the company has grown to 150 full-time and 1,200 seasonal processing facility to three state-of-the-art facilities. Annual revenue has grown 40 fold, now exceeding \$40 million annually. Beginning as a supplier to solely food manufacturers, Wawona has grown their sales in other markets including food service distributors, restaurant chains, retail and warehouse stores, school food service and the USDA school lunch program.

Wawona Frozen Foods is America's largest processor of California freestone peaches, shipping over 65 million pounds of the 110 million pound industry-wide crop of 80% of the entire national frozen production. The growth in sales of frozen peaches has a vital and positive impact on the entire freestone peach

industry and makes the total peach marketing program more stable while contributing to the potential of higher prices for fresh market peaches.

Wawona Frozen Foods is an exceptional corporate citizen. Its officers and employees participate in and financially support many community activities. Wawona is involved with the Clovis Unified School Foundation, Valley Children's Hospital, St. Agnes Hospital, Valley Teen Ranch and the National Hispanics Scholarship Fund, just to name a few. All of the Wawona principals are graduates of California State University, Fresno, and major grants have been given to the CSUF Ag and Food Science Departments as a commitment of their support. The company has also been a leader in state and national organizations such as the California Tree Fruit Association, National Restaurant Association and the American Frozen Foods Institute, of which Wawona's CEO is president emeritus on the board of directors.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize Wawona Frozen Foods as the recipient of the Baker, Peterson & Franklin Ag Business Award. The Central Valley can be proud of the fine work done by this outstanding local company. I invite all of my colleagues to join me in wishing Wawona Frozen Foods many years of continued success.

TRIBUTE TO MR. AND MRS. JOE E. PALMER ON THEIR 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

HON. DAVID D. PHELPS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 8, 1999

Mr. PHELPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. and Mrs. Joe E. Palmer of Herrin, IL, on the occasion of their fiftieth wedding anniversary. The Palmers were married on Feb. 26, 1949 in Herrin, where they lived, worked and raised a large family with 10 children, 23 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren. Joe and Dora were exceptional role models and they worked hard to provide their children with a Christian home. All ten of their children received college degrees, and some went on to graduate school. Joe worked for and retired from the Maytag Corporation and Dora was a homemaker. Since retirement both have enjoyed gardening and spending time with their family. Once again, I am pleased to have this opportunity to congratulate the Palmers, and I would like to wish them and their family many more happy years.

TRIBUTE TO AMY PAGE OF GIRL SCOUT TROOP 395

HON. SPENCER BACHUS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 8, 1999

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to salute an outstanding young woman who has been honored with the Girl Scout Gold Award by the Cahaba Girl Scout Council in Birmingham, Alabama. She is Amy Page of Girl Scout Troop 395. She has been honored for earning the highest achievement award in