

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

YEAR 2000 ACT

HON. JAMES A. BARCIA

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 22, 1999

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Year 2000 Act. Everyone in this House is aware of the Year 2000 computer problem and the federal government's effort to fix its computer systems. The Subcommittee on Technology, of which I am the Ranking Member, has taken the lead in holding hearings on the Y2K issue. We have spent a lot of time reviewing Federal efforts and promoting companies sharing information on the Y2K problem. However, there are several gaps in our Y2K efforts, the intent of this legislation is to fill in these gaps. This bill has six very specific goals: (1) to raise consumer awareness and to create a consumer Y2K checklist; (2) to raise small and medium-sized businesses Y2K awareness and create a Y2K self-assessment checklist for the Nation's small and medium-sized companies; (3) to ensure that Federal agencies have worked with outside entities to ensure that all date sensitive data exchanges are Year 2000 compliant; (4) require a report to Congress on the economic implications to the United States of the global Y2K problem; (5) raise Y2K awareness in the health care sector and disseminate a list of Y2K compliant biomedical devices and other health care equipment that could lead to life threatening situations due to a Y2K related failure; and (6) raise Y2K awareness in the water utility sector and disseminate a list of Y2K compliant products and equipment used in key elements of the water utility sector.

With this information in hand, I believe that the public and Congress will be able to make the right decisions and avoid the panic which is so often predicted in articles about the Y2K computer crisis.

During the Subcommittee on Technology's hearing on the Y2K issue, I have constantly been struck by the lack of specific information on the exact nature and magnitude of the problem. Other than federal agencies, witnesses have been able to provide little more than anecdotal evidence and generalities. However, there is agreement that computer hardware and software, as well as embedded microchips found in many consumer products could possibly fail as a result of the Year 2000 computer problem. In talking with my constituents, I find that they are generally aware of the problem, but do not know how it impacts them nor do they know what specific actions they can take to minimize the impact of the Y2K problem in their lives. This bill requires the Undersecretary for Technology at the Department of Commerce to develop a Year 2000 self-assessment checklist for consumers; provide a resource center for consumers of all federal government Year 2000 computer problem resources; a listing of all GSA approved Year 2000 compliant products; and conduct a series of public awareness announcements

and seminars on the impact of the Y2K problem on consumer products and services. These goals are consistent with the recommendations made by witnesses who have appeared before the Subcommittee on Technology.

The situation facing small and medium-sized businesses mirrors that of consumers. The Nation's more than 381,000 small- and medium-sized manufacturers contribute more than half of the country's total value in manufacturing. However, as of 1998, 75 percent of all companies with fewer than 2000 employees had not yet started Year 2000 remediation projects.

Small and medium-sized companies are an integral part of the business supply chain. Increasingly, they rely on computers for their manufacturing operations, for accounting and billing practices, and to meet just-in-time order and delivery concepts. To assist our small- and medium-sized manufacturers meet the Y2K challenge, this bill requires that the National Institute of Standards and Technology and highly successful Manufacturing Extension Partnership program to work with the Small Business Administration to define the Year 2000 problem and develop best practices to attack the problem, develop a Year 2000 self-assessment checklist, and list all federal government Y2K resources including the General Services listing of approved Y2K compliant products.

Federal agencies make thousands of date sensitive data exchanges on a daily basis. These data exchanges include social security information, Medicare, information related to the air traffic control system, financial transactions, and the list goes on and on. Consequently, as federal computer systems are converted to process year 2000 dates, the associated data exchanges must also be made Year 2000 compliant. The testing and implementation of Year 2000 compliant data exchanges must be closely coordinated with exchange partners. Agencies must not only test its own software, but effective testing includes end-to-end testing, and agreed upon date formats with all exchange partners. If these Year 2000 data exchanges do not function properly, data will not be exchanged between systems or invalid data could cause receiving computer systems to malfunction. In other words, regardless of federal efforts to fix its own computer systems, unless their data exchange partners have Y2K compliant systems the computer network as a whole will fail. A recent GAO report "Year 2000 Computing Crisis: Actions Needed on Electronic Data Exchanges" found that federal agencies had made little progress in addressing this data exchange issue. The GAO made specific recommendations for federal government actions. This legislation is based on the GAO's recommendations and would help ensure that federal agencies address the data exchange issue fully. The legislation requires agencies to establish a test schedule with data exchange partners, notify exchange partners of the implications and consequences of non-compliance, de-

velop contingency plans and report to Congress quarterly on their progress.

The bill also requires Secretary of Commerce to report to Congress on the international implications of the Y2K problem and its potential impact on the U.S. economy. Again, we lack specific information on how other countries are addressing the Y2K issue. However, the international implications are profound, disruptions in international financial services, international air travel, international telecommunications, and international commercial transactions to name a few. However, it is nearly impossible to make contingency plans in the face of little and inadequate information. And as I mentioned earlier, it is the lack of information that leads to panic and uncertainty. I believe that such an international assessment could be a guide post for federal and private sector actions.

The Senate Committee on the Year 2000 recently released their report on the extent of the Y2K problem. In that report was a sectoral analysis that specifically recognized the significant potential for Y2K problems within the health care and water utility sectors. In an effort to address these findings, this legislation requires the development of a Y2K self-assessment checklist, an explanation of the problem and identification of best practices for resolution, and a list of Federal Government Y2K computer problem information resources for each sector.

Additionally, this bill requires the Food and Drug Administration, in consultation with the Veterans' Administration, to develop a list of biomedical devices and other products used by health care providers that are both Y2K compliant and or could lead to life-threatening situations due to a Y2K related failure. Also included will be an indication of whether the Year 2000 compliance of such equipment has been independently verified. Similarly, the Environmental Protection Agency is required to list the Y2K compliant products and equipment used in key elements of the water utility sector, including whether the Y2K compliance of these products has been independently verified.

In closing, this legislation is one of many important issues that need to be addressed. Nevertheless, I believe the most important element of any Y2K strategy is informing consumers and medium-sized businesses on how the Year 2000 computer problem could affect them. The public, as well as those sectors particularly sensitive to Y2K problems, need to know what questions to ask and how to determine their Y2K readiness. I am confident this legislation provides the necessary framework to accomplish this and I urge its swift passage.

● 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.

A TRIBUTE TO PARK SLOPE
NEIGHBORHOOD FAMILY CENTER

HON. ANTHONY D. WEINER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 22, 1999

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to invite my colleagues to pay tribute to the Park Slope Neighborhood Family Center on the occasion of its Annual Dinner Dance.

This event is not only a festive happening, it is a chance for all of us to celebrate and pay tribute to a group of individuals who embody the spirit of community service. This year's honorees truly represent the best of what our community has to offer.

The Park Slope Neighborhood Family Center (PSNFC) is home to five community organizations serving thousands of south Brooklyn residents. PSNFC was founded in 1983 by a small group of neighborhood residents in response to the need for safe, affordable space shared by local community organizations. By placing a variety of social service programs under one roof, PSNFC encourages the creation of innovative intergovernmental and multicultural programming while answering the interrelated needs of many agency clients.

Martin Gomez serves as the Executive Director of the Brooklyn Public Library, the nation's fifth-largest library system. He is an elected member of the American Library Association Executive Board and a board member of the Metropolitan New York Library Council. He established the Library's first foundation board to raise private funds for library programs and was instrumental in creating an on-line wide-area network providing free public access to the Internet at Brooklyn's 60 public libraries. With a lifelong commitment to encouraging diversity in libraries, Martin has designed programs for the California Literacy Campaign and its Minority Services Recruitment and Scholarship program.

Tupper Thomas serves as the administrator of Prospect Park where she is responsible for the ongoing operation of the park. In addition to overseeing the ongoing restoration of Prospect Park, Tupper Thomas has been instrumental in increasing the park's usership through special events, public information and outreach programs. Tupper Thomas also serves as the president of the Prospect Park Alliance, an organization dedicated to funding activities and services for park visitors, landscape projects, and selected capital projects.

Judith D. Zuk serves as the president and chief executive officer of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. An horticulturist with experience as an educator, researcher, and administrator, she heads one of America's preeminent public gardens. With members in every State and 52 foreign countries, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden attracts 800,000 visitors annually. She is active in a number of professional and civic organizations and serves as the chairman of the Cultural Institutions Group. Judith also serves on the boards of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, Chase Manhattan Regional Advisory Board, Greenwood Cemetery, New York City Street Tree Consortium, and the New York City Water Conservation District.

All of today's honorees have long been known as innovators and beacons of good will to all those with whom they come into contact. Through their dedicated efforts, they have

each helped to improve my constituents' quality of life. In recognition of their many accomplishments on behalf of my constituents, I offer my congratulations on their being honored by the Park Slope Neighborhood Family Center.

PARTIAL HOSPITALIZATION SERVICES IN INTEGRITY ACT OF 1999

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 22, 1999

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I are proud to introduce the "Partial Hospitalization Services Integrity Act of 1999" that will enact much-needed reforms to Medicare's partial hospitalization benefit.

Partial hospitalization is an important component of Medicare. In-patient hospitalization for psychiatric treatment is expensive and disruptive to the person's life. Therefore, Congress created partial hospitalization as a cost-effective alternative for treating seniors with acute psychological disorders. The program allows them to live at home and receive intensive treatment.

Unfortunately, many dishonest individuals have abused the partial hospitalization program and defrauded the government of millions of dollars. On October 5, 1998, the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General issued a report that exposed egregious waste, fraud, and abuse by many partial hospitalization providers. The report quickly gained national attention. Later that evening, NBC News featured the report in their "Fleeing of America" segment.

The results of that audit represent a clear case of greed and fraud committed by dishonest mental health care providers. For example, the total program costs increased by approximately 482 percent between 1993 and 1997, from \$15 to \$349 million per year! More distressing is the fact that much of this was squandered on unreasonable and unnecessary services, given to people who were not eligible, and provided by organization that were not certified to provide the services.

The bill that I am introducing will correct the conditions that lead to the abuse of the program. The Partial Hospitalization Services Integrity Act of 1999 clarifies the current definition of the organizations that can provide partial hospitalization services and includes clear civil monetary penalties for fraudulent claims. The legislation represents a broad consensus of interested parties that include the Administration, representatives of qualified partial hospitalization providers, and patient advocates.

It is time to act quickly and decisively to preserve a valuable service and to stop the waste, fraud, and abuse perpetrated by unscrupulous operators.

HONORING ALL THE PEOPLE WHO OFFERED ASSISTANCE DURING THE AMTRAK TRAIN TRAGEDY IN BOURBONNAIS

HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 22, 1999

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Kankakee County Sheriff Tim Bukowski;

Bourbonnais Mayor, Grover Brooks; Bourbonnais Police Chief, Joseph Beard, Bourbonnais Fire Chief, Mike Harshbarger; employees of Riverside Medical Center; employees of Provena St. Mary's Hospital; paid and volunteer firefighters and emergency personnel; employees of Birmingham Steel; employees of Farm & Fleet; all policemen and firemen in Kankakee County; as well as all those who reside in the Kankakee River Valley for their acts of heroism during the recent Amtrak train tragedy in Bourbonnais.

The Village of Bourbonnais is known as the "Village of Friendship". The Village as well as the entire Kankakee River Valley has proven worthy of the title. Both local and national news accounts were filled with stories of heroism and acts of kindness. The world was watching and Bourbonnais arose to the occasion. People of all ages rose to the occasion. Half a million pennies collected by Kankakee County school children during the past year even helped save lives. The pennies were recently used to purchase a night vision camera which was used to help see in the night through the fumes and smoke from the wreckage.

I have been told of small acts of kindness throughout the Kankakee River Valley. Anyone who took part in the rescue effort would not be allowed to pay for their own meals in any area restaurant. Food, clothing, and toy donations poured into the local hospitals for over 8 hours. Offers of assistance came from all surrounding communities and counties. Even local teenagers donated blood to the Red Cross.

The Village of Bourbonnais was incorporated in 1875, nearly two centuries after French explorer Cavalier de La Salle established contact with the Potawatomi Indians who lived there. According to Village history, the town takes its name for an early pioneer, Francois Bourbonnais, Sr., a French-Canadian Fur trapper who set up a trading post in 1830. Today, Bourbonnais is a growing community and was named by Reader's Digest as one of the best communities in the United States in which to raise a family.

Mr. Speaker, I urge this body to identify and recognize other towns and villages in their own districts whose actions have so greatly proven to be a community which works together during both good and bad times.

AND THE WINNER IS, ANGELIN BASKARIN

HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 22, 1999

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, while our nation continues to grieve over the school tragedy in Littleton, Colo., I'd like to turn our attention for a moment to a middle school student from Galveston, Texas, who is already making contributions toward advancing our understanding of the aging process at age 13.

All too often we only hear about the problem children in our society. As a former high school teacher, I know that there are hundreds of kind, intelligent, and productive students, like Angelin Baskarin, who are working hard to become the next generation of scientists, professors, and even Members of Congress.