

be missed. Teachers like Mr. Selke, who give tirelessly to their students and inspire great success, are a rare breed.

It is with this, Mr. Speaker, that I say thank you to Mr. Selke and wish him the best of luck as he begins his much deserved retirement.

INTRODUCTION OF "MEDICARE HOSPITAL CAPITAL EFFICIENCY PROMOTION ACT OF 1999," 11TH IN A SERIES OF MEDICARE MODERNIZATION BILLS

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 14, 1999

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I am today introducing the 11th in a series of bills to modernize Medicare, obtain long-term savings, and make the program more efficient, without forcing beneficiaries to make radical changes.

The bill would give Medicare authority to reduce capital payments 25% to hospitals in areas where we have more than an average number of beds and the occupancy rate is below the national average. Exceptions would be made if capital payments to these hospitals were used to merge or downsize or if the Secretary determined that special circumstances required a capital expansion.

Mr. speaker, a major force making American health care the most expensive in the world is that we have way, way too many hospital beds. In California, occupancy has been below 50% for years. Throughout the nation, many hospitals are at 20 to 30% occupied. No one would run a modern factory at these occupancy rates-and certainly no banker would willy-nilly put more capital into such an industry. Yet the taxpayer consistently makes billions of dollars a year in automatic payments for capital to the nation's hospitals.

Dr. John Weinberg of Dartmouth has just published the third in what is called The Dartmouth Atlas. He provides overwhelming documentation that in health, it is not so much demand, as supply that is driving the cost of the health care system. In other words, "build it, and they shall come." Build a hospital, and doctors will find a way to use it. The more hospital beds available in a community, the more likely you will die in a hospital instead of at home, in a hospice, or in a nursing home. Yet we know that the public does not prefer a high-tech, prolonged death. At the moment of death, most people would like to be a familiar setting surrounded by family-not hooked up to a half dozen tubes in a hospital ICU.

Capital payments also are used to proliferate fancy new services-rather than asking that expensive services (such as transplant or open heart surgeries) be concentrated at hospitals which do a large volume of operations and which have better outcomes. The data is overwhelming that the more operations a hospital does, the less likely they are to kill you. In other words, practice makes perfect, or at least very good. Yet in California, for example, we have about 130 hospitals doing open heart surgeries. Setting up an open heart program costs, I am told, about \$10 million. Yet some of these heart centers only do 3 or 5 operations a month! They may be good for a local hospital's prestige, but they are almost a prime facie malpractice waiting for a jury.

Medicare and taxpayers, again, should not be paying for this proliferation of local prestige: we are killing people through bad outcomes when we allow every Tom, Dick, and Harry hospital to do sophisticated operations.

My bill is a simple proposal: where we have to many beds and they are going unoccupied, the taxpayer can save 25% in reduced hospital capital payments.

RECOGNIZING THE OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE RAGIN CAJUN AMATEUR BOXING CLUB

HON. CHRISTOPHER JOHN

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 14, 1999

Mr. JOHN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a very special group of young athletes. These young boxers, along with their coach Beau Williford, comprise Lafayette, Louisiana's Ragin Cajun Amateur Boxing Club.

Over the Memorial Day district work period, I had the privilege of visiting their gym and witnessing first-hand the remarkable program that Mr. Williford leads. Everyday after school, Mr. Williford's gym becomes a training ground for the next generation of boxers. He not only provides these youngsters with a place to train, but he also provides the life instruction and guidance that many of these kids so desperately need. My experience at his gym convinced me of just how vital the need for such programs is in communities throughout the United States. In fact, research has shown that students who participate in after-school programs exhibit higher levels of achievement in reading, math, and other subjects. These students also exhibit improved grades, reading ability, attendance levels, homework completion, and increased graduation and enrollment in post secondary education.

In 1982, Beau Williford opened Beau Williford's Boxing Academy and began the Ragin Cajun Amateur Boxing Club. Mr. Williford's Boxing Academy soon became a place where young people could productively spend their after school time under the wing of an inspirational coach. Indeed, nine gold medals were recently won by young athletes who competed at the 1999 Junior Olympics and Under 19 competitions in Natchitoches, LA, on May 14-16, 1999.

Beau Williford deserves special acknowledgement for his devotion to the physical and personal development of the youngsters he takes in. A former boxer and trainer of six boxing champions, Mr. Williford offers these kids a place where they can relieve stress through exercise while socializing with others their age. Several of the young people he trains were troubled youths without motivation, discipline, or direction. Under Mr. Williford's guidance, their lives have been turned around. Those who were once making failing grades in school are now making straight A's. In addition, the parents of these young athletes claim that not only are their children doing great as boxers, but they are doing much better as children. They are more disciplined and have gained a sense of self-respect.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to individually recognize these outstanding youths who have worked hard to earn the title of "champion." Please join me in extending a warm voice of

recognition to Jared Hidalgo, a sixteen year-old Carencro High School junior who won the 178-pound division gold medal; to Harold Breau, a seventeen year-old Northside High School junior who won the 165-pound division gold medal; to Mark Megna, an eight year-old Woodvale Elementary School student who won the Gold in the 60-pound bantam division; to John Ross Prudhomme, an eleven-year old Westminster Academy student who won the Gold in the 85-pound junior division; to Jacob Carriere, an eleven year-old Edgar Martin Middle School student who won the Gold in the 65-pound junior division; to Clay Johnson, an eleven year-old S.J. Montgomery student who won the Gold in the 95-pound junior division; to Michael Carriere, a fourteen year-old Edgar Martin Middle School student who won the Gold in the 156-pound intermediate division; to Darren Johnson, a fourteen year-old Lawtell Middle School student who won the Gold in the super heavy weight intermediate division; and to Wesley Williford, a fourteen year-old Lafayette Middle School student who won the Gold in the 156-pound senior division.

These youngsters are guided by an outstanding group of coaches who also deserve our recognition. In addition to the guidance of Beau Williford, Coaches Gene Hidalgo, Walter Dugas, Mark Peters, Sean McGraw, Lenny Johnson, Harold Breau, Sr., and Deidre Gogarty work with these kids on a daily basis. Along with team manager Christian Williford, this outstanding group of adults is committed to the direction and success of these young athletes.

The hard work and discipline that Mr. Williford and his team inspire in these young people not only produces athletic growth, but personal growth as well. Studies have shown that sustained positive interactions with adults contribute to the overall development of young people and their achievement in school. At a time in our country when youth violence is on the rise and we are searching for answers, Mr. Williford and the Ragin Cajun Amateur Boxing Club have found their own solution. He and his young boxers were an inspiration to me, and in recognizing them today I hope that his story will inspire others to take an active role in the lives of our youth.

HONORING KENNETH C. BAKER

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 14, 1999

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to recognize and honor the accomplishments of a man who has given much to the teaching profession, and even to his many students. On June 30, friends, colleagues, and family will gather to pay tribute to Mr. Kenneth Baker of Flint, Michigan, who is retiring from the Flint Community Schools after 34 years of dedicated service to the community.

As a former school teacher myself, I understand how important it is for the minds of our Nation's children to be influenced by positive, uplifting role models. I am happy that Kenneth Baker lives up to this ideal. A graduate of the University of Toledo, and Eastern Michigan University, Kenneth began his long and rewarding career with Flint Community Schools in 1965. He served as a science teacher at