

Project Management at Caltrans District 8 in San Bernardino, a post he held since 1988. In that capacity, he was responsible for directing a professional engineering staff in the development, design and delivery of highway projects totaling in excess of \$100 million a year. Sassaman was a member of a team that helped develop the project management concept at Caltrans, and later helped implement the system in District 8. The district was the first one in the state to use "single hat" project managers to streamline the process of delivering transportation improvements. He also was a facilitator at the project management academies that taught the system to Caltrans supervisors.

Among Sassaman's other career highlights are supervising the design of the complex Simi Valley/San Diego Freeway interchange—now named the Ronald Reagan Freeway 118/405—in the San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles.

Sassaman was born in Neptune, NJ, but grew up in Phillipsburg, on the Pennsylvania border. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from Lafayette College in Easton, PA, and a Master of Science degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Southern California. He also completed course work at California State University, Long Beach, and Mount San Antonio College in Walnut, CA, in business management. He holds a certificate in real estate from Mount San Antonio College.

Sassaman was hired at Caltrans District 7 as a junior civil engineer in July 1962; and held a variety of positions within the district over the next 26 years. They included Design Project Engineer of the 118/405 Freeway interchange; Resource Management Section Chief, Project Management Section Chief, Hydraulics Section Chief, Management Services Branch Chief; and Deputy District Director for Administration.

Sassaman is registered as a Professional Engineer in California (Civil), and is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Project Management Institute.

There are few tasks as monumental in southern California as overseeing our regional freeway system with a commitment to responding to local needs and concerns, and for his dedication to better serving the commuting public of southern California as well as Caltrans employees, I ask all Members of Congress to join me in congratulating Bob Sassaman upon his retirement.

MENTAL HEALTH PARITY NOW!

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 6, 2002

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, The National Mental Health Association's, NMHA, powerful vision for our country is to be a just, humane and healthy society in which all people are accorded respect, dignity and the opportunity to achieve their full potential free from stigma and prejudice.

Today, June 6, 2002, Americans are rallying on Capitol Hill to send Members of Congress a clear and unified message: Mental Health Parity Now! We must do more than simply hear what they are saying; we must persevere until we make it a legal reality.

Passage of a Mental Health Parity Bill would be a major step toward realizing the vision of the NMHA. Specifically, it is my hope that this Congress will pass the Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act of 2002, which will address the critical need of assuring that insurance coverage for physical ailments and mental ailments are comparable. Mental illness is real and widespread, but fortunately it is often very treatable and manageable.

Unfortunately, a parity amendment to the fiscal year 2002 spending bill for the Department of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education, which was passed by the Senate, failed in conference on a party-line vote. The amendment would have closed the loopholes of 1996 Mental Health Parity Act and given true parity to the American people. Instead, Congress extended the existing flawed mental health parity provision up until December 31, 2003. This leaves this important issue in pressing need of a resolution.

Over 54 million people in the United States experience some form of mental illness in their lifetime, but many go without the much-needed treatment a mental health professional could provide. In fact, almost half of the people of our nation with severe mental illness never seek or receive treatment. This in large part is due to stigma.

Throughout our nation's history, we have viewed mental illness with ignorance, fear and misunderstanding. We would not stand by while insurance companies put up barriers to cancer treatments, nor should we turn our backs on those suffering from mental health problems.

Many health insurers opposed to parity laws are concerned that overall health care costs will be significantly increased, due in part to the fact that treatment is sometimes more expensive and longer lasting than many physical ailments. However, access to mental health care often reduces medical claims for physical illness.

Recent studies show that full parity can be implemented without causing significant cost increases for managed care. In states that have enacted parity laws, many consumers use mental health care more efficiently. In the great state of Maryland, after a small rise of less than one percentage point in the first year of parity, mental health costs held steady in year two and declined in year three.

As millions of suffering Americans go without medical assistance, it costs the nation upwards of \$150 billion each year. Vital human capital is lost and medical bills skyrocket as ailments worsen until even more expensive management is inevitable. The most damaging effect, however, is the pain and suffering that untreated individuals and their loved ones must endure.

The events and the aftermath of September 11 have exemplified the need to provide mental healthcare to all sectors of the population, including our youngest generation. Children, who are exposed to violent and threatening experiences, such as the September 11th attacks, may need special attention in order to heal emotionally.

If a child with a mental health problem is left untreated, the results can be devastating. Victims may repeatedly relive a traumatic event, which can cause anxiety and depression, impair concentration and learning and ultimately perpetuate a cycle of aggressive or violent behavior.

This vicious cycle can be lessened by strengthening families through programs and understanding, breaking down misconceptions of mental illness and providing people access to mental health professionals and vital treatment. All of these factors will help give millions of Americans the opportunity to recover and live healthy and productive lives.

I am proud that Congresswoman ROSA DELAURO and I were successful in securing \$20 million in funding for fiscal year 2002 for the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative, administered through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration. Presently, we are working to secure an additional \$50 million for fiscal year 2003 to continue this highly-regarded program.

I would like to commend the National Mental Health Association and the other organizations and individuals here today, who are pushing for mental health parity. This call for parity in the coverage of costs for mental and physical ailments through insurance programs merits our serious attention. Let us make their vision a reality in the 107th, Congress.

HONORING PATRICIA BARELA RIVERA

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 6, 2002

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the District Director of the Small Business Administration, SBA, in Colorado, Patricia Barela Rivera.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., once said that the true measure of a person's character is how they handle themselves in times of adversity. By this gauge, Patricia Barela Rivera's character is worthy of our admiration.

Ms. Barela Rivera certainly knows a great deal about overcoming adversity, shrugging off disappointment and competing against unfavorable odds. She built a successful business in Colorado when Latina entrepreneurs were few and far between. She volunteered countless hours on behalf of minority non-profits, and eventually became the Director of the Governor's Advocate Corps in Colorado, where she swiftly built a reputation for inspirational management and was recognized as a leading voice on behalf of diversity in the Romer administration.

Tragically, just weeks ago, Ms. Rivera's condominium burned down just days before the SBA's biggest event of the year. Ms. Rivera lost her home and all of her possessions. This kind of blow would level many, but not Patricia Barela Rivera. She picked herself up, bought something to wear, attended the event and served gracefully as the Master of Ceremonies. That kind of dedication is worth our attention. At a time when many question the determination and quality of public servants, I find Ms. Barela Rivera's example inspiring.

Reflecting on the fire, she reasserted her belief that "everything happens for a reason and eventually shows itself to be something good". On her choice of attending the event in the midst of her personal chaos she said simply, "I had to be here. It's about strength. It's about surviving when we have devastation in our lives."

Patricia Barela Rivera, or "PBR" as she is affectionately known to her friends, is clearly a