

Both Europe and Greater China have the economic mass required to anchor the world monetary system to their currencies, as the UK once did.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I very much regret that I was unavoidably detained and unable to vote on rollcall No. 278, the motion to commit S. 2578, on June 27, 2002. Had I been present, you may be assured that I would have cast my vote in opposition. My beeper did not work.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS RESEARCH CORPORATION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2002

HON. STEVE BUYER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the "Department of Veterans Affairs Research Corporation Accountability Act of 2002."

In 1988 Congress enacted Public Law 100-322, the Veterans' Benefits and Services Act, which included a provision that gave the VA the authority to establish nonprofit research corporations. This was done to provide a flexible funding mechanism for the conduct of approved research at medical centers. Prior to giving VA this authority any funding received from private sources such as pharmaceutical companies was placed in a General Post fund. However, it became virtually impossible to track the funding stream. There was no way to identify the source of the funding, nor how the money was being spent. The impetus behind establishing the research corporations was to create an accounting mechanism whereby the VA would submit to Congress an annual report on the number and location of corporations established and the amount of contributions made to each such corporation. Unfortunately, these reports have turned out to be nothing more than ledger sheets with numbers with little or no detail.

Earlier this year, my Subcommittee held a hearing on VA Research Corporations and we heard from the VA's Assistant Inspector General for Auditing that during the years 1994 through 1997, that his office published three reports that identified the need for stricter accountability and oversight with regard to the administration of funds by the Veterans Health Administration research corporations. For instance, in 1994, the IG audit of a million dollars of the \$3.6 million in expenditures spent at three research corporations and identified approximately \$625,000 that was spent on salaries of medical residents, staff travel not clearly related to research or administration. Funds were also spent for non-research related conferences, honorary gifts, awards, entertainment, other than non-research expenditures. This one but one example of how money can be misspent when in this case the corporation is not held accountable.

Under current law, the VA nonprofit research corporations are required to provide Congress with an annual report summarizing their activities and accomplishments. These reports have turned out to be nothing more than bare bones financial statements. The legislation I have introduced today amends section 7366 of Title 38 of the United States Code to require each VA corporation submit a detailed statement that includes the corporation's operations, activities, and accomplishments during the preceding year to the Secretary of the VA by not later than March 1 of each year. The report should include the amount of funds received along with the source of funding; and an itemized accounting of all disbursements. Those corporations with funding in excess of \$300,000 must obtain an audit of the corporation for that year, corporations with funding totaling less than \$300,000 must obtain an audit every three years. These audits must be conducted by an independent auditor and shall be performed in accordance with generally accepted Government auditing standards.

The VA's Inspector General will be required to randomly review audits to determine whether or not they were carried out in accordance with the auditing standards outlined in the legislation. My bill would also extend the life of the corporations by providing authority to establish such corporations until December 31, 2006.

The VA has made tremendous contributions in the field of medical research. I think we all recognize the many accomplishments made by the VA in discovering new drug therapies and developing medical devices that have benefited not only veterans but all Americans. For instance, the VA invented the implantable cardiac pacemaker, developed the nicotine patch, performed the first successful liver transplant, and the development of the first oral vaccine for smallpox.

It is not my intention to prevent VA research from continuing to make great strides as it has in the past, but we must ensure that all research funds are directed with focus and accountability.

LYNDA SCOTT EVERETT

HON. KEVIN BRADY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a special lady who is not only a constituent, but a close personal friend, Lynda Scott Everett. On July 11, 2002, Lynda will receive the Texas Council of Community MHMR Centers' "Betty Hardwick Best of Texas Award" for her long and distinguished record of service and commitment to providing the citizens of Texas with the best possible mental health, mental retardation, and substance abuse services. Lynda is only the second person to receive this distinguished recognition.

Concerned about the quality of care her son, Andy, who suffers from autism and mental retardation, was receiving, Lynda became a tireless voice for those who could not speak out for themselves. She began her volunteerism for the mentally disabled as a consultant for the Tri-County MHMR in Montgomery County, Texas. She was then ap-

pointed to the Board of Trustees in 1989 and continued her fight for better services, stronger rights, and additional funds for more effective medications for those who are disabled. Lynda's presence was quickly felt as she attended hearings, meetings and conventions in order to improve the lives of individuals with mental disabilities, as well as their families. Her work expanded her cause across the state of Texas when she was appointed by Governor George W. Bush to the Texas Board of Mental Health and Mental Retardation in 1999.

As part of Lynda's efforts to help the mentally disabled, she also has been a member of the Texas State Autism Task Force, served on the Montgomery County United Way Campaign Cabinet, as a Board member of the Texas Council of Community MHMR Centers and the Mental Health Association in Texas, as well as being president and co-founder of the Citizens for the Developmentally Disabled.

While Lynda was also a recipient of the Montgomery County Women of Distinction Award from 1997-1999, I am personally grateful for her role as a key, and indispensable member of my first U.S. congressional campaign committee.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Lynda Scott Everett on her hard work and dedication to the mentally and physically disabled on behalf of the eighth Congressional District of Texas. She not only is an exemplary Texan, but an exemplary American with a wonderful heart and inspiring courage. As Cindy Sill, Executive Director of the Tri-County MHMR, who nominated Lynda for the "Betty Hardwick Best of Texas Award" said, "She began her journey into advocacy and volunteer work to help her son, but quickly expanded her focus and has spoken for countless individuals whose voices are often not heard or ignored. . . . She makes a difference in countless lives throughout Texas."

IN CELEBRATION OF THE 90TH BIRTHDAY OF GRACE VIGNEAU

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Grace Vigneau of East Hartford, Connecticut, who is celebrating her 90th birthday. Grace is a fellow Mayberryite whose enthusiasm and good will shine through in all she does. Her continued involvement and energy make the Energizer Bunny pale by comparison.

The impact Grace has had on our community in East Hartford is sizable and her accomplishments numerable. She was an original organizer of the Mayberry Village Social and Athletic Club and provided many years of outstanding service to the Democratic Women's Club. She is also a prime mover behind the "Golden Girls," a group of women that includes my mother who have been friends for years and remain nearly as active as they were when they first met. One of their main goals is community involvement, which Grace exemplifies. I must admit, I would not be standing here on the floor of the House today without the support of Grace and the Golden Girls.