

The perpetuation of the Disabled Veterans Tax is just one example of how we have let our veterans down. It is unconscionable that those who have fought for this country are relegated to second class status. The fact of the matter remains that when America makes a promise to those who wear the uniform, that promise should be kept. Military retirement pay is just compensation for a career of honorable service. By contrast, compensation for service-connected disability is designed to assuage the veterans' suffering, pain, and lost future earning power.

I am confident that this bill will get overwhelming support from the Members of this House, because it gives veterans some relief; however, it is not the best that we can do. I will support this bill, because it is right that we provide for the men and women who so valiantly fought for us.

That said, I cannot help but ask why those who so often wrap themselves in the American flag and the language and symbolism of patriotism for political gain refuse to be real patriots and stand up to the President's threat to veto a repeal of the Disabled Veterans Tax.

Why is it that we can spend our country deep into debt by giving tax cuts to the richest one-percent and building infrastructure in foreign lands—while at the same time creating new veterans—but we still can't find sufficient money for education, veterans' health care and an elimination of the Disabled Veterans Tax? There is too much left undone. Sadly, despite its noble goals, this bill leaves many promises unmet and that is just plain wrong. It is time to fulfill our commitment to the Nation's veterans. We can do better than this, and I hope that in the future we will do better than this.

How can America hope to retain its military might if we continually refuse to fulfill our promises to the servicemen and women who came before; the men and women who bravely served our country in its darkest hours, our Nation's veterans? Who will carry the banner of the American ideals and protect this great land, if this government lets fighting men and women fall by the wayside?

Those who fought in two World Wars, in Korea, in Vietnam, in Iraq and every conflict before and in between kept their promise to this great Nation. They served us in the name of freedom, and they served us well. The next time the opportunity to do right by our veterans presents itself, I hope that the Administration and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will not diminish the greatness of these United States but rather will ensure that their deeds match their rhetoric in helping us keep America's promise to its veterans.

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#### HONORING SSM HEALTH CARE IN WISCONSIN

### HON. TAMMY BALDWIN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 15, 2003*

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor one of the nation's leading providers of health care. The role of SSM Health Care in Wisconsin and throughout the country is deserving of a prestigious award.

SSM Health Care is being honored as one of the esteemed recipients of the 2002

Malcom Baldrige National Quality Award, the Nation's premier award for performance excellence and quality achievement given by the National Institute of Standards and Technology within the Department of Commerce. This is the first time in history a recipient has been named in the health care category.

SSM Health Care offers a wide range of medical services centered around the values of compassion, respect, excellence, stewardship, and community. We all benefit from SSM Health Care taking such an active role in our community. By engaging in great technological advances, community projects and charity care, as well as a continuous exploration into medical research, SSM Health Care has demonstrated true leadership and exceptional skill.

With the increasing aging population in Wisconsin, SSM Health Care has been an important provider of quality medical services, including acute care and nursing home facilities to my constituents. I join the National Institute of Standards and Technology as they recognize SSM Health Care with the Malcom Baldrige National Quality Award.

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#### HONORING VETERANS ON VETERANS DAY

### HON. HEATHER WILSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 15, 2003*

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, it is a tremendous honor for me to recognize and pay tribute to the men and women of New Mexico on Veterans Day who have served in the Armed Forces. This solemn occasion, commemorated by the ceremony at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial on November 11, 2003, celebrates the hearts and souls of our veterans who have chosen to make military service an enduring commitment in their lives. This commitment, borne out of a strong sense of duty and patriotism to our principles and to our citizens, has never wavered. Our service men and women have always accepted the hardships imposed on them by their responsibilities, and have been willing to meet any challenge or risk in order to see their missions accomplished. This unwavering loyalty and willingness to serve our country must be commemorated for future generations to remember, and to know that it is because of our veterans that our country continues to remain strong and free.

This Veterans Day also marks the 50th anniversary of the cessation of hostilities of the Korean War. The Korean War was fought under conditions that could only be described as brutal and harsh. Despite the difficulty of their orders, the terrain and the fighting conditions, our men and women in uniform performed with tremendous courage and dignity. Their actions during conflict stand as a testament to the strength of our Armed Forces, and our country's resolve to overcome oppression and tyranny in the world.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in celebrating these exemplary New Mexicans and the examples of heroism and courage they have displayed by their commitment to America.

#### TRIBUTE TO RON POAST

### HON. TAMMY BALDWIN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 15, 2003*

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a person who is a gifted artisan. Mr. Ron Poast is one of our nation's rare makers of the Hardanger fiddles. Mr. Poast's skill in this art has brought him nationwide acclaim.

Ron has recently been awarded the National Heritage Fellowship Award. This very prestigious award was presented to only 16 artists from across the nation.

The Hardanger fiddle is recognized as the national instrument of Norway. Norwegian cultural influences are prevalent in Mr. Poast's hometown of Black Earth, as they are in much of Wisconsin. Ron's passion for the Hardanger was shaped by his Norwegian-American parents and his grandfathers who were both fiddlers. The Hardanger fiddle has a dragonhead scroll, four bowed violin strings, and five sympathetic understrings that produce a unique droning sound. Before shipping each handcrafted fiddle that he makes, Ron carefully "plays it in" to make sure that it has the right distinctive sound. In addition to his rare talent with the Hardanger, he also makes fine banjos, violins, mandolins, and guitars.

Ron has received wide recognition for his excellence in this craft. At the national level, he was recognized by the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. The Wisconsin State Strings Museum Hall of Fame named him Master Luthier of the Year in 1992, and former Governor Tommy Thompson nominated Mr. Poast for the National Living Treasure of the United States Award. When I served in the Wisconsin State Legislature, a photograph of Mr. Poast's great craftsmanship graced the cover of the State of Wisconsin Telephone Directory, a listing of thousands of state employees and their agencies. In 2000, Ron was given the opportunity to display his beautiful instruments internationally at the Chiba People's Days festival in Makuhari, Japan.

Mr. Speaker, I join the National Endowment for the Arts in recognizing Mr. Poast's achievements and congratulate him as he accepts the National Heritage Fellowship Award.

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#### QUICK THINKING EIGHT-YEAR-OLD

### HON. HEATHER WILSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 15, 2003*

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, today I bring to your attention the heroic actions of Annalisha Labastida, an 8-year-old girl who called 911 and stayed calm while her dad had a seizure on Interstate 40.

While driving with her dad on Interstate 40, young Annalisha took action when her father had a seizure and blacked out. She maneuvered the truck to a safe stop on the side of the freeway and called 911 for help. She was able to give clear and accurate directions to the emergency operator, which allowed Albuquerque Police to respond quickly to the emergency.

Without Annalisha's quick thinking there could have been a major accident where lives

may have been lost. Instead everyone came out okay. No one ever told Annalisha what to do if her dad blacked out but she seemed to know exactly what to do to save his life. The consequences of this event could have been tragic however; Annalisha acted heroically and prevented a disaster.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to join me and all residents of New Mexico in honoring and thanking Annalisha Labastida.

CELEBRATE 50TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE ANDERSEN LIBRARY AT  
THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

**HON. TAMMY BALDWIN**

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 15, 2003*

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr Speaker, I rise today to honor and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Andersen Library at the University of Wisconsin, Whitewater. The library's tradition of excellence well deserves recognition.

Opened on February 25, 1953, the Andersen Library exemplifies the high standards of education valued by the Wisconsin state university system. Throughout its tenure, the library has served the Whitewater community, professors, and students alike in a variety of important capacities. One of the more notable among these capacities has been the library's accumulation of volumes. In 1953, the Andersen library opened its doors with 41,000 volumes. Today, the collection has grown to an impressive 2 million documents including a variety of print, audio-visual, and electronic files. It has been through this accumulation that the outstanding staff has been able to fulfill the library's mission to provide quality research, service, and teaching facilities to the Whitewater community.

Commitment to service is also well demonstrated by the library's annual reception and exhibit of works recognizing UW-Whitewater faculty and staff for their scholarship and creative achievements. Now in its fifteenth year, the program's fascinating exhibits recognize employee work in all media, including print, paint, and photograph.

The library's dedication to service and education is highlighted by the life achievements of its namesake, Harold G. Andersen. Mr. Andersen, a lifelong Whitewater resident and graduate of the class of 1917, was one of the many individuals who committed time and energy to the library's opening. In particular, Mr. Andersen helped move the collection with then-university President Robert C. Williams from the old site to the new library on what I can only imagine was a cold February day.

Perhaps the original dedication program said it best when stating that the Andersen Library was "planned with an eye to the future." Indeed, the library's past, present, and future are vital to the Whitewater community and deserve recognition.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MEDICARE  
PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICE NE-  
GOTIATION ACT

**HON. JOHN B. LARSON**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 15, 2003*

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, Hubert Humphrey once said, "The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life—the sick, the needy, and the handicapped." Right now we are failing this test.

America has over 40 million elderly and disabled Americans who rely on prescription medication to maintain their way of life. Over the past few years, prescription drug costs have skyrocketed and a prescription drug benefit plan for seniors is long overdue. Many seniors are faced with the choice of paying for the medications they need or paying for the food on their table and the heat in their home. This is not a choice they should be forced to make. The Federal Government should not be turning its back on those who have done so much for this country.

A prescription drug benefit should come under the traditional Medicare program that seniors know and are comfortable with, not placed in the hands of HMOs and private insurers. The experience with Medicare+Choice HMOs leaving Connecticut is proof that private insurers will not buy into this program, at least for an extended period, because drug costs are risky and expensive to cover and because it is not actuarially feasible for them to make a profit. But don't take my word for it, listen to the words of Chip Kahn, former president of the Health Insurance Association of America. He said, "I don't know of an insurance company that would offer a drug-only policy like that or even consider it." He went on to say that it would be like "insuring against haircuts."

Prescription drug prices are virtually unregulated in the United States, as opposed to most other nations. Internationally, seniors pay dramatically less for prescription drugs, while pharmaceutical companies are leaving other countries to enjoy the largely unregulated market in the United States. Nations like Canada are no longer developing innovative drugs. In the European Union, health care quality is diminishing and investors are wary of EU pharmaceutical companies because of the uncertainty of profits due to price controls. Thus, American seniors are shouldering the burden of pharmaceutical research and development for the entire world.

The real problem lies in the cost of prescription drugs. American seniors pay drastically more than in any other place in the world. A solution needs to be identified that reduces this burden without stifling the innovative research that sets America's health care industry apart from the rest of the world.

I believe the solution lies in an idea that is already being used by the Federal Government. Prescription drug prices have been successfully lowered for seniors enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system. The secretary leverages the power of the VA purchasing population (6.9 million peo-

ple) to negotiate substantially lower drug prices. The VA also makes heavy use of generic drugs and mail order purchasing. An investigation by the Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services in 2001 found that the VA paid, on average, 52 percent less for a list of 24 drugs than did Medicare.

The legislation I am introducing today, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act, would allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense, to negotiate the prices of prescription drugs purchased by the Federal Government and by Medicare recipients. By using this successful model, seniors will be able to realize actual savings in their prescription drug costs.

As I noted earlier, the United States is the home of major pharmaceutical innovation, due in part to its largely unregulated market. I think that it is vitally important for the United States to maintain its preeminence in this area and my legislation would require the Secretaries to take into account the goal of promoting the development of breakthrough drugs in negotiations with manufacturers. Pharmaceutical companies should be rewarded for their innovative work and their role in improving the lives of so many Americans. However, American seniors should not be the only ones shouldering this burden. I believe it is incumbent on the Federal Government to step in and provide some relief to seniors, many of who live on fixed incomes, who rely on these drugs to maintain their quality of life.

Additionally, my legislation creates an ombudsman within the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that savings are being passed along and resolve disputes between the manufacturers, sellers, and purchasers of prescription drugs. Additionally, the Secretary will be required to report to Congress regarding the effectiveness of this act in achieving reduced prices for Medicare beneficiaries.

We now have an opportunity to pass the test Vice President Humphrey handed down to us. My legislation would provide seniors with the relief they need without stifling American innovation and the creation of lifesaving medications. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation and treat those in the twilight of life with the respect they deserve.

TRIBUTE TO MOTHER TERESA OF  
CALCUTTA

**HON. TIM HOLDEN**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 15, 2003*

Mr. HOLDEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mother Teresa of Calcutta and to recognize the many contributions she has made to the world. She knew no limits in her caring for other people. She offered unconditional love while asking for nothing in return.

Born in Albania on August 26, 1910, Mother Teresa decided to become a Roman Catholic sister in 1928. She went on to create a religious order based on caring for the sick, disabled, or dying, whether it was a gutter in Calcutta, under a thatched roof in Africa, or in an apartment complex in Harlem.