

District of New York, to formally honor Rochester General Hospital of Rochester, New York, for having achieved excellence in the area of heart care, as an integrated source for patient cardiovascular needs, from prevention and education to diagnosis, treatment and recovery.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE HOUSTON
AREA NETWORK ONLINE COMMUNITY
(HAN-NET)

HON. CHRIS BELL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 4, 2003

Mr. BELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor The Houston Area Network Online Community (HAN-NET), a forum for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender activists and others committed to the cause of equality and civil rights for all. HAN-NET has been in operation since November 1998 and is ceasing operations on November 1, 2003.

Throughout its existence and operation, HAN-NET has informed, challenged and inspired the Houston GLBT community and has been extremely successful in accomplishing its mission to simplify and accelerate communication within the Houston GLBT community.

HAN-NET, a Yahoo groups "listserv," has enhanced GLBT community communication through its online announcements, news, and dialogue. HAN-NET has made pertinent information immediately accessible to its members. Information reached members directly and was packaged for quick redistribution.

The HAN-NET online community participated in several collaborative efforts including establishing community priorities and activist goals for the Houston GLBT community. I strongly support these goals which include: focusing on local and state political issues impacting the GLBT community; finding a new home and permanent funding for the Houston Lesbian and Gay Community Center; finding permanent funding for the operation and growth of the Gulf Coast Archives and Museum; building a strong corporate network group; supporting HIV education and prevention; and establishing an educational outreach program for the transgender community.

It is my sincere hope that the success of HAN-NET will inspire other community leaders to continue and grow the mission of its founders.

I know my colleagues join me in congratulating HAN-NET moderator Brandon J. Wolf and the HAN-NET online community for a job well done for Houston's GLBT community. Mr. Wolf's commitment to improved communication and outreach for the past five years has been inspiring and extremely worthwhile. I wish him great success in his continued work for the GLBT community.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LUIS V. GUTIERREZ

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 4, 2003

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent from this Chamber on Octo-

ber 29, 2003. I would like the record to show that had I been present in this Chamber, I would have voted "nay" on rollcall votes 574 and 575. I also would have voted "yea" on rollcall votes 576, 577, 578 and 579.

VETERANS HEALTH CARE FACILITIES
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT
ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. JOEL HEFLEY

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 29, 2003

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1720, the Veterans Health Care Facilities Capital Improvement Act, a two-year authorization bill that will authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out major medical facility construction projects to improve, renovate, replace, update or establish patient care facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In addition to authorizing \$168 million for fiscal year 2004 and \$600 million for fiscal year 2005 for construction of undesignated major projects, H.R. 1720 also authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a major medical facility project at the former Fitzsimons Army Medical Center site in Aurora, Colorado. H.R. 1720 would authorize this project to be carried out using a total appropriation of \$300 million.

Mr. Speaker, since the end of World War II, the Veterans Medical Center in Denver and the University of Colorado hospitals have shared expensive and specialized medical equipment and facilities, such as surgical suites and imaging equipment. This partnership has also included the sharing of expensive specialty diagnostics and medical treatments.

Due to the lack of space, inability to renovate or construct newer facilities and the cost associated with continuing to use the site, the University of Colorado Hospital moved its campus in 1995 to the former Fitzsimons Army Medical Center. This site is four and one half times the size of the existing campus and provides the school with a new medical complex for the 21st century.

As the University completes its move to Fitzsimons, a state of the art medical campus will be developed and many of the very best services in the United States will be available. For example, the Anschutz Cancer Pavilion, which is already open, is among the best institutions in the nation for all types of cancer treatment and research. In addition, the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center is well known throughout the country for its organ transplant programs.

While the move to the Fitzsimons site solved existing problems and provided future advantages for the University of Colorado Hospital, it unfortunately separated the Denver Veterans Medical Center from both the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center and the University of Colorado Hospital by eight miles. While the University of Colorado Hospital and the Veterans Medical Center continue to share medical resources, this eight mile separation creates a very real and significant barrier to quality care for veterans who receive their care at the Denver Veterans Medical Center.

Compounding this problem, a recent study commissioned by the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 19 indicated that high demand for medical services by veterans at the Denver Veterans Medical Center will continue unabated for the next 20 years. The cost of maintaining the current Denver Veterans Medical Center to satisfy minimal accreditation levels until 2020 has been estimated to be \$233 million, and estimates to rebuild the facility in 2020 are \$377 million in today's dollars.

Planning studies have shown that a move of the Denver Veterans Medical Center to the Fitzsimons campus is the most cost effective of the reasonably acceptable alternatives. Passage of H.R. 1720 will allow the Denver Veterans Medical Center to relocate to the Fitzsimons site and enjoy many of the same opportunities as the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center enjoys now. This will include, but is not limited to, solving aging facilities issues, capping new facilities cost, enhancing quality of medical care, increasing flexibility and reducing operational costs.

Veterans who have highly specialized medical needs must have easy access to the best diagnostic and treatment programs that America provides. In a medical school environment doctors tend to be better informed of the latest treatment procedures and protocols. They are closer to the "cutting edge" of modern medicine. Quality of medical care for veterans is enhanced in a medical school teaching hospital.

University physicians in specialty residency programs provide a significant amount of care in the Denver Veterans Medical Center. To date some 90 percent of the physicians that work at the VA Medical Center also work at University of Colorado Health Sciences Center and most VA doctors have faculty appointments in the Medical School. Co-locating the University of Colorado Hospital with the Denver Veterans Medical Center will allow University doctors to continue their close relationship in treating veterans. Not allowing the Denver Veterans Medical Center to move to the Fitzsimons campus is simply unacceptable and it would not be in the best interest of high quality patient care veterans deserve to abandon this partnership of over fifty years.

The new VA Medical Center at Fitzsimons site will be veteran-friendly and will provide a practicable alternative to the Denver Veterans Medical Center remaining at its current, outdated facility. The new Veterans Medical Center at Fitzsimons will be a free-standing ambulatory and inpatient care federal tower building for veterans, clearly identified as the Veterans Administration Medical Center with its own nearby parking. New veterans research facilities will be constructed and there will be a new veterans long-term care unit located next to the new 180-bed State veterans nursing home currently being constructed at the site.

This project has another group of potential beneficiaries, as well. The Department of Defense will likely construct a military treatment facility to meet the needs of Buckley Air Force Base. One attractive solution will be to meet the Buckley Air Force Base's military treatment facility requirements by participating in joint construction of a joint Denver Veterans Medical Center and a Department of Defense facility at Fitzsimons. The Air Force, as well as the Department of Defense, find this partnership to be in its long term interest. For this reason, the House-passed Fiscal Year 2004

National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included \$4 million for the Department of Defense's portion of the design and planning phase of its military treatment facility.

Additionally, recognizing the importance of cost savings and other efficiencies, the FY04 NDAA included report language directing that the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs make every effort to share health care facilities. I have included this report language below:

TITLE XXIV: DEPARTMENTS OF DEFENSE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTHCARE SHARING

The committee continues to believe that significant efficiencies are possible if the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) share health care facilities. However, the Department and VA operate only 7 joint ventures, even though the 2 departments operate approximately 240 hospitals. Such incremental progress is representative of the significant bureaucratic challenges facing the health care sharing effort. Nevertheless, the committee believes that the Department and VA should take advantage of health care sharing opportunities whenever possible.

The committee understands that the Colorado University School of Medicine has begun relocation to the site of the closed Fitzsimons Army Hospital. The Department of Veterans Affairs is currently considering replacement of the Denver VA Medical Center, a 50-year-old structure now co-located with the Colorado medical school, as a part of that relocation. The committee understands that the Department is also considering participation in the VA Medical Center's new facility. As such, the committee believes that the Department of Defense should participate in design and construction of this facility, which would provide ambulatory and acute care medical services to military personnel attached to Buckley Air Force Base. Such an approach would allow the Department to leverage construction, operations, and maintenance costs of a joint facility with VA, and eliminate the Department's need to construct an additional medical treatment facility at Buckley Air Force Base. In this particular case, a joint facility would further benefit by sharing significant assets with the Colorado University School of Medicine Facility, resulting in further savings.

With the expectation that the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs will reach an agreement on sharing design and construction costs at levels representative of their medical requirements, the committee recommends authorization of \$4,000,000 for planning and design of a DOD-VA medical treatment facility at the site of the closed Fitzsimons Army Hospital.

The funds included in the House-passed FY04 NDAA are a critical step toward ensuring that the VA and the DOD leverage their resources through joint projects that meet both of their requirements. Constructing a VA-DOD facility at Fitzsimons will serve as a model for future efforts to serve the medical needs of America's service members and veterans alike. And, I would like to point out that inpatient care for the veterans and the DOD will be located in the same federal tower as the veterans ambulatory care, but will be connected to the University of Colorado Hospital to share expensive facilities such as operating rooms and medical imaging.

Mr. Speaker, given the rising demand for veterans' health care, and the significant challenges of an aging and increasingly less-effi-

cient Denver Veterans Medical Center facility, my interest and my efforts are aimed at continuing the collaboration between the Denver Veterans Medical Center, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center and University of Colorado Hospital. I believe that the opportunity to locate the Denver Veterans Medical Center with the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center and the University of Colorado Hospital at the Fitzsimons campus will meet the demand for veteran care in the VISN 19 area through 2020 and beyond; provide significant savings in both capital and operational costs for the Department of Veterans Affairs and the taxpayer; continue to meet the Denver Veterans Medical Center commitment to education and research; and potentially create a national model for the future of veterans' care dealing with both a new concept for facilities and collaboration with long-established partners. More importantly, this move will retain veteran "identity" while also providing optimum patient care:

To date, over 45 local, state and national Veterans' Service Organizations and the American Federation of Government Employees, Local 2241, have expressed their support for this proposal. We stand committed in the goal of providing the utmost modern, comprehensive and cost-efficient medical care that we as a nation owe our veterans. And I believe that co-locating the Denver Veterans' Medical Center with the University of Colorado Hospital will achieve these goals.

Mr. Speaker, Congress has a duty to provide the best medical care it can to our nation's veterans and we must always strive for the very best health care services it can by utilizing the most cost-effective measures available. The fact is, aging facilities, lack of funds, and the growing demands on the veterans health system are proving to be daunting obstacles in meeting Congress' responsibilities to our nation's veterans. However, the possibility for the Denver Veterans Medical Center to move to Fitzsimons and co-locate with University of Colorado Health Sciences Center and University of Colorado Hospital is a unique opportunity to provide solid and constructive solutions to these challenges.

WISCONSIN CITIZEN ACTION 20TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. TAMMY BALDWIN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 4, 2003

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Wisconsin Citizen Action's 20th Anniversary as the state's leading public interest organization. I am honored to share with you today the accomplishments of this powerful Wisconsin organization.

I applaud Wisconsin Citizen Action's twenty year commitment to political activism for progressive change that benefits all of us in Wisconsin. They have helped pass twenty laws, trained and developed hundreds of citizen leaders, and organized tens of thousands of residents to work for social, economic and environmental justice. Just a few of their recent victories include SeniorCare, a vitally important program to provide seniors with prescription drug coverage, a mining moratorium pro-

tecting Wisconsin's precious northwoods against unsafe mining, a tough ordinance for lead poisoning prevention in Milwaukee, and they also obtained a five-fold increase in the funding for the SAGE program, which reduces classroom size for our Wisconsin school children.

As a former Wisconsin Citizen Action board member, I had the privilege of seeing firsthand the truly remarkable impact Wisconsin Citizen Action has had on our great state. Wisconsin Citizen Action has given Wisconsin residents the power to improve their communities. It is through people working together and sharing ideas that social change is achieved, and as these recent accomplishments demonstrate, Wisconsin Citizen Action does just this. I commend this group for their insight and their tireless action in joining the political power of a few with the voices and ideas of many.

Mr. Speaker, I join my fellow Wisconsinites in congratulating Wisconsin Citizen Action on their 20th Anniversary and for their many great achievements. I wish them continued success for another 20 years and beyond.

RECOGNIZING AUBREY DALE BELL

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 4, 2003

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, Sgt. Aubrey Dale Bell, 33, of Tuskegee, Alabama, did this past Monday in Baghdad. Sgt. Bell was a member of the 214th Military Police Company based in Alexander City, Alabama, and was killed in an attack on the Iraqi police station he was helping guard.

Aubrey Bell was a quiet and unassuming person, Mr. Speaker, but he took pride in working hard for his country. When not serving in the National Guard, he worked in Alexander City at Russell Corporation. Like every other soldier, he dutifully left behind his family and loved ones to serve our country overseas.

Words cannot express the sense of sadness we have for his family, and for the gratitude our country feels for his service. Sgt. Bell died serving not just the United States, but the entire cause of liberty, on a noble mission to help spread the cause of freedom in Iraq and liberate an oppressed people from tyrannical rule.

We will forever hold him closely in our hearts, and remember his sacrifice and that of his family as a remembrance of his bravery and willingness to serve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the House's remembrance on this mournful day.

RECOGNIZING ANOKA, MINNESOTA, AS THE HALLOWEEN CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

HON. MARK R. KENNEDY

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 4, 2003

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the city of Anoka, Minnesota, as the "Halloween Capital of the World." Anoka has been holding Halloween festivities since 1920, when a group of business and civic leaders suggested the idea of