

MEDICARE IMPROVEMENTS FOR
PATIENTS AND PROVIDERS ACT
OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2008

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 6331, the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act will delay cuts in physician payments under Medicare until next year. I hope that this is the last temporary delay and next year we will implement a permanent fix to this problem. It's important to Medicare patients and physicians that there is a continuity of payments so physicians can continue to treat Medicare patients and Medicare patients do not lose access to the physician most familiar with their medical needs.

When we implement a permanent fix to the Medicare physician payment cuts, I hope to address the issue of the Medicare physician geographic payment discrepancy that is faced by many areas in California and across the country. One of these areas is Sonoma County, in my District. This inconsistency has led to doctor's reimbursements being based upon geographic location and not the true cost of providing services. Because of this discrepancy, doctors in Sonoma County receive a lower payment for the same services than doctors in next door Marin County and this discrepancy is causing doctors to leave Sonoma County. Congress must act to fix this discrepancy and ensure that physicians with Medicare patients can continue to afford to see Medicare patients regardless of where a practice is located.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6331, Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act and look forward to working together to provide a permanent solution to the Medicare physician payment issues so that our Nation's seniors receive the best possible care from the physician who knows the patient the best.

IN HONOR OF DR. J. FREDERICK
GRASSLE

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Dr. J. Frederick Grassle on his retirement from the Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. Dr. Grassle served as director of the Institute for 19 years.

Under Dr. Grassle's direction, the Institute gained a national and international reputation for excellence in marine and coastal research, education and service.

Dr. Grassle's creativity and vision led to establishment of the world's first undersea observatory, commonly known as LEO-15. This achievement enabled development of the Nation's Integrated Ocean Observing System that now supports critical national missions associated with saving lives at sea, enhancing homeland security, and forecasting effects of natural disasters.

Dr. Grassle is known for his innovative thinking and many scientific achievements, which are highlighted by his pioneering work on the biology of hydrothermal vents, biodiversity, and effects of waste disposal in deep sea systems. He devoted his time and effort to ensure that the results of science were transferred in a timely manner to environmental managers and policymakers. His work on waste disposal culminated in a national policy change based on his scientific findings and testimony before Congress.

Serving the state of New Jersey, Dr. Grassle advanced novel approaches for disposal and management of contaminated sediments that helped to preserve the region's port industry and coastal-based economy. He also fostered new approaches to science education that have enriched the critical thinking skills of youth in New Jersey and throughout the Nation.

Madam Speaker, I sincerely hope that my colleagues will join me in celebrating the service of Dr. J. Frederick Grassle, a man whose deep commitment to excellence in marine and coastal research, education for all ages, and services to resource managers have enabled New Jersey to be a national and international leader in these fields.

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SPEECH OF

HON. PATRICK J. KENNEDY

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2008

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6331, the Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act. This important bill includes mental health parity for Medicare beneficiaries. Currently, there is a discriminatory 50-percent copayment requirement for mental health services, while a 20-percent copayment exists for physical health care services under Medicare.

As the lead sponsor of H.R. 1424, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act, I am fighting to enact mental health parity for individuals who receive their insurance in the private sector. Federal employees, including Members of Congress, have had equal access to mental health and addiction services since 2001 with little or no cost increase. It's time for the private sector and Medicare to join in this effort to protect the health of all Americans, regardless of age or diagnosis.

In my home State of Rhode Island, I spend countless hours in senior centers and high-rises talking to my constituents, and it's clear that there is an epidemic of undiagnosed and untreated mental illness among older Americans. In fact, as many as one-quarter of seniors have significant clinical depression. But the one thing we must remember is that depression does not have to be a byproduct of aging—it isn't "normal" to get depressed as you get older. Allowing mental illness to go untreated in our seniors is not only unethical, but it increases health care costs, especially for those seniors with depression who are unable to manage their chronic illnesses.

Tragically, only 3 percent of older adults with mental illness ever seek mental health

treatment. Often, this is due to stigma. Stigma that is reinforced by our reimbursement structure that favors the treatment of our physical health over our mental health. H.R. 6331 ends this stigma by phasing in a 20-percent copayment for Medicare mental health services over 6 years. By ending arbitrary and discriminatory financial limits and making treatment more affordable, we can ensure that all seniors have access to mental health services. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6331.

HONORING FORMER VICE MAYOR
MICKEY NOVACK OF SURFSIDE
ON HER 90TH BIRTHDAY

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor one of South Florida's most outstanding citizens, the Honorable Mickey Novack, who recently turned 90. In the aftermath of the Second World War, former Surfside vice mayor Novack left London, where she was born, and came to this country. Having arrived in New York, she later moved to Surfside, Florida, where she established herself as an exemplary citizen both in her public and family life.

Former vice mayor Novack has contributed to many different types of organizations in her community, in several different capacities. She has consistently played a proactive role in Surfside and was both the vice mayor and the commissioner of the city's government. She has also utilized her financial expertise in her positions of president of the Surfside Taxpayers Association and as the treasurer of numerous other organizations. These range from the PTA to Women in Government Service. Professional life aside, she has been the cornerstone of a family dedicated to public service, education and the improvement of their community.

The fervor and ardor with which former vice mayor Novack devoted herself to the community and her family in conjunction with her life achievements are truly inspirational. I am proud to represent her as her Congresswoman and delighted to share with you her achievements.

HONORING MR. DICK DEITZ

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and honor Mr. Dick Deitz of McLeansboro, Illinois.

Mr. Deitz is to be inducted into the 2008 National High School Hall of Fame, the highest honor that an individual associated with high school sports can receive. This Hall of Fame honors athletes, coaches, officials, and administrators for their extraordinary achievements in high school sports.

Mr. Deitz has been working as a football, basketball, and baseball official in Illinois since 1958 and has been the state's rules interpreter in basketball and baseball since 1976.

He is the head official for the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) football playoffs, and he is an IHSA clinician in both football and basketball.

Mr. Deitz officiated state tournaments in boys basketball and state finals in football; making him one of a select few in the State to work finals in both major sports. He was inducted into the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 1998, and since 1993, he has been mayor of McLeansboro, Illinois.

I extend my congratulations to Dick Deitz and his family for his impressive accomplishments and his induction into the National High School Hall of Fame.

ALTERNATIVE MINIMUM TAX

HON. TIM MAHONEY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Mr. MAHONEY of Florida. Madam Speaker, as I stated for the record on June 26, 2008, I missed votes on June 25, 2008, due to the funeral of my friend, Mason Smoak.

One of the votes I missed was a vote on the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT). I applaud our leadership for its work to ensure that the AMT does not hit middle- and working-class families in a way that would not increase our national debt. I have voted against the AMT in the past—and, had I been able to vote on June 25, 2008, I would have voted “no”—because changing the taxation on carried interest sends the wrong message that Congress values money more than ingenuity, with the unintended consequences potentially being a constriction of private capital to America’s small businesses. It is my hope that Congress will continue to address this vital issue responsibly and in a bipartisan manner.

VETERANS HEALTH SCHOLARSHIP ACT OF 2008

HON. STEVE BUYER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the Veterans Health Scholarship Act of 2008. This legislation would extend the authority of the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, to reinstate the Health Professional Scholarship Program and give priority to veterans in awarding these scholarships.

VA is known for its high quality health care. However, the supply of highly trained medical personnel is not growing as fast as the demand, and VA struggles to recruit highly trained health care professionals critical to providing veterans the care and services they need.

The Health Professional Scholarship Program was originally established to improve recruitment and retention and help reduce the national nursing shortage. VA lost an important tool to meet their current and anticipated staffing needs when the program expired in 1998 and was not reinstated. As concerns over recruitment and retention of health care professionals increase, it is especially impor-

tant that we enhance opportunities to educate a new generation of VA health care providers. Reinstating the authorization for this program will provide VA another tool to attract qualified health professionals to care for our nation’s veterans.

Even as VA is experiencing recruiting difficulties, many servicemembers from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom are trained combat medics responsible for providing frontline trauma care on the battlefield. When they come home, we can provide the opportunity for these new veterans to continue their medical education, and use their knowledge and experience to provide needed services to their fellow veterans.

Madam Speaker, the quality of health care available to our veterans is dependent on the ability of VA to recruit and retain qualified health care personnel. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join me in this effort to build a new generation of health care professionals and cosponsor the Veterans Health Scholarship Act of 2008.

RECOGNIZING EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, DISASTER RECOVERY AND RELIEF EFFORTS IN WAYNE COUNTY

HON. MIKE PENCE

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend and recognize the extraordinary contributions of emergency management, disaster response, and recovery personnel as well as elected officials and community leaders in my district which was devastated by the recent severe weather in Indiana.

I wish particularly to honor the Board of Commissioners, County Council, and all the other outstanding individuals in Wayne County who rose to the occasion during these difficult times. This area suffered greatly from severe storms and weather, creating a catastrophe of nature that inflicted injuries, destroyed property, and displaced many of our citizens. In response, these officials went above and beyond the call of duty, showing great poise while saving many lives and serving the people of their communities.

Madam Speaker, I commend these fine men and women for their tremendous dedication to the Hoosier families, businesses, farmers and communities that they serve. As Hoosiers continue to recover from Mother Nature’s fury, I feel confident that the people of Wayne County will be well served by these officials.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO MARY EATON

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to rise today to honor my friend Mary Eaton by entering her name in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, the official record of the proceedings and debates of the United States Congress since 1873. Today, I pay tribute to Mary Eaton of Boulder City, who celebrated her 100th birthday on April 14, 2008.

Mary moved to Boulder City with her husband, Bruce Eaton, on July 4, 1932, where Bruce worked on the Hoover Dam project. Mary cared for their children and stayed home until Bruce enlisted in the Army in 1942. Mary stayed in Boulder City and began working as a home economics teacher, and continued to teach middle school and high school for 13 years. She eventually became the first president of the classroom teachers, the union at the time, and also participated in many groups, such as Volunteers of America, Eastern Star, Rainbow Girls. She was a charter member of Grace Community Church.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor Mary Eaton for her achievements and dedication to the Boulder City community. I applaud her efforts. I wish her a happy centennial and all the best in her future endeavors.

REGARDING H.R. 6381, THE MEDICAL DEVICE SAFETY ACT OF 2008

HON. BRUCE L. BRALEY

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6381, the Medical Device Safety Act of 2008. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation, which will address the Supreme Court’s flawed decision in *Riegel v. Medtronic* that completely ignored Congressional intent regarding the ability of injured patients to hold medical device manufacturers accountable for their injuries. This bill will restore Congress’s original intent to allow injured patients to seek recourse for their injuries suffered at the hands of negligent device manufacturers.

American patients need the Medical Device Safety Act of 2008 to ensure that they have the ability to hold negligent device manufacturers accountable for injuries caused by unsafe products. It also would prevent these manufacturers from receiving total immunity from any claims simply by virtue of receiving a Food and Drug Administration device approval.

It is important for Congress to quickly make its intent clear, as the Supreme Court will likely take up a parallel issue this fall regarding accountability for pharmaceutical manufacturers. Earlier this year, I was proud to participate in a hearing in the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform which looked deeper into this issue. Witness testimony made it clear that when we allow the FDA to have the final say on device safety, patient safety is compromised. Strong State laws are critical to maintaining accountability for device manufacturers, and allowing the FDA to preempt these State laws is a surefire way to lead to negligence and the production of unsafe products.

The civil justice system and the Federal regulatory system were always meant to complement each other. Both are necessary to adequately protect Americans. The FDA simply cannot do it alone. The agency is understaffed and underfunded, and I support additional funding to help this critical agency. However, allowing the buck to stop solely with the FDA on issues of life and death is simply contradictory to our system of checks and balances. This is just one more reason that it is