

much to be done. I am introducing this bill because the lives of our most frail senior citizens are at stake, and our return to this issue is long overdue. I recognize we are in the waning days of this Congress, and I look forward to hearing feedback from my colleagues and interested parties in the coming months. It is my hope we will move forward on this issue in the 111th Congress.

A disturbing trend has been underway in the nursing home industry recently. Nursing home chains have changed their corporate structure in ways that conceal the ownership and management of individual facilities. In doing so, the chains are able to shield assets and limit liability. They obscure regulators' efforts to find the responsible party and seek corrective action or collect monetary penalties. Beneficiaries are similarly limited in their ability to seek remuneration for injury or neglect.

The result is a woeful lack of transparency and accountability. How can we hold nursing home chains accountable for the quality of care if they are hiding their true ownership relationships?

Even more worrisome is the negative effect on quality that may result from these changing corporate structures. The heightened focus on profit maximization in the restructured organizations may come at the expense of quality of care. When cost cutting leads to staffing cuts, patient care suffers, and our most frail seniors and people with disabilities are put in jeopardy.

We must not forget that this industry operates largely on the government dime. Medicare and Medicaid pay for the majority—60 percent—of spending on nursing homes annually, with the remainder coming from people's own wallets or from private insurance. At any one time, nearly 80 percent of residents living in nursing homes are supported by public funds.

These troubling trends in ownership and quality are occurring at the same time that the nursing home industry is enjoying healthy Medicare margins of nearly 13.1 percent in 2006. For profit nursing homes are doing even better, with soaring stock prices and Medicare margins of 16 percent in 2006.

The federal government has a moral and fiduciary responsibility to make sure we know who those providers are and what they are doing, and ensure they are using government dollars to provide high quality care for our nation's nursing home residents. That is why we are introducing this legislation.

The Nursing Home Transparency and Quality of Care Improvement Act would place patients before profits. It provides protections to residents when a home closes, and brings structure to the complaint process. It increases the transparency of nursing home ownership and operations so that seniors and their families know who is calling the shots, and what level of care is being provided in the home. It improves the data available on Medicare's Nursing Home Compare Web site so that families are well-informed when making decisions about the care of their loved one. The bill also improves staff training. The bill strengthens the current enforcement system via mandatory compliance and ethics programs, new quality assurance efforts, and meaningful enforcement penalties.

TRIBUTE TO CHUCK TURNER

HON. JERRY LEWIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2008

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute and say farewell to Chuck Turner, a hard-working, highly valued staff member of the Legislative Branch Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. It is a privilege to consider Chuck a part of the extended Lewis family.

Throughout his over 30 years of service to the legislative branch, Chuck represented the highest values we in Congress want to provide: courtesy, commitment, and a dedication to public service. He has distinguished himself as a champion of this great institution, working tirelessly to ensure the Capitol stays the "people's house" and that it remains a beacon for motivated and service-minded young people.

Appropriations staffers have a special role in Congress, helping to ensure that our government spending meets the needs of the public and stays within our budget. At the same time, they must help us to win the support of a majority of Congress, since these spending bills must pass every year. New staff members working on Legislative Branch appropriations could always rely on Chuck's expertise, generosity, and insight. He has been an example of the very best of the Appropriations Committee and has been a staffer that colleagues and Members on both sides of the aisle could turn to.

Retirement is something to be celebrated and enjoyed. It is not the end of a career, but rather the beginning of a new adventure. Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my colleagues to join me in sending our best wishes to Chuck in his retirement, and let him know that we will miss him every day and will always be grateful for all he's done for Congress and the Legislative Branch.

CONGRATULATING THE PEOPLE OF TAIWAN ON THEIR NATIONAL DAY

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2008

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the people of Taiwan on the occasion of their National Day on October 10. As a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I am pleased to send my best wishes to our friends in Taiwan.

The Republic of China (Taiwan) is our ally in the Pacific. Although it is a small island nation, it has a growing and progressive economy, providing its citizens with quality education, health care and affordable housing. Also, with its well-educated population, Taiwan is an ideal place for business entrepreneurship. Much of Taiwan's economic prowess is directly attributable to Taiwan's political system.

A vibrant democracy, Taiwan's history of democratization is an important example of how other countries can change. In a little more than two decades, Taiwan has peacefully transformed its political system, from

authoritarianism to democratic government, providing a role model for other non-democratic political governments in Asia. Taiwan's successful democratic experience proves that democracy can thrive on Chinese soil.

We hope that in the years ahead, Taiwan and China will reach a rapprochement of sorts. Cross-strait relations are improving every day: There are now charter flights from Taiwan to the mainland, relaxation of China-bound investments, more visas for mainland tourists, and more exchange in many areas. Taiwan's new president Ma Ying-jeou is committed to pursue reconciliation and truce with the People's Republic. President Ma looks for peace and co-prosperity with the People's Republic.

Congratulations to the people of Taiwan and a warm welcome to Ambassador Jason Yuan. Ambassador Yuan is a distinguished career diplomat and will represent his country well.

CONGRATULATING SAMUEL BECK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2008

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Samuel Beck Elementary School in Northwest ISD. The school has been awarded a No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Award for 2008.

This prestigious award honors schools that have shown remarkable gains in student achievement. Samuel Beck Elementary was one of only 18 public elementary schools in Texas and 320 schools across the nation to receive this great honor.

The No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School award distinguishes and honors schools for helping students achieve at very high levels and for making significant progress in closing the achievement gap. The program honors public and private elementary and secondary schools that are either academically superior or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement.

Samuel Beck Elementary School was selected for the achievement of having students score in the top 10 percent of the state on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. The No Child Left Behind Act requires schools to make adequate yearly progress in reading and mathematics.

The accomplishments of the staff, faculty, and students at Samuel Beck Elementary School have extended beyond test scores—they've learned the value of teamwork and they've shown how dedication and persistence can lead to success. I am proud to represent Samuel Beck Elementary School in the 26th District of Texas, and I wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO BOB SEGA

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2008

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to rise today to honor my good