

HONORING THE MEMORY OF
MAYOR C.W. SKIDMORE

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 4, 2009

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, the city of Saraland and all of southwest Alabama recently lost a dear friend, and I rise today to honor C.W. Skidmore and pay tribute to his memory.

Mayor Skidmore, known to his many friends as "Bill," was a native of Russellville and long-time resident of Saraland. He served as a city councilman from 1957, when Saraland was incorporated, until 1960. In 1964, he was elected mayor and served two terms.

Bill set out to be the mayor of Saraland with the intention of changing the reputation the city had received after the murder of its first mayor. During his time serving as mayor, Bill also focused on commercial and residential growth, as well as the development of city services.

When Saraland celebrated its 50th anniversary, Mayor Skidmore was honored. The city also named a football park on Norton Avenue in his honor. In addition to a lifetime of public service, Mayor Skidmore owned and operated Skidmore Oil Company and Skidmore Construction. He also served on the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering a beloved friend to many throughout southwest Alabama. Mayor Skidmore will be dearly missed by his family—his wife, Took; his children, Billy and his wife Sheila, Mary and her husband Bruce, and Tammie and her husband Rick; his 13 grandchildren; and his great-grandchildren—as well as the countless friends he leaves behind.

Our thoughts and prayers are with them all during this difficult time.

HONORING JOHN BRENNEMAN

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 4, 2009

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize John Brenneman, an outstanding naturalist and public servant from the 12th Congressional District of Florida. John has worked tirelessly for the Florida Cooperative Extension Service and Imperial Polk County for 30 years. His devotion to improving local water quality and educating lakefront homeowners is evident through his continuing commitment to serve the public with excellence and integrity.

John's academic achievements have shaped his career in water management. He earned both his B.S. in Agriculture and his Masters of Agricultural Management and Resource Development from the University of Florida. He is also a certified instructor for the Florida Master Naturalist Program Wetland, Coastal and Upland Modules. With this certification, he actively assists rural pond owners in becoming good stewards of their water property. He has taught them how to manage surface waters and fisheries to enhance the aesthetics of their pond, while maintaining sound water quality.

John has an obvious passion for educating the public and is responsible for developing a program to educate lakefront residents entitled, "Living at the Lake." This primer has been used extensively for Florida's lakefront homeowners and by others interested in central Florida's lake resources. John also coordinates the Polk County Extension Water School. This program is designed to provide local officials with valuable information to prepare them for addressing important water issues and policies.

John has also molded young minds and shaped lives through his work as a 4-H Agent. For many years, John chaperoned trips to 4-H Congress and 4-H Camps where he taught courses, led fishing expeditions and counseled young people on character and values. His own example is what provides the best lesson for a life of service, love, and faith. I say this as one who benefited from his mentoring.

John's experience and influence reaches beyond Polk County lines. For ten years, John worked to educate businesses and residents through the natural resource education program as a multi-county agent. Additionally, John has worked with volunteers associated with the University of Florida's LAKEWATCH program which was designed to monitor water quality in local lakes. As a result of John's efforts, data was collected from local lakes on a monthly basis and entered into an extensive database used for profiling the local waterscape.

John and his wife, Terri, have been married for almost 36 years. They have one daughter, Emily, and three sons Jacob, Adam, and Joseph. When not tending to his work or bragging about his grandkids, John is a Sunday school teacher and Deacon at the First Baptist Church at the Mall.

GLOBAL WARMING PETITION
SIGNED BY 31,478 SCIENTISTS

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 4, 2009

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, before voting on the "cap-and-trade" legislation, my colleagues should consider the views expressed in the following petition that has been signed by 31,478 American scientists:

"We urge the United States government to reject the global warming agreement that was written in Kyoto, Japan in December, 1997, and any other similar proposals. The proposed limits on greenhouse gases would harm the environment, hinder the advance of science and technology, and damage the health and welfare of mankind.

There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gases is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere and disruption of the Earth's climate. Moreover, there is substantial scientific evidence that increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide produce many beneficial effects upon the natural plant and animal environments of the Earth."

Circulated through the mail by a distinguished group of American physical scientists

and supported by a definitive review of the peer-reviewed scientific literature, this may be the strongest and most widely supported statement on this subject that has been made by the scientific community. A state-by-state listing of the signers, which include 9,029 men and women with PhD degrees, a listing of their academic specialties, and a peer-reviewed summary of the science on this subject are available at www.petitionproject.org.

The peer-reviewed summary, "Environmental Effects of Increased Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide" by A. B. Robinson, N. E. Robinson, and W. Soon includes 132 references to the scientific literature and was circulated with the petition.

Signers of this petition include 3,803 with specific training in atmospheric, earth, and environmental sciences. All 31,478 of the signers have the necessary training in physics, chemistry, and mathematics to understand and evaluate the scientific data relevant to the human-caused global warming hypothesis and to the effects of human activities upon environmental quality.

In a letter circulated with this petition, Frederick Seitz—past President of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, President Emeritus of Rockefeller University, and recipient of honorary doctorate degrees from 32 universities throughout the world—wrote:

"The United States is very close to adopting an international agreement that would ration the use of energy and of technologies that depend upon coal, oil, and natural gas and some other organic compounds.

This treaty is, in our opinion, based upon flawed ideas. Research data on climate change do not show that human use of hydrocarbons is harmful. To the contrary, there is good evidence that increased atmospheric carbon dioxide is environmentally helpful.

The proposed agreement we have very negative effects upon the technology of nations throughout the world; especially those that are currently attempting to lift from poverty and provide opportunities to the over 4 billion people in technologically underdeveloped countries.

It is especially important for America to hear from its citizens who have the training necessary to evaluate the relevant data and offer sound advice."

We urge you to sign and return the enclosed petition card. If you would like more cards for use by your colleagues, these will be sent."

Madam Speaker, at a time when our nation is faced with a severe shortage of domestically produced energy and a serious economic contraction; we should be reducing the taxation and regulation that plagues our energy-producing industries.

Yet, we will soon be considering so-called "cap and trade" legislation that would increase the taxation and regulation of our energy industries. "Cap and-trade" will do at least as much, if not more, damage to the economy as the treaty referred by Professor Seitz! This legislation is being supported by the claims of "global warming" and "climate change" advocates—claims that, as demonstrated by the 31,477 signatures to Professor Seitz' petition, many American scientists believe is disproved by extensive experimental and observational work.

It is time that we look beyond those few who seek increased taxation and increased

regulation and control of the American people. Our energy policies must be based upon scientific truth—not fictional movies or self-interested international agendas. They should be based upon the accomplishments of technological free enterprise that have provided our modern civilization, including our energy industries. That free enterprise must not be hindered by bogus claims about imaginary disasters.

Above all, we must never forget our contract with the American people—the Constitution that provides the sole source of legitimacy of our government. That Constitution requires that we preserve the basic human rights of our people—including the right to freely manufacture, use, and sell energy produced by any means they devise—including nuclear, hydrocarbon, solar, wind, or even bicycle generators.

While it is evident that the human right to produce and use energy does not extend to activities that actually endanger the climate of the Earth upon which we all depend, bogus claims about climate dangers should not be used as a justification to further limit the American people's freedom.

In conclusion, I once again urge my colleagues to carefully consider the arguments made by the 31,478 American scientists who have signed this petition before voting on any legislation imposing new regulations or taxes on the American people in the name of halting climate change.

CONGRATULATING MAYOR
CHARLES MURPHY FOR BEING
ELECTED VICE PRESIDENT OF
THE ALABAMA LEAGUE OF MU-
NICIPALITIES

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 4, 2009

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, it is with great pride and pleasure that I rise today to congratulate Robertsdale Mayor Charles Murphy for being elected vice president of the Alabama League of Municipalities. As the elected vice president, Mayor Murphy will become president of the League in 2010 and will also become the fourth Baldwin County mayor to preside over the Alabama League of Municipalities in the organization's 74 year history.

Born in Missouri, Mayor Murphy was raised on a cotton and cattle farm near Bossier City, Louisiana. After high school, he began his career with the U.S. Navy. After his discharge, he joined South Central Bell, now BellSouth, in 1973. In 1976, BellSouth transferred him to south Alabama to work in the company's construction department. He continues to work for BellSouth today and is currently the manager of the supply division for the Gulf Coast.

Mayor Murphy's public service career began in 1983 when he was appointed to Robertsdale's Zoning Board of Adjustments. In 1988, he was elected to the city council, and just four years later, he was elected mayor of Robertsdale. He serves on the board of directors for the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation and is the chairman of the Baldwin County Mayor's Association.

As president of the Alabama League of Municipalities, Mayor Murphy will oversee an or-

ganization that serves as the voice of the cities and towns of Alabama. Since 1935, the organization has brought municipalities together to promote legislation, provide legal advice, and establish education programs for city and town officials.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the city of Robertsdale and Alabama's First Congressional District, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing a dedicated community leader and friend to many throughout Alabama. On behalf of all those who have benefited from his good heart and generous spirit, permit me to extend thanks for his many efforts in making Robertsdale and all of Alabama a better place.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MEDICARE SAVINGS PROGRAM IMPROVE- MENT ACT OF 2009

HON. XAVIER BECERRA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 4, 2009

Mr. BECERRA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Medicare Savings Program Improvement Act of 2009 with my colleague Congressman LLOYD DOGGETT (D-TX). Senator BINGAMAN (D-NM) is introducing similar legislation in the Senate. This legislation makes long overdue improvements to the Medicare Savings Program by providing additional assistance to modest income seniors for their health care out-of-pocket expenses.

Numerous advocacy groups have endorsed the bill, including AARP, Families USA, Consumers Union, the Center for Medicare Advocacy, the Medicare Rights Center, the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, the National Council on Aging, and the National Senior Citizens Law Center.

Currently, the Medicare Savings Program provides needed financial assistance for more than 6.2 million of the sickest and most vulnerable Medicare beneficiaries. The program has three major categories of beneficiaries: Qualified Medicare Beneficiaries (QMBs), Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiaries (SLMBs) and Qualified Individuals (QI). These categories provide varying amounts of benefits to Medicare beneficiaries whose annual incomes are less than 135 percent of the federal poverty level (annual incomes of \$14,623 for an individual and \$19,670 for couples in 2009) and annual resources are no more than \$4,000 for individuals and \$6,000 for couples.

Unfortunately, the Medicare Savings Program does not reach many eligible beneficiaries because the benefit rules are very restrictive and confusing, and it is difficult to apply for the program. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that only 33 percent of eligible QMBs and 13 percent of eligible SLMBs actually are enrolled in the program. This enrollment rate is much lower than other federal benefit programs. For instance, 75 percent of eligible beneficiaries receive the Earned Income Tax Credit, 66 to 73 percent of eligible recipients enroll in the Supplemental Security Income program and 66 to 70 percent of eligible beneficiaries enroll in Medicaid.

The National Academy of Social Insurance found that many potential beneficiaries do not apply for these benefits because they incorrectly assume that they have too many re-

sources. And for many more modest-income Medicare beneficiaries, the extremely low asset test of the Medicare Savings Program disqualifies them from receiving these important benefits. A 2002 Commonwealth Fund study found that only 48 percent of those who met the income requirements for the Medicare Savings Program in effect that year also met the asset requirements.

This inability to access the Medicare Savings Program benefit has real consequences for these seniors and individuals with disabilities. MedPAC has cited a study finding that QMB qualifying nonenrollees were twice as likely to avoid visiting a physician because of cost than QMB enrollees. As a result, QMB qualifying nonenrollees are more likely to access hospital emergency rooms than QMB enrollees.

Both the National Academy of Social Insurance and the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation in separate studies cite similar reasons for the low enrollment in the Medicare Savings Program. They include: enrollment in Medicaid offices (welfare stigma), asset reporting, lack of awareness (79 percent of unenrolled eligible beneficiaries never heard of the program), hard-to-reach population (eligible individuals are older, poorer, sicker and often cannot read or speak English), and a burdensome application process (two-thirds of enrollees need help with the application).

Recognizing the shortcomings of the current program, Congress did make modest, but important modifications in the rules of the program last year. As part of "The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act" (P.L. 110-275), Congress allowed seniors to begin their application process in Social Security offices, modestly increased asset limits and eliminated a provision that allowed states to recover assets upon a beneficiary's death. These provisions did simplify the application process, make more individuals aware of the program and increase outreach to hard-to-reach individuals. However, much more needs to be done.

Even with these changes, the Medicare Savings Program's current design still makes it difficult for eligible seniors to enroll for the benefits and its eligibility requirements are significantly stricter than the Medicare low-income drug subsidy program. Recognizing these issues in 2008, MedPAC recommended that Congress raise the Medicare income and asset criteria to conform to the low-income drug subsidy and standardize program requirements so that the Social Security Administration could screen low-income drug subsidy applicants for federal Medicare Savings Program eligibility.

In response, the Medicare Savings Program Improvement Act of 2009 proposes to accomplish three goals. First, the bill aligns the Medicare Savings Program with the low-income drug subsidy program by reducing it to two beneficiary categories and standardizing the definition of income and assets for both programs.

Second, it would expand access by increasing the income eligibility limits for Qualified Medicare Beneficiaries up to 150 percent (an annual income level of \$16,245 for individuals and \$21,855 for families in 2009) and Specified Low-Income Beneficiaries up to 200 percent (an annual income of up to \$21,660 for individuals and up to \$29,140 in 2009) of the federal poverty level. And annual resource limits would be raised to \$27,000 for individuals