

THE RAIDERS ARE COMING—AND I DON'T MEAN THE FOOTBALL TEAM

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 10, 1996

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, the raiders I am referring to do not wear football helmets and they do not throw a ball. They are profiteering health care entrepreneurs, and they are quickly moving into our community.

The move toward investor-owned health care, particularly where doctors are sharing in the financial risk and have incentives to deny care, means that patients could be denied access to critical medical resources. Significant health care dollars are being siphoned off to pay shareholders, soaring executives salaries and exorbitant marketing costs. Meanwhile, the number of Americans who are uninsured and underinsured is growing.

The explosion of profit-sharing health care companies is leading the current transformation of the U.S. health care market, and they have arrived in our district. Watch out. The move toward monopolistic, for-profit health care requires a legislative response to protect patients and consumers.

THE MOVE TO FOR-PROFIT HEALTH CARE: COLUMBIA-HCA

The largest, most aggressive for-profit health care company is Columbia-HCA Healthcare Corporation [Columbia]. Columbia has aggressively pursued the acquisition of nonprofit hospitals. As a result, Columbia now owns 355 hospitals making it the wealthiest for-profit chain with \$18 billion in annual revenue.

Columbia owns the San Leandro Hospital; the San Leandro Surgery and Outpatient Center; Estudillo Surgery Center; and the San Jose Hospital as well as Diablo Valley Surgery Center in Concord. Elsewhere in the bay area, Columbia owns Healdsburg General Hospital and Palm Drive Hospital in Sebastopol; Columbia Los Gatos Surgical Center; Mammography Plus Medical Group; and Sereno Surgicenter in Los Gatos in addition to the four facilities in the south bay that comprise the Good Samaritan chain. They have reportedly offered to negotiate deals with almost every hospital in the bay area including Sequoia, Eden, and St. Rose.

I have asked Medicare to investigate whether Columbia's merger mania is bad for the patients and for our community.

Will quality patient care be provided?

As a for-profit hospital, Columbia's primary obligation is to its out-of-town shareholders. Their focus is on the bottom line, not quality care.

We will see a reduction in care provided to the poor in our community!

Columbia offers physicians up to 20 percent ownership interest to encourage physicians to direct paying patients to their hospital, and charity cases away from the Columbia hospital. Study after study shows that for-profit hospitals provide a lower level of charity care than do nonprofit hospitals.

Will services be eliminated that are vital to our community?

It is likely that programs such as trauma centers and neonatal intensive care units will be eliminated.

Will Columbia close local hospitals?

It has a history of buying many local hospitals and closing them to increase bed occupancy and profits in other units.

Will existing labor contracts be ignored?

Columbia is reportedly reneging on labor contracts at Good Samaritan Hospital and has an antilabor record.

Capitalism is great but should patients be put at risk?

I do not believe health care is a commodity. Joseph Cardinal Bernadin said it best:

Health care is fundamentally different from most other goods and services. It is about the most human and intimate needs of people, their families, and communities. It is because of this crucial difference that each of us should work to preserve the predominantly non-profit character of our health care delivery system.

The goal is not health care anymore—it is care of the stockholder interest. I am preparing legislation to make sure: First, for-profit do not skim off the healthiest patients and dump the sickest, money-losing patients in public hospitals; and second, the public's investment in nonprofit hospitals is not lost through phony sales prices. You can count on me to fight the takeover of our community's hospital system and keep the "care" in health care.

TRIBUTE TO THE SOUTHWEST SUBURBAN CENTER ON AGING ON ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 10, 1996

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to an outstanding organization in my district that for 25 years has addressed the needs of older residents—the Southwest Suburban Center on Aging in La Grange, IL.

The center is enjoying its silver anniversary of providing a variety of important services for senior citizens. The agency drew out a study commissioned by the La Grange Kiwanis Club in 1970 that determined that not only was the senior population growing in the area, but that the vast majority of this group did not know where to turn for assistance.

The senior center was initially established as an arm of a local mental health agency, but because of the great demand for its services, it soon became a separate entity. In 1974, it leased its first facility, a building in La Grange, which it still occupies 22 years later.

Beginning with a staff of three on 1971, the center grew to employ a staff of 26 and over 300 volunteers. Today, the center now serves more than 10,000 seniors in 22 communities. The services provided range from arts and crafts classes to delivering meals to the home-bound to investigating suspected cases of abuse of the elderly.

However, the varied offerings of the Southwest Suburban Center on Aging all contribute to one goal: to promote independent living for seniors and support their efforts to maintain healthy active lifestyles within their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Southwest Suburban Center on Aging for 25 years of service to the senior citizens of its community, and wish the organization many more years of service.

TRIBUTE TO LOUIS ELIAS, WILLIAM MORGAN, AND GABRIEL KASSAB

HON. DAVID E. BONIOR

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 10, 1996

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, the March of Dimes is an organization with a noble mission: to fight birth defects and childhood disease. We all share the March of Dimes dream which is that every child should have the opportunity to live a health life.

For the past 12 years, the Southeast Michigan Chapter of the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation has honored several Macomb County residents who are outstanding members of our community and have helped in the campaign for healthier babies. On the evening of Wednesday, September 25, 1996, the chapter will be hosting the 13th annual Alexander Macomb Citizen of the Year award dinner. The award, instituted in 1984, is named after my home country's namesake, Gen. Alexander Macomb, a hero of the War of 1812.

This year, the March of Dimes has chosen Louis Elias, William Morgan, and Gabriel Kassab as recipients of the Family of the Year Award. The Elias family executives can be counted on to devote time and money to numerous charitable and civic groups. Mr. Elias is known as a quiet philanthropist. His generous donations over the years have benefited many charitable organizations. Mr. Kassab has been active in several civic and social groups. He has also served on the executive board of the Boys Scouts of America. Mr. Morgan was instrumental in instituting the service club system of operations which annually returns over \$2 million to the community. The Elias family members have been ardent backers of the March of Dimes' dream of erasing birth defects.

I applaud the Southeast Michigan Chapter of the March of Dimes and the Elias Family for their leadership, advocacy, and community service. The Elias Brothers are living proof that the business community meets their civic responsibility. I am sure that the Elias families are honored by the recognition and I urge my colleagues to join me in saluting them as the 1996 recipients of the Alexander Macomb Family of the Year Award.

TURKEY: NEW GOVERNMENT,
SAME OLD REPRESSION

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 10, 1996

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, in the last few weeks, the new Government of Turkey has demonstrated a familiar disregard for international human rights commitments and earlier promises made to secure entry into a European Union customs agreement. On August 26, 41 members of the Peoples Democracy Party [HADEP], including its leadership, were charged for alleged ties with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party [PKK]. The same day, two editors of the Turkish Daily News were charged with "damaging the prestige of the armed forces" by publishing an