

needs to remove substance abusers from the drug or alcohol in question before any treatment could be effectively initiated. The majority of VA facilities for such programs exist in the Northeast. It is foolish not to utilize them in the name of efficiency, especially when the comparison is between outpatient care and inpatient treatment—applies and oranges.

I believe that this bill adequately addresses the problems posed by the VERA-based model for VA health care reallocation. Rather than simply reacting to the VERA model, this legislation is proactive, and changes VERA to make for true equity in VA health care allocation. The VERA model does offer many constructive suggestions for improving the manner in which the VA delivers health care services. Yet these improvements should not benefit some veterans at the expense of others.

The veterans of the Northeast and the Rust Belt gave just as much for their country as their counterparts in the Sun Belt and Deep South. There is no reason why they should be punished with their VA health care, simply due to where they have chosen to live.

Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation which will guarantee true equity in the allocation of veterans health care funding.

H.R. 1580

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

**SECTION 1. CRITERIA FOR REQUIRED COPY-
MENT FOR MEDICAL CARE PRO-
VIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

(a) EXCEPTION BASED ON PRIOR CATASTROPHIC HEALTH CARE EXPENSES.—Subsection (a) of section 1722 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking out “or” at the end of paragraph (2);

(2) by striking out the period at the end of paragraph (3) and inserting in lieu thereof “; or”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(4) the veteran’s expenses for medical care (as defined in section 213 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) for the previous year are in excess of 7½ percent of the veteran’s adjusted gross income for the previous year (as determined for purposes of the personal income tax under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986).”

(b) ADJUSTMENT IN INCOME THRESHOLDS FOR VETERANS RESIDING IN SMSAS.—Subsection (b) of such section is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(3) The amounts in effect for purposes of this subsection for any calendar year shall be increased by 20 percent for any veteran who resides in a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), as defined by the Bureau of the Census.”

(c) AMENDMENTS WITHIN EXISTING RESOURCES.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out the amendments made by this section for fiscal years 1998 and 1999 within the amount of funds otherwise available (or programmed to be available) for medical care for the Department of Veterans Affairs for those fiscal years.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on January 1, 1998.

SEC. 2. SERVICES FOR MENTALLY ILL VETERANS.

(a) MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE ON CARE OF SEVERELY CHRONICALLY MENTALLY ILL VETERANS.—Section 7321 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by inserting “and members of the general public with expertise

in the care of the chronically mentally ill” in the second sentence after “chronically mentally ill”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(e) The Secretary shall determine the terms of service and (for members appointed from the general public) the pay and allowances of the members of the committee, except that a term of service may not exceed five years. The Secretary may reappoint any member for additional terms of service.”

(b) CENTERS FOR MENTAL ILLNESS RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND CLINICAL ACTIVITIES.—Paragraph (3) of section 7320(b) of such title is amended to read as follows:

“(3) The Secretary shall designate at least one center under this section in each service network region of the Veterans Health Administration.”

SEC. 3. ALLOCATION OF MEDICAL CARE RESOURCES FOR THE DEPARTMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) Chapter 81 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 8116 the following new section:

“§ 8117. Allocation of medical care resources

“In applying the plan for the allocation of health care resources (including personnel and funds) known as the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation system, developed by the Secretary pursuant to the requirements of section 429 of Public Law 104-204 (110 Stat. 2929) and submitted to Congress in March 1997, the Secretary shall exclude from consideration in the determination of the allocation of such resources the following (resources for which shall be allocated in such manner as the Secretary determines to be appropriate):

“(1) Programs to provide readjustment counseling and treatment.

“(2) Programs to provide counseling and treatment (including psychiatric care) for the mentally ill.

“(3) Programs relating to drug and alcohol abuse and dependence.

“(4) Programs for the homeless.

“(5) Programs relating to post-traumatic stress disorder.

“(6) Programs relating to spinal cord dysfunction.

“(7) Programs relating to AIDS.

“(8) Programs relating to geriatric and extended care.”

(2) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 8116 the following new item:

“8117. Allocation of medical care resources.”

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 8117 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to the allocation of resources for each fiscal year after fiscal year 1997.

TRIBUTE TO WADE SHEELER

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 13, 1997

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding work of Wade Sheeler, a student in my community. Wade’s one act play “Vortex” recently won a national competition and was honored at the Kennedy Center’s America College Theater Festival, here in our Nation’s Capital.

While growing up in Woodland Hills, Wade’s love of theater and film was nurtured by his father taking him to see classic films at the Los Angeles Museum of Art. He continued his

study in radio, TV, and film at California State University, Northridge. Wade is currently a student at the California Institute of the Arts in the Directing for Theater, Video and Cinema Program. It seems his education and inclination toward theater have served him well, as “Vortex” is an exceptional work.

The storyline of the play is of a gunman on the run from the law that meets up with a mysterious holy man, and how the two must learn to trust and rely upon one another for their own survival. The enthralling relationship of these two men captivates the audience and proves to be the driving force of the play. In the one act production the audience gets a glimpse into the life and mind of Wade Sheeler. Indeed Wade poured himself into this work and his passion is evident in the play’s exhilarating highs and believable lows.

“Vortex” competed against hundreds of plays to win the National Short Play Award, truly a remarkable accomplishment. This feat is particularly impressive in light of the fact that most of the plays it was competing against were faculty-directed or produced, while “Vortex” was an entirely student-operated production. In recognition of this honor Wade will be awarded a membership in the Dramatist’s Guild and “Vortex” will be published.

I am pleased to represent such a talented individual as Wade. I wish him the best in what promises to be a long and inspiring career as a successful playwright.

**THE COURAGE TO STAND ALONE—
THE PUBLICATION OF LETTERS
AND WRITINGS OF CHINESE DEMOCRACY LEADER,
WEI JINGSHENG**

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 13, 1997

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me today in paying tribute to an outstanding voice for human rights in the People’s Republic of China, and to join me in demanding his immediate release from prison.

Wei Jingsheng, a former soldier and an electrician at the Beijing Zoo, has become the best known pro-democracy activist in China today. He challenged China’s authoritarian system first in the late 1970’s by mounting posters calling for freedom and democracy on the famous “Democracy Wall” in Beijing. For the “crime” of speaking out for democracy, he was jailed on charges of “counter-revolutionary” activities in 1979 and remained a prisoner of conscience until September 1993.

Immediately after his release from prison in 1993, Wei Jingsheng was threatened and intimidated by Chinese authorities for speaking out publicly in support of democracy and freedom of speech. He also continued to maintain contacts with foreigners, including my good friend, the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, John Shattuck.

Shortly after meeting with John Shattuck, Wei Jingsheng was again arrested, and in a blatant violation of Article 48 of the Chinese Criminal Procedure Law—which stipulates that a person can only be held for 10 days without charge—he was held incommunicado for almost 20 months. Prior to his trial, his family