

in 1994 formed a Recruitment and Retention Program to solicit new members.

Throughout its long and distinguished history, the Ramsey Fire Department has protected both lives and property through professionalism, dedication and skill of its many members. The department has grown vastly in personnel, equipment and other resources. Today, it is among the finest firefighting organizations in the State of New Jersey. Members constantly train to improve performance in order to do their jobs as safely and efficiently as possible.

The Ramsey Fire Department has come a long way from its founding. Today's state-of-the-art fire engines and high-tech equipment put Ramsey on par with any other fire department in the region. But it takes more than equipment and buildings to run a fire department. It takes dedicated, hard-working individuals willing to put the safety and property of their neighbors first. People like President Ken Bell and Fire Chief George Sutherland and all the officers and firefighters of the Ramsey Fire Department deserve our most special thanks.

The Ramsey Fire Department was founded 100 years ago on the principle of neighbors helping neighbors. That principal has made the department a success and will continue to do so in the future.

I would like to ask my colleagues in the House to join me in congratulating the Ramsey Fire Department on 100 years of meritorious service to the community, and in paying tribute to the brave and dedicated firefighters who have sacrificed personal safety in response to the needs of others. All past and present members of this very professional "volunteer" fire department deserve our deepest thanks for their work on the behalf of our community.

THE SENIOR CITIZENS
PROTECTION ACT

HON. RICK LAZIO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 7, 1999

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill to cut fraud and abuse in our Medicare system, restore balance in our health care system, and give us all a better quality of life. Federal, state, and local governments need more tools at their disposal to crack down on rampant health care fraud. Congress needs to empower law enforcement to preserve and protect Medicare, decrease the crime rate, and let each and every one of us feel safe and secure in our retirement years.

The Health and Human Services' Office of the Inspector General recently released startling information on their audit of the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA). According to the audit, the Medicare Program lost \$20 billion in fraud and improper payments in Fiscal Year 1997. What is unconscionable is that only \$4 billion was recovered.

A recently published Focus Group Study of Medicare Insurance Counselors found that most officials believe a significant amount of fraud exists and continues to undermine the Medicare program. In the study, many experts said HCFA took no action after being notified of fraud. The May 1998 study further cited that

HCFA did not have adequate systems and procedures in place to root out fraud.

A major reason health care fraud is at historic levels is because current law bars state officials from even investigating Medicare fraud. They are limited to investigating suspected fraud in the Medicaid. This creates an enforcement gap because an entity defrauding Medicaid is often linked to fraud in other federal health programs.

An example from my district on Long Island illustrates this predicament perfectly. A provider was suspected of defrauding Medicaid. The state and its Medicaid Fraud Control Unit began an investigation. That investigation spilled over into allegations of Medicare fraud and the state could not investigate because it lacked the requisite authority. Despite repeated requests from the state, the Federal Government did not investigate or prosecute the allegations. While the state was trying to wrest control of the investigation for the Federal Government, the provider billed nearly \$2 million. If the state had the power to investigate, some fraud could have been stopped and stolen money would have been recovered and returned to the government coffers.

My bill, the Senior Citizens Protection Act of 1999, will empower the states and their Medicaid Fraud Control Units by allowing them to investigate Medicare fraud cases when Medicaid fraud has been alleged.

A second reason health care fraud remains unchecked is because current law prohibits states from investigating patient abuse in assisted living and residential-care facilities. Currently, a state only has the authority to investigate patient abuse in facilities that receive Medicaid reimbursement, usually nursing facilities. Yet today, more and more of our friends and family reside in assisted living and other residential-care facilities. Normally, federal and local governments do not investigate suspected patient abuse in these non-traditional health care facilities and the state lacks the power to delve into these cases. The result is a high number of cases falling through the cracks.

My bill would authorize the states and the Medicaid Fraud Control Units to investigate these patient abuse cases in long-term care facilities.

The government should be doing more—much more—to combat fraud and abuse. "White collar" crimes in the health care industry can be stopped. The Senior Citizens Protection Act requires coordination of anti-fraud efforts, keeps our senior citizens safe, returns all recoveries to the Federal Government, and does not cost the Federal Government anything.

Our government should be given all the tools necessary to combat fraud in our health care system and give Americans the peace of mind that their moms and dads are well cared for in their retirement years. We need to ferret out providers who rip off the system, and Americans need to rest comfortably at night knowing our family members and friends receive the highest quality health care without the fear of being physically, mentally, or financially abused. I urge my colleagues to support the Senior Citizens Protection Act of 1999 because it will provide health care security to our seniors and restore their trust in the people who care for them from morning until night.

HONORING THE MADERA COLLEGE
CENTER

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 7, 1999

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Madera College Center for the State Center Community College District. The Board of Trustees for the college held a groundbreaking ceremony for the first permanent building on their campus on September 24, 1999.

The Madera Center has been in existence for approximately 15 years. The college offers a wide variety of programs and opportunities for students. The full-service campus includes a library, bookstore, distance learning classroom, cafeteria, and computer laboratories. Utilizing services and course catalogs from its sister institution, Reedley College, the Madera Community College Center is able to afford its students a choice of more than 40 Associate Degrees and Certificates of Achievement.

The building for which ground was broken will consist of a lecture hall, library, classrooms, laboratories and offices. It is projected that the facility will be completed by August 2000, allowing for the attendance of students for the fall 2000 semester. In addition, parking lots and play fields will be installed as a part of this \$12.7 million development project.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Madera College Center and its Board of Trustees, for their dedication to providing quality education to students in the Madera area. I urge my colleagues to join me in wishing the Madera Center many more years of success and continued growth.

IN HONOR OF CAPT. CLELL NEIL
AMMERMAN, U.S. NAVY (RET.)

HON. ELTON GALLEGLY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 7, 1999

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Capt. Clell Neil Ammerman, U.S. Navy (Ret.), who passed away last week.

Captain Ammerman had a long and distinguished career serving his country in the United States Navy. He graduated with honors from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1954 and quickly proved himself as a capable officer. In 1957, he commanded the USS *Ely*, one of the first ships to transit the new St. Lawrence Seaway. In 1958, he was assigned to the National Security Agency, and in 1961 received his master's degree in applied mathematics and physics.

Captain Ammerman returned to the sea, and in August 1964 was involved in the initial action in the Gulf of Tonkin as an officer aboard the USS *Oklahoma City*. In 1967, he completed his work in the field of nuclear weapons effects at the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory in Livermore, California, for which he received the Joint Services Commendation Medal.

After another year at sea, Captain Ammerman served as Assistant to the Deputy Director, Research and Technology, ODDR&E. That stint earned him the Legion of