

center, community center, recreation center, and library.

Mayor Fitts proved to be a fiscal conservative, as well, with South Salt Lake receiving high bond ratings and awards from the Government Finance Officer's Association. He also succeeded in preventing the implementation of property tax increases.

Always active in regional efforts, he has served on many public boards and councils along the Wasatch Front, dealing with important policy issues such as transportation and public safety.

He is currently Vice-Chair of the Wasatch Front Regional Council, and a member of the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee.

He has also been President of the Salt Lake Valley Conference of Mayors and President of the Salt Lake County Council of Governments.

Mayor Fitts showed great courage and leadership in providing early public support at a critical time for light rail. Fortunately, Mayor Fitts had the vision to realize the importance of bringing mass transit to the Salt Lake Valley.

This vision continued after the North-South line from Salt Lake City to Sandy was completed. Three light-rail stops are located in South Salt Lake, and Mayor Fitts has sought to integrate the light-rail system into the community in a way that is both socially and economically beneficial.

The 3300 South Transit-Oriented Redevelopment Project is a key component of this integration. This project seeks to utilize high-density housing, commercial offices, as well as retail and community services around the light-rail station.

This project will stimulate economic growth while at the same time encourage further use of mass transit, thereby helping to prevent further sprawl in the Salt Lake Valley.

This project received the 2001 Best Achievement in Planning for Transit Oriented Development from the Utah Quality Growth Commission, as part of South Salt Lake's Light Rail Corridor Master Plan.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Mayor Fitts is well known for his sense of humor and wit. While he took his job seriously, he did not take himself too seriously. Which has always been the mark of an effective leader and public servant.

Therefore, I am proud to join with his many admirers in extending my highest praise and congratulations to Mayor Randy Fitts for his dedicated public service to the City of South Salt Lake. I extend my most heartfelt good wishes for all his future endeavors.

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE MEDICARE LABORATORY SERVICES ACCESS ACT OF 2001

### HON. PHIL ENGLISH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, November 30, 2001*

Mr. ENGLISH. Mr. Speaker, today I will introduce the Medicare Laboratory Services Access Act of 2001. I am pleased to be joined in introducing this important legislation by my colleague from Florida, Representative PETER DEUTSCH. Laboratory testing is an essential component of the health services we provide to our seniors. The health care needs of Medi-

care beneficiaries require them to have assured access to the full range of diagnostic laboratory tests. This measure would help ensure that the community laboratories that serve our nation's seniors have the resources necessary to continue to provide life-saving laboratory services. This legislation also seeks to remedy a financial burden imposed by new regulations requiring safe needles and related practices.

Laboratory tests facilitate early detection and accurate diagnoses which in turn result in more effective and less costly treatment. As a majority of the currently available tests to diagnose and treat diseases in the Medicare population involve taking and analyzing a specimen—or sample—from the beneficiary for laboratory analysis, health care providers rely on the accurate and timely collection of specimens to ensure adequate diagnosis and treatment. In fact, laboratory tests only account for 1.6% of the total Medicare budget but are used in 70% of medical decision-making. Yet, underpayment for specimen collection currently threatens the ability of community laboratories to continue to provide this much-needed service.

In 1984, Congress established a policy to provide for a "nominal fee" that was to cover the costs associated with collecting the sample on which a clinical diagnostic laboratory test was performed and paid for under the Medicare program. That fee was established 17 years ago at a rate of \$3.00 and has not been increased, even for inflationary factors since that time.

Our nation has seen amazing medical breakthroughs in technology while simultaneously the environments in which health care providers work has become more and more regulated. Further exacerbating the pressures on laboratories is that the available population of phlebotomists—the folks trained to draw blood—continues to shrink.

The combination of increasing costs, eroding reimbursement levels, fewer available health care workers with a growing population of Medicare beneficiaries threatens the Medicare program's ongoing ability to provide essential laboratory services, especially in rural areas and remote sites such as nursing homes. In January 2001, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) implemented new blood borne pathogen rules designed to improve worker safety. Yet, no additional funds have been provided to implement these requirements.

While I fully support new requirements for hospitals and other health-care facilities to identify and provide safer sharps systems as these policies help protect public health, we need to assist laboratories with these additional costs. This legislation would provide a modest increase in the specimen collection fee—an increase that would help offset the costs of these important new regulations and recognize inflationary increases over the past 17 years.

The Medicare Laboratory Services Access Act of 2001 increases the Medicare specimen collection payment for FY 2002 to \$5.25—the amount the payment would be today had it been indexed annually to the CPI-U. For subsequent years, the bill allows for an annual adjustment based on the CPI-U.

I urge my colleagues to join us in the effort to bolster our community-based system of care for Medicare beneficiaries. I am pleased

that my bill is supported by a number of national organizations, including the leading providers of clinical laboratory services. Groups endorsing this legislation include: American Association of Bioanalysts, the American Association for Clinical Chemists, the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, the American Clinical Laboratory Association, the American Medical Technologists, the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science, the American Society of Clinical Pathologists, the American Society for Microbiology, Becton Dickinson, and Quest Diagnostics. This important measure will help ensure Medicare beneficiaries access to the quality laboratory services they need and deserve.

#### HONORING THE GOOD DEED OF JUSTIN BRAMEL

### HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, November 30, 2001*

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the good deed of Justin Bramel, a Murfreesboro, Tennessee, eighth-grade student who helped his school bus driver in her time of need.

Justin's bus driver, Sally Brown, became sick one recent afternoon after finishing her route. Fortunately for Mrs. Brown, Justin spotted the bus parked on the side of a road. He realized something was wrong and investigated the situation. He found Mrs. Brown to be very ill.

Justin calmly used the bus transceiver to advise school officials about the situation and direct emergency personnel to the location. Thanks to Justin's concern and levelheaded actions, Mrs. Brown is now recovering and should be back to work soon.

I want to salute Justin for his quick actions and his concern for his fellow human being. People like Justin epitomize the spirit of this nation and make it a better place to live.

#### COMMEMORATING 2001 DINNER OF CHAMPIONS

### HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, November 30, 2001*

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 2001 Dinner of Champions being put on by the Central California Branch of the Mountain Valley California Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. The first of these annual events will honor racing legends Blackie Gejeian, Joe Boghosian, and the late Fred Gerhardt.

The Dinner of Champions made its national debut in 1972 and honors local public leaders and personalities for their efforts to champion the fight against multiple sclerosis. The National MS Society strives to reach out to those affected by the crippling disease and raise awareness for MS.

Mr. Gejeian's involvement in racing began in 1949 and he won championships all over the Central Valley. Blackie was presented the Most Popular Driver award four years in a