

HELP EFFICIENT, ACCESSIBLE,  
LOW-COST, TIMELY HEALTHCARE  
(HEALTH) ACT OF 2003

SPEECH OF

**HON. BOB ETHERIDGE**

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 13, 2003*

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 5, the Republican medical malpractice bill, and the process by which it is being debated in this House.

Today, the House will pass H.R. 5, a bill to impose caps on damages that may be awarded for medical malpractice, defective products, and other health related wrongdoings. Like many Members of this House, I am concerned about the rising cost of medical malpractice insurance and its impact on physicians and their patients, but H.R. 5 is not the right medicine for this national problem.

I oppose H.R. 5 because it will not reduce medical malpractice premiums. What's more, it protects manufacturers of defective pharmaceutical and medical equipment from product liability actions, and overturns North Carolina state law.

Years of experience prove that limiting patient rights to seek legal remedies for medical malpractice will not reduce insurance rates for doctors or hospitals. We've heard a lot of debate on this floor today about California's law that caps damage awards in medical malpractice cases at \$250,000. Supporters of H.R. 5 misses the point in this debate, Mr. Speaker. Instead of dealing with the real issue here, which involves insurance rates, the Republican Majority is turning this serious issue into a political football at the expense of patients.

H.R. 5 also limits the ability of injured persons to bring suits against pharmaceutical companies, HMOs, nursing homes, and medical device manufacturers, thus setting a dangerous precedent allowing these entities to escape the law in even the most severe cases of neglect and abuse.

Finally, H.R. 5 undermines North Carolina's patients protection statutes, which are some of the strongest in the nation.

My colleagues Mr. DINGELL and Mr. CONYERS have drafted an alternative amendment to H.R. 5. This alternative will help courts weed out frivolous lawsuits without restricting the rights of legitimate claims, repeal the federal anti-trust exemption for medical malpractice insurance companies, thereby increasing competition and lowering premiums, and provide targeted assistance directly to physicians, hospitals, and communities in medical malpractice crisis areas. Finally, the alternative establishes an independent advisory commission to examine and recommend long-term solutions to this important issue. Unfortunately, the Republican Leadership has denied us an opportunity to offer this alternative.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of an insurance is an important one. Yet, it seems that the Republican Majority has forgotten one of the key tenets of the Hippocratic oath—do no harm or injustice. H.R. 5 will without a doubt harm America's patients. I urge all of my colleagues to vote against H.R. 5 and to support the motion to recommit the bill.

TRIBUTE TO MRS. ANNIE MAE  
AARON ON HER 95TH BIRTHDAY

**HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 19, 2003*

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great pride to recognize Mrs. Annie Mae Aaron who will soon observe her 95th birthday.

Born on April 24, 1908, Mrs. Aaron was aware at an early age of the importance family, faith, freedom, and education. Though she was struck with polio at the age of three, through her faith in God, and self-reliance, she recovered from this illness to lead a full and productive life of distinction. She Attended Edward Waters College in Jacksonville, Florida and graduated in the class of 1930. She was a teacher in the public school system of Florida, teaching in E.O. Douglas high school in Sebring.

In 1939, Mrs. Aaron made her home in West Palm Beach Florida where she was the Sunday school secretary at Payne Chapel A.M.E. Church. She was a marketing representative for the Afro American Insurance Company. She married J.E. Aaron of Sebring in 1941 and they enjoyed a long happy union until his death in 1974.

Mrs. Aaron's greatest contribution to her community and to her country is through her family—her children that she reared—and pre-school age children of others whom she mentored. She produced seven sons and two daughters. Four of her sons served honorably in the United States Army, three of whom served in combat zones during hostilities. Rudy rose to the rank of Sergeant and served in the Army Signal Corps in the Korean War. Samuel achieved to the rank of Regular Army Major and was an Army aviator during two tours in the Vietnam War. He is a high-ranking official with the Federal Aviation Administration. A third son, Eugene, advanced to the rank of Regular Army Captain and served in Wurzburg, Germany with the Third Infantry Division as a Tank platoon commander during the height of the Cold War. He was also an advisory to South Vietnamese in the Vietnam War. He is now a State Department Foreign Service Officer, who has completed diplomatic assignments in four countries. Patrick served in the United States Army in Alaska in the Signal Corps, Mrs. Aaron's daughters are also serving their communities in significant ways. Both have chosen to become teachers in their native Florida, following in the large footprints of their mother. Priscilla is a Business teacher at Sebring High School in Highlands County. Ruth is a Mathematics Instructor in the Seminole County Community College.

Some sons have distinguished themselves in non-military areas as well. Joseph is an expert chemist and enjoyed a long 20-year career with the Department of Energy. James is a passionate lawyer, using his knowledge and skill of the law to increase justice in his community. During his life, Robert used his hands in many trades, mainly the construction crafts. Lastly, one of the children that she mentored as a pre-school student, Water, is a Medical Doctor. Indeed Mrs. Aaron has contributed much to Sebring, the state of Florida and America.

In addition to organizing and serving as president of the Women's Club, a community

service organization, Mrs. Aaron was an advisor to the Girl Scouts. She is still a vibrant presence in Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church in Sebring, Florida. Mrs. Aaron's life is the very model of what is possible in a free and open democratic society and it is in keeping with the culture and highest traditions of what it means to be an American. Mr. Speaker I know that my colleagues here in the U.S. House of Representatives join me today in saluting Mrs. Aaron and wishing her continued health and happiness in the years to come.

CONGRESSIONAL RESOLUTION  
SUPPORTING THE EDUCATIONAL  
VALUE OF STUDENT TRAVEL

**HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON**

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 19, 2003*

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, whereas travel is a vital component of the educational experience for Americans of all ages;

Whereas, the Washington, DC area is an area rich in American history and is visited by students nationwide;

Whereas many school boards across the country are reluctant to approve student trips to Washington, DC and other historic areas due to the attack on the World Trade Center, Washington, DC and Pennsylvania and the fear of additional attacks;

Whereas many U.S. students will not be able to experience landmarks and monuments celebrating American democracy, political figures and scientific achievement;

Whereas the absence of student travel to our nation's historic sites will leave a vital gap in the education of America's youth;

Whereas America's youth must be cognizant of American history to understand fully the concepts and responsibilities of democracy and citizenship;

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Senate and the United States House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled, that student travel is a vital component of the educational process and should be encouraged so that Americans, young and old, can participate in travel, the perfect freedom.

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR TONI  
JENNINGS

**HON. GINNY BROWN-WAITE**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 19, 2003*

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker I rise today to congratulate Florida's new Lieutenant Governor, Toni Jennings, who was appointed Monday by Florida Governor Jeb Bush.

I served with Toni in the Florida State Senate and I know from working with her in that capacity what a dedicated public servant she is.

A Florida native and the first woman to hold this post in Florida's history, Toni brings a wealth of legislative knowledge and dedication to the State of Florida with her to the Executive Branch.

Toni was the youngest woman ever elected to the State Legislature when she took office