

have health insurance and are less likely to receive appropriate health care services. These communities are also significantly underrepresented in our health care workforce.

I am fully committed to the elimination of racial and ethnic disparities in health care access, quality, and in our health care workforce, because we all deserve equal treatment when it comes to our health. Additionally, a full investment in health care will improve the economic well-being of our Nation.

For these reasons, I am an original cosponsor of the Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act. This bill will reduce racial and ethnic disparities and improve the health care for minority communities by: expanding health care coverage, removing language and cultural barriers, improving workforce diversity, improving data collection, creating and funding programs that reduce health disparities, promoting agency accountability, and strengthening our health institutions that already serve our minority populations.

I am grateful that one vital component of this bill recognizes the late Congresswoman Patsy T. Mink by creating a Health and Gender Research Fellowship program in her name. This fellowship program, which will examine and research gender and health disparities, is an appropriate tribute to someone who is so well remembered for her work in education policy and known for her beliefs in social and economic justice.

I commend the work of the Democratic Leadership in both chambers not only to bring the issue of health care disparities to light, but to address this national concern firmly and directly. I further appreciate the leadership's willingness to work with the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Native American Caucus to ensure that our respective communities are included in this legislation. I especially appreciated the opportunity to assist in efforts to ensure that Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders were specifically included.

As the Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act will provide true health benefits for all, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
BELLEVILLE, WISCONSIN PUBLIC
LIBRARY

HON. TAMMY BALDWIN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 125th anniversary of the Belleville Public Library, in Belleville, Wisconsin. Since 1878, the Belleville Public Library has been providing an invaluable service to the community.

The Belleville Library opened its doors on December 14, 1878 when a local businessman, Henry Story, donated a collection of 133 books. The library's collection has grown over the past 125 years to an impressive 20,000 items, serving the community with print materials, audio books, videos, and CD ROM products. Belleville residents are also fortunate to have access to the library interchange network, a consortium of South Central Wis-

consin libraries that operate a shared automation system providing access to over 2 million items.

A public library is a strong component of a democratic society. Providing an equal opportunity for its residents to learn and grow is just one of the many functions a public library serves. In the library's 125 years of service, the Belleville Public Library has provided programs which foster learning for all within the community. The library has consistently encouraged learning through programs catering to all members of the community including summer reading programs for children, book discussions, and biweekly story hours.

For 125 years, the Belleville Public Library has recognized the vital importance of free access to information in a democratic society. I wholeheartedly believe that access to information allows everyone in a community to prepare themselves for the future, experience personal growth, and to perform the civic duties encouraged of all citizens in our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today and join the residents of Belleville in honoring the impressive 125 years of service from the Belleville Public Library.

TRIBUTE TO COACH ROD SMEDLEY

HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Coach Rod Smedley, former Head Football Coach of San Bernardino Valley College. Coach Smedley is an individual of great distinction, and we join with family and friends in honoring his remarkable achievements and years of dedicated service to the Inland Empire.

Coach Smedley is an exceptional individual who has not only devoted his life to helping the San Bernardino Valley College community but has also been an important pillar of support for the student-athletes of the college. His kindness and passionate spirit render him a vital resource and a beloved member of the college community.

For the past 26 years, Coach Smedley has dedicated himself to serving the college and achieving a remarkable level of achievement. As Head Football Coach, he guided the San Bernardino Valley College Wolverines to five Bowl Championships, including three consecutive wins between 1995 and 1997, seven Football Foothill Conference Championships, and the highest winning percentage of a Junior College football coach in the Inland Empire. Coach Smedley has also led the Men's and Women's tennis teams to a combined total of seven conference titles. He has been an integral contributor to the management and administration of San Bernardino sports, as well as an active participant and positive influence on the lives of many college students.

In addition to these contributions, Coach Smedley was twice awarded the honor of California Community College Football Coach of the Year and awarded the Foothill Conference Football Coach of the Year four times. Most importantly, under his guidance, Coach Smedley has seen more student-athletes receive scholarships to four-year schools than any other Junior College coach in the Inland

Empire. He has received the highest possible evaluation of his profession for integrity and performance, and has taken a proactive approach to leadership in the college community.

Through his participation in countless activities, Coach Smedley has exhibited kindness, humility, and a deep resolve to ameliorate all aspects of San Bernardino Valley College, so it is only appropriate that we honor him today with his family and the residents of the Inland Empire.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we salute Coach Rod Smedley. We express sincere admiration that he is being honored for his incomparable accomplishments and hope that others may recognize his good works in the community.

TRIBUTE TO RONNIE WILLETT

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to rise and pay tribute to a remarkable man from my district. Ronald Willett has dedicated his life to the betterment of the people of Pagosa Springs, Colorado and this nation. On October 2nd of this year, Ronnie announced his retirement from his position with the Pagosa Springs Sun Newspaper. For over four decades, Ronnie has worked tirelessly to keep the people of his community well informed. It is my honor to call the attention of this body of Congress, and this nation, to Ronnie's many contributions.

Ronnie moved to Pagosa Springs in 1944, where he was a standout player on the Pagosa Springs football team. After graduating from high school, Ronnie joined the United States Navy in 1954. In the Navy, he served his country honorably and achieved the rank of Petty Officer First Class.

Upon leaving the military, Ronnie went to work for the Pagosa Springs Sun in 1962, where he quickly became an accomplished newspaperman and was instrumental in the exponential growth of the newspaper's circulation. Ronnie used his position with the newspaper to take an active role in the community. Over the years, he donated a multitude of printing jobs to various community projects and volunteer groups.

Ronnie's contributions to the citizens of Pagosa Springs reach far beyond his work with the Sun. In the 1960's, he was a member of the Jaycees and helped numerous youngsters build soapbox racers. Currently, he spends his time as a dedicated member of the Fleet Reserve Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, and the American Legion.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly a privilege to pay tribute to a man who has spent his life serving his fellow Coloradans and this nation. Ronnie's selfless dedication to his community and country is truly admirable. On behalf of the citizens of Pagosa Springs, and a grateful nation, I would like to thank Ronnie Willett for his service.