

children are helping others by sharing their own experience with diabetes and teaching us about its impact on their lives.

Many may not realize the extent of the negative effects diabetes can have on people. This dreadful disease attacks 16 million Americans and is a leading cause of blindness, kidney disease, heart disease, and amputations. The reality is, people with diabetes live 15 years less than those without. As Members of Congress, we have the unique opportunity to help find a cure for diabetes by funding further research.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support the cause of the Children's Congress and support allocations for more resources and medical research. I would like to thank the courageous young boys and girls of Children's Congress for taking the time to educate my colleagues and me on this terrible disease.

TRIBUTE TO ELFLORA K. AIKMAN

HON. DAVID D. PHELPS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 1999

Mr. PHELPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to Elflora K. Aikman of Marion, IL. On July 1 of this year, Elflora will retire from the Marion Senior Citizens Center as Administrator. For twenty years, since February of 1981, Elflora has done an outstanding job at Marion Senior Citizens Center where she will be sorely missed. Elflora has been a blessing to both the Marion Senior Citizens Center and to the residents of Southern Illinois.

Mr. Speaker, as the nation ages, and our senior citizens live longer and longer, it can sometimes be a burden to families both financially and psychologically to give appropriate care to the seniors they love. I know everyday that families across the Southern Illinois and America struggle with this hardship. Elflora has eased this burden on countless families by providing a nurturing and wonderful place for the elderly. I am sure that her hard work and diligence at the Marion Senior Citizens Center has provided many families, who sought caring geriatric care for their loved ones, with answers to their prayers.

Elflora helped to create the Marion Senior Citizens Center in 1981 and since then has played a leading role in making it the exceptional Senior Center it is today. She has also been extremely active in the community as a whole and particularly at her church, where she has served as a Sunday School teacher, member of the Church Council, Logos instructor, organist, pianist and choir member. This year on Christmas Eve, Elflora will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of her marriage to her husband Sam. She has a large and loving family, who I am sure she will spend a great deal of her time with, when she is not playing her piano or gardening. Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish Elflora the best of luck in her retirement and God's speed. Her accomplishments will not soon be forgotten and never overlooked.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE GORDON
BYNUM

HON. MARSHALL "MARK" SANFORD

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 1999

Mr. SANFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to pay tribute to, and say good-bye to, a dear friend. Gordon Bynum was the living definition of the word, "friend." This spring, on what turned out to be his last trip down to Coosaw, he called my wife Jenny ahead of time to say he wanted to come early to get things ready for the party. He was there and helped. This was part of a well worn pattern in the way he lived his life. Getting there early, staying later—going the extra mile—was what he thought normal. If I had ever found myself in real trouble with the option of only one call, it would have been to Gordon.

In his forty-four years he did not spectate on life, he lived it. When Atlanta was still sleeping, I remember leaving town in the early morning hours to go on one of his crazy mountain canoe trips. Exotic locations, atlases, wilderness maps were part of Gordon's world; Jenny and I still have at the house National Geographic books he had sent after our wedding. In fact his birthday card to me, this year, one I received two days after his death, had penned at the bottom. "Adventure soon?"

Finally, he lived a life that towers as an example to each of my four boys. At dinner on Tuesday upon hearing the story of Gordon's death a friend asked, "Was he a Christian?" I said, "Absolutely." Whereupon he asked, "How do you know?" I said because Matthew 5:16 says let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works give glory to your father who is in heaven. He had the light, you could see it in his eyes and in his actions. One of those actions was his work at the Sheppard Clinic. He loved the patients and they loved him, despite the fact volunteerism is a trait lost on most bachelors. In short, he didn't spend his time talking about his faith, he lived it. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self control are what the Bible calls the fruit—the byproduct—of the spirit. He had it in abundance. He would have given love and more generously to Laura Lee, who he was to have married two weeks after his death. Love was the easiest word to describe him, and I suppose what I will most miss.

Good-bye.

A TRIBUTE TO JERRY BERGER,
SUFFOLK COUNTY BOARD OF
ELECTIONS COMMISSIONER

HON. MICHAEL P. FORBES

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 1999

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a true community leader, a visionary in the election process—Jerry Berger, the Suffolk County Republican Commissioner of Elec-

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tions, who will be sorely missed upon his upcoming retirement.

Jerry Berger started at the Suffolk County Board of Elections on June 1, 1974 working on voting machines in the warehouse. Shortly thereafter, Jerry was appointed to the position of Campaign Finance Director. Since this was a new position, Jerry worked with the New York State Board of Elections and proceeded to co-author the first Campaign Finance Guide Book that was used throughout New York State. In 1978, he was appointed Deputy Commissioner, and in 1992 he was appointed Commissioner of Elections and was re-appointed in 1994 and 1998.

As Commissioner, Jerry implemented the computerization and modernization of the Suffolk County Board of Elections which has been the first throughout New York State to certify its election results during his entire tenure as Commissioner. Due to Jerry's innovative thinking, an inspector's instructional video was developed and is being used at all inspector training seminars. A natural leader, Jerry knows that ensuring the outstanding management of the election process meant forming an effective training system of its administrators—a move that will benefit the voters of Suffolk County for years to come.

Jerry's propensity for fairness and his devotion to his position as Commissioner can only be emulated, never replaced. He has worked tirelessly for the people of Suffolk County, putting aside politics in the most political of environments. Jerry typifies what the public wants in a "Public Servant" and we have been truly blessed to count him as our friend and neighbor.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in honoring Jerry Berger and to recognize his commitment to promoting all that is good in Suffolk County for his family and his community. We will sure miss Jerry, and we wish he and his wife, Marion, a wonderful retirement in West Palm Beach, Florida.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN R. JONES

HON. JOE SCARBOROUGH

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 1999

Mr. SCARBOROUGH. Mr. Speaker, the citizens of Escambia County and the State of Florida have been blessed with a man who has dedicated his career to the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of life. This gentleman distinguished himself as a community leader and the model of an honest and effective public servant. The man that I speak about is John R. Jones.

Most of the residents of Northwest Florida remember John R. Jones for his over 40 years of public service, during which he served as an Escambia County Commissioner and as the Escambia County Property Appraiser. We are better because of his belief that the needs of each taxpayer are equally important, and his insistence that he wasn't just elected by the people of Escambia County, he was employed by them.

However, what I admire most about Mr. Jones, is that he always went above and beyond the call of duty to help others. At a time

when our nation calls out for principled leadership from public officials, it is fitting that today we honor a professional who always went the extra mile to represent the under-represented and to promote equality within the community, the State of Florida, and the nation. During his distinguished career, John never forgot how important the little guy is to the American way of life.

Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, June 29, an athletic park in Escambia County will be dedicated in Mr. Jones' honor. I can't think of a more fitting way to honor the life of a man who has been such an integral part of our community.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of John R. Jones, we can take pride in knowing that he has influenced so many people in a positive way. As a fellow elected official and as a friend, I appreciate the importance of dedication and devotion to public office. Mr. Jones' overall attitude and dedication to public service has been a model in the lives of the public servants that he has trained, supervised, and encouraged. His legacy will be a constant reminder that one person can make an extraordinary difference in the lives of many.

IN HONOR OF HUFF-N-PUFFERS

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 1999

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the participants in the Huff-N-Puffers senior citizen baseball league.

This is a wonderful organization that provides and promotes physical activity for seniors. This is a great way for seniors to get together to socialize and partake in aerobic activities. The Huff-N-Puffers is open to anybody who is over the age of 65. This program was started in 1985 and has more than doubled in size since that time.

These senior citizens participate in many games and tournaments around the country as well as a championship tournament at the end of each season. They have a very busy schedule consisting of around 20 games against other teams in their league. These seniors are an inspiration to us all by getting the best out of what life has to offer.

My fellow colleagues please join me in honoring the dedication of these outstanding athletes.

CONGRATULATING MS. NICOLE SIEMINSKI

HON. JAY INSLEE

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 1999

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ms. Nicole Sieminski for earning the honor of 1999 Class Valedictorian at Marysville-Pilchuck High School in Marysville, WA. Ms. Sieminski is the first member of the Tulalip Tribes to achieve this distinguished po-

sition at Marysville-Pilchuck High School. I want to commend her for her dedication and commitment to education. Clearly, great achievements such as this do not occur by chance. Ms. Sieminski worked very hard throughout her high school years. I know that the knowledge and skills she gained at Marysville-Pilchuck High School will help her reach even higher goals in the future.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 2337, THE "MEDICARE COVERAGE INFORMATION DECISION ACT OF 1999"

HON. JIM RAMSTAD

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 1999

Mr. RAMSTAD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation to greatly improve the Medicare coverage decision-making process.

While Medicare law provides for the coverage of various categories of benefits, it does not specify a list of covered technologies and services. That's where the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) and its coverage process come in to play.

Medical technology and innovation play an important role in this critical health care program for America's seniors. As new life-enhancing and life-saving technologies and procedures are developed, and more Americans learn about them, the process for making these coverage decisions becomes increasingly important.

HCFA recently published its new proposal to completely overhaul the decision-making process, and I applaud the hard work and time HCFA staff put into developing this new process. HCFA has been attempting to make these much needed changes for over a decade, and it was Dr. Jeffrey Kang's leadership and thoughtful approach at HCFA that finally brought the effort to fruition.

HCFA's proposal is a good first step in making the coverage process transparent, timely and understandable. However, I believe there are a few additional issues that need to be addressed.

In addition to addressing the issue of appeals—which my good friend and Health Subcommittee Chairman Thomas is working on—and timely payment and coding updates—which I outlined in my other bill, H.R. 2030, the Medicare Patient Access to Technology Act—we also need to ensure the process encourages HCFA to work in a collaborative way with those petitioning for coverage.

For example, current Food and Drug Administration law provides for early meetings and a written agreement between manufacturers and the FDA on the studies to be done for pre-market approvals. Both parties have found this to be a beneficial tool because both know what is required. In addition, I am told FDA staff has found it improves their efficiency when agreed-upon data is submitted for review.

I strongly believe HCFA's coverage process should include a similar step.

HCFA currently allows stakeholders to come in and informally discuss the required data, but no written agreement is ever reached. The

importance of this agreement cannot be understated. Without an agreement, HCFA is not required to accept the data given to them, even when HCFA initially suggested it at the early meeting. HCFA's ability to continuously change what constitutes appropriate data has left many companies in my district stuck in an endless loop of data collection. In fact, one constituent company of mine, Empi, has been petitioning for a coverage decision for over 7 years!

Given the handful of national coverage decisions that are announced each year, I believe HCFA's informal discussions could be transformed into more formalized collaborative meetings at which binding agreements could be written. That's why I am introducing this legislation today to require HCFA to meet with stakeholders and develop an agreement on the required data, should the stakeholders request to do so.

Just as with the FDA process, there are exceptions in the legislation to give HCFA flexibility for changing the agreement should it become aware of a new, substantial scientific issue that would impact its ability to adequately review the technology or procedure. In addition, should HCFA wish to change the agreement for other reasons, it can do so with the written consent of the stakeholders.

These meetings and agreements are practical and beneficial additions to the coverage decision-making process. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor this legislation to further improve this important process and ensure Medicare beneficiaries have timely access to life-saving and life-enhancing medical innovations.

INTRODUCTION OF A BILL TO NAME A POST OFFICE IN EAST CHICAGO, INDIANA AFTER LANCE CORPORAL HAROLD GOMEZ

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 1999

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, today I was joined by the other nine members of the Indiana House delegation in introducing legislation to name a post office in East Chicago, Indiana, after a true hero of my congressional district, Marine Corps Lance Corporal Harold Gomez. Lance Corporal Gomez was the first citizen of Northwest Indiana to give his life for his country during the Vietnam War. My colleagues and I firmly believe that the time has come to honor him in a way that will value his memory and his sacrifice. To name a post office after Lance Corporal Gomez, a place that is synonymous in our country with the center of a community's life, is an appropriate way to accomplish this worthy goal.

Lance Corporal Gomez was born in East Chicago in 1946 and graduated from East Chicago's Washington High School in June 1965. After working briefly at Inland Steel Company, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and was ordered to Vietnam in 1966. A fire team leader in a rifle company of the Third Marine Division, a land mine killed Lance Corporal Gomez on