

TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE
SOCIAL SECURITY

HON. BERNARD SANDERS

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call the attention of my colleagues to a resolution on Social Security. The following was agreed upon by both houses of the Vermont General Assembly on the 13th of May, 1999.

I call the attention of my colleagues to this resolution and submit the resolution to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD for their benefit.

J.R.H. 113

JOINT RESOLUTION REQUESTING CONGRESS TO
PROTECT AND PRESERVE SOCIAL SECURITY

Offered by: Representatives Corren of Burlington, Aswad of Burlington, Bouricius of Burlington, Darrow of Newfane, Darrow of Dummerston, Hingtgen of Burlington, Jordan of Middlesex, Keenan of St. Albans City, Kreitzer of Rutland City, Nuovo of Middlebury, Smith of Sudbury, Sullivan of Burlington, Sweetser of Essex, Valsangiaco of Barre City, Vinton of Colchester, Wheeler of Burlington and Zuckerman of Burlington.

Whereas, the purpose of Social Security is to provide a strong, simple and efficient form of basic insurance against the adversities of old age, disability and dependency, and

Whereas, for 60 years Social Security has provided a stable platform of retirement, disability and survivor annuity benefits to protect working Americans and their dependents, and

Whereas, the costs to administer Social Security are less than one percent of the benefits delivered, and

Whereas, the American and world economies continue to encounter periods of high uncertainty and volatility that make it as important as ever to preserve a basic and continuing safety net of protections guaranteed by our society's largest guarantor of risk, the federal government, and

Whereas, Social Security affords protections to rich and poor alike and no citizen, no matter how well-off today, can foretell tomorrow's adversities, and

Whereas, average life expectancies are increasing and people are commonly living into their 80's and 90's, making it more important than ever that each of us be fully protected by defined retirement benefits, and

Whereas, medical scientists are continually developing new ways to maintain and enhance the lives of people with severe disabilities, thus making it more important that each of us to be protected against the risk of dependency, institutionalization and impoverishment, and

Whereas, the lives of wage earners and their spouses are seldom coterminous; one often outlives the other by decades, making it crucial to preserve a secure base of protection for children and other family members dependent on a wage earner who may die or become disabled, and

Whereas, Social Security, in current form, reinforces family cohesiveness and enhances the value of work in our society, and

Whereas, Congress currently has proposals to shift a portion of Social Security contributions from insurance to personal investment accounts for each wage earner, and

Whereas, Social Security, our largest and most fundamental insurance system, cannot

fulfill its protective function if it is splintered into individualized stock accounts and must create and manage millions of small risk-bearing investments out of a stream of contributions intended as insurance, and

Whereas, private accounts cannot be substituted for Social Security without eroding basic protections for working families, since such protections, to be strong, must be insulated from economic uncertainty and be backed by the entity best capable of spreading risk, the federal government, and

Whereas, the diversion of contributions to private investment accounts would dramatically increase financial shortfalls to the Social Security trust fund and require major reductions in the defined benefits upon which millions of Americans depend; and

Whereas, to administer 150 million separate investment accounts would require a larger bureaucracy, and the resulting expense and the cost of converting each account to an annuity upon retirement would consume much of the profit or exacerbate the loss realized by each participant, and

Whereas, the question of whether part of the Social Security Trust Fund should be diversified into investments other than government bonds so that, while still invested collectively at low expense, returns may be increased, thus enhancing the capacity of the fund to meet its obligations to pay benefits while spreading the risk across the entire spectrum of Social Security participants, is entirely different from that of splintering its millions of accounts, and

Whereas, creating an array of winners and losers would be contrary to the basic principles of insurance and risk distribution, thus defeating the purpose of this part of our retirement system, and

Whereas, Congress amended the Internal Revenue Code to provide a full menu of provisions that enables working Americans and their employers to voluntarily contribute to tax-sheltered accounts that are open to the opportunities and exposed to the risks of investment markets, diverting Social Security contributions to private accounts duplicates existing programs, and

Whereas, such recently created systems now cover half of American families, now therefore be it

Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly respectfully and strongly urges Congress not to enact laws that might tend to diminish or undermine a unified and stable Social Security system, and be it further

Resolved: That laws to encourage workers and their employers to save or invest for retirement should supplement and not substitute for the basic benefits of Social Security insurance that are vital to American working families, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States and each member of the Vermont Congressional Delegation.

A TRIBUTE TO THE GRANHAN
PLAYGROUND WOLFPACK

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor a great Philadelphia sports pro-

gram, the Granhan Playground Wolfpack. The Wolfpack is the latest in a long time of Philadelphia champions. My city is the proud home of many former, and future champs: people like Joe Frazier, the 76ers, the Flyers, the Phillies and the Eagles. And now, we can add the Wolfpack to that long list.

This year, Granhan Playground is not only the home of the 12 year old and under hockey champs, it also produced the 15 years old and under championship team. Mr. Speaker, this record breaking season could not have happened without the determination of kids who gave their all to bring glory to their neighborhood. The 12 and under team won with a talented roster featuring Mike and Kevin Cassidy; Kevin Lowthert; George Bochanski; Dan Devine; Mike Devine; Joe Walsh; Chris Porter; Mike McLaughlin; Chris Porter; Jason Mardinly and Rich Canfield. They also benefited from the skills of goalie Sean Rodgers, this year's Vezina award winner.

The 15 and older squad, anchored by fellow Vezina trophy winner, Julie Bochanski and playoff mvp, R.J. Carrido; featured Joe Walsh; Joe Grajek; Tom August; Jay Bailey; Brain DiTomo; Jim Dougherty; Josh Mills and Tom Kay, proved to be equally fierce competitors. They did their neighborhood proud in their march to victory.

But none of this would have been possible without the support and involvement of Wolfpack parents, family, and community volunteers. I am proud of them and all they do to help these kids grow into healthy and productive adults. And I have a special pride in one young man who works with the "Pack." I want to salute Robert F. Brady, my son, who is Recreation Leader at Granhan Playground. I love him and am proud of all the work he does.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join me in saluting the Granhan Wolfpack on this successful season and wish them many more.

CONGRATULATING ROSALINA
FREEMAN FOR IMPROVING COM-
MUNITY HEALTH IN EAST TEN-
NESSEE

HON. VAN HILLEARY

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ms. Rosalina Freeman, who was recently named one of ten outstanding individuals from around the country to receive a \$100,000 award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Community Health Leadership Program (CHLP).

Ms. Freeman is the founder and executive director of Reachout, Inc., which provides rural health education and services for East Tennessee's Hispanic factory and farm workers. Reachout works with other rural health care providers to offer mammograms, cancer prevention education, HIV/AIDS prevention, lead and pesticide education and post-natal education. In addition to these rural health services, Ms. Freeman's Reachout also offers GED programs and translation services.

Thanks to Ms. Freeman's leadership, dedication and caring spirit, the translation and referral services have reached more than 3,000

people in eight rural East Tennessee counties. More than 2,000 high school students have received Reachout's AIDS/HIV education program.

Ms. Freeman herself overcame great odds before helping improve rural health care for others in East Tennessee. Born in Puerto Rico, she has lived in Cocke County for the past 29 years. She earned an undergraduate degree in sociology in 1990, then went back to earn a Masters in health education in 1996. She even had to overcome her own illnesses stemming from a rare muscle condition.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when rural health care has been under direct assault from Washington, it is refreshing to see a private citizen take it upon herself to try to solve the problems she sees in her community. Ms. Freeman probably said it best when she said, "We believe in letting communities be the biggest part of the solution to addressing and solving their problems * * * I am committed to helping provide the tools to my community so it can help itself."

I agree completely, and I want to once again thank and congratulate Rosie Freeman for everything she has done to improve rural health care in East Tennessee. There is still much to do before rural health care receives the kind of attention it deserves, but with caring people like Ms. Freeman on the job, the situation looks a little brighter.

PRESERVING HEALTH CARE CHOICES FOR SENIORS

HON. MICHAEL BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, today, I am proud to introduce legislation that will help millions of Medicare beneficiaries whose health coverage is in jeopardy. My Florida colleague, PETER DEUTSCH, has joined me in sponsoring this bipartisan measure. Our bill—the "Medicare+Choice Risk Adjustment Amendments of 1999"—will help to preserve and expand health care choices for seniors who participate in Medicare managed care plans.

The Medicare+Choice program was created as part of the 1997 Balanced Budget Act to increase health care options for Medicare beneficiaries. While the majority of beneficiaries remain in traditional fee-for-service Medicare, enrollment in managed care plans has grown rapidly in recent years. Many seniors now depend on the additional benefits (such as prescription drug coverage) available through plans under the Medicare+Choice program. However, a serious crisis threatens this vital program.

Last year, nearly 100 Medicare managed care plans did not renew their Medicare contracts or reduced their geographic areas of service. This year, many more plans have announced their intent to leave the Medicare+Choice program, raising serious concerns about its continued availability as an option for Medicare beneficiaries. Many plans cite inadequate reimbursement as a major factor in their decision.

Unless Congress takes action to correct this problem, the consequences will be devastating

for Medicare beneficiaries, especially low-income seniors. Many will lose the option of participating in a Medicare managed care plan altogether. Others will face increased out-of-pocket costs or a reduction in benefits.

This situation is largely due to a decision by the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) to disregard the intent of Congress in establishing the Medicare+Choice program. The 1997 Balanced Budget Act required HCFA to establish a process for "adjusting" Medicare+Choice payments based on the likelihood or the "risk" that enrollees will use health care services.

Congress anticipated that this new "risk adjustment" process would provide Medicare+Choice plans with higher payments for patients who are chronically ill and lower payments for those who are generally healthy. We did not intend to decrease overall Medicare+Choice spending through this process. Instead, we were simply trying to make sure that Medicare+Choice funds would be distributed based on the health status of Medicare+Choice enrollees.

However, HCFA has completely disregarded the intent of Congress on this critical issue. The agency is using its authority to establish a "risk adjustment" process as an excuse to try to impose deep spending cuts in the Medicare+Choice program. HCFA's ill-advised decision threatens to seriously underfund the Medicare+Choice program. Estimates indicate as much as \$11 billion may be drained from Medicare+Choice over the next five years, if HCFA is allowed to go forward with its plan.

At the time the 1997 Balanced Budget Act was considered, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated no savings from the risk adjuster. CBO's analysis assumed that the risk adjuster would simply shift funds within Medicare+Choice. By contrast, HCFA's approach would drain billions of dollars from the program.

The "Medicare+Choice Risk Adjustment Amendments of 1999" would address this problem in two ways. First, it would require HCFA to implement its risk adjustment process on a budget neutral basis—as Congress intended. Second, the bill would repeal a provision of current law that automatically requires the annual increase in Medicare fee-for-service payments.

Millions of seniors rely on Medicare+Choice for greater flexibility in meeting their health care needs. My legislation will help to stabilize this vital program and guarantee continued health care choices for Medicare beneficiaries. I urge my colleagues to join me in protecting seniors' health care choices by cosponsoring the "Medicare+Choice Risk Adjustment Amendments of 1999."

A TRIBUTE TO JOE VIVIAN

HON. HEATHER WILSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mrs. WILSON. Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring to your attention the 35 years of service Mr. Joe Vivian has given to our community of Albuquerque as a coach, mentor and leader.

Mr. Vivian coached wrestling for 35 years at six city high schools. He began his wrestling career in the eighth grade when a coach reached out to him and helped him turn his life around. Through his coaching Mr. Vivian mentored many young athletes. Mr. Vivian provided important lessons in staying physically fit, being part of a team, setting and achieving goals and community involvement. People who worked with Joe Vivian describe him as dedicated and committed to the wrestlers he worked with. He coached teams to three state titles and holds over 300 career dual victories.

In addition to coaching, Joe Vivian volunteers with Meals on Wheels, Special Olympics and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Mr. Joe Vivian retired from coaching this year. Please join me in thanking him for the positive influence he is in our community and wish him the best in retirement.

CLINTON HYPOCRISY ON LAND MINES

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, the Contra Costa Times, my hometown newspaper in the East Bay of San Francisco, got it right today when they took the President to task on the issue of land mines. "Hypocrisy on Land Mines," an editorial, points out that while President Clinton is now giving his compassion and his warnings of safety to returning Kosovar refugees because their homeland is wired full of land mines, it was the same President Clinton who refused to sign the international treaty to ban land mines two years ago. Over 100 other nations signed the treaty and the United States should have taken the lead to see this treaty enacted and enforced. Instead, all the United States can do now is hope that not too many Kosovar refugees have their limbs blown off as they venture home after the war.

Tens of thousands of civilians are killed by land mines around the world every year. The world needs America's leadership to bring an end to this cruel form of warfare where the main victims, in fact, are civilians. I commend the editorial below to my colleagues and to my President.

[From Contra Costa Times, July 1, 1999]

HYPOCRISY ON LAND MINES

President Clinton gave good advice when he warned Kosovar Albanians to delay their return to Kosovo because of the many land mines still scattered about the countryside and in towns. But there must have been much gnashing of teeth at the office of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, whose members watched two years ago as Clinton and the United States refused to sign a treaty that would have banned land mines around the world. Why they must have wondered is it all right for Angolan and Cambodian children to be exposed to these deadly weapons, but not Kosovars?

Clinton was in full "caring" mode as he spoke with refugees in Macedonia last week. "I know a lot of people are anxious to go