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 care coverage is in jeopardy. My Florida colleague, Peter Deutch, 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. Medicare+Choice enrollees may 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 "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 simply were 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 adjustment. 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. 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. The wrestling coach reached out to him and helped turn him the light 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 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.
home," he said. “But you know there are still a lot of land mines in the ground, one sees routes into Kosovo and in many of the communities. You have suffered enough. I don’t want any child hurt. I don’t want anyone else to lose a leg or an arm or a child because of a land mine.”

The president neglected to mention that while the retreating Serb army left many of those land mines, much of the danger to returning civilians comes from unexploded “bomblets” from cluster bombs dropped by NATO planes.

Unexploded ordnance dropped by NATO aircraft floods the province. Two NATO soldiers died trying to deactivate some of it, and some children died when they tried to play with it. Cluster bombs contain 202 of the bomblets that scatter over a wide area.

The bomblets’ purpose is to kill enemy troops. But of course, as with land mines, it is civilians who pay the price. None of this is new. There are more than 100 million land mines in the ground around the world, many of them in unmarked fields where even children who put their heads down cannot find them. Most were sown during regional conflicts, such as the decades-long Angola Civil War. Afghanistan and Angola have roughly 9 million land mines each. The mines kill or maim some 26,000 civilians yearly.

Despite full knowledge of these obscene numbers, Clinton refused to sign the land mines treaty two years ago, even though 100 other nations did sign it. Now here he is in Macedonia warning civilians and their children about land mines, much of which he did nothing to stop, and cluster bomblets, which NATO deposited on Kosovo land.

It is he, the president of the United States acknowledging the danger of land mines. Perhaps now he will turn his attention to halting their further proliferation.

TRIBUTE TO J.B. WHITTEMORE

HON. SCOTT McINNIS
OF COLORADO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with a great deal of sadness that I wish to recognize the remarkable life and spirit of Mr. J.B. Whittemore of Pueblo, Colorado. With this, I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to Mr. Whittemore who embodied and exemplified hard work, dedication, and compassion. For more than half of a century, he dedicated his energy to ensuring the happiness of thousands of Pueblo children, never letting a lack of money keep children from enjoying the ride.

J.B. Whittemore was born in Pueblo, Colorado in 1914, the same year in which the City Park carousel was manufactured. With nickels earned by milking cows, Mr. Whittemore escaped the carousel. On March 1, 1943, he joined the City Parks Department staff—a job which became a career spanning 33 years. While working for the City Parks Department, Mr. Whittemore also worked nights, Sundays and holidays as the maintenance man and operator of the City Park carousel. Just as Mr. Whittemore cared about the happiness of children, he also cared about his family. He loved and appreciated his family and shared his light with all.

Mr. Whittemore was a man of kindness and generosity. Through his involvement in the community, he touched the lives of many. His smile, his devotion, and his zest for life will long be remembered and admired. Those who have come to know J.B. Whittmorer will miss him greatly. I am confident however, that in spite of this profound loss, the family and friends of Mr. Whittemore can take comfort in the knowledge that he made a significant impact on the quality of life of the citizens of Pueblo.

Sikh leader's letter exposes conflict in Kashmir

HON. JOHN T. DOOLITTLE
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, India has recently undertaken a military effort to eliminate the freedom movement in Kashmir. Supporters of freedom for all the nations of South Asia, especially neighboring Punjab, Kashmir, are concerned that if this conflict spreads, it could be a threat to other nations inside India's borders.

Recently, Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, wrote a letter to the Washington Times which I am sure will be of interest to my colleagues. He pointed out that the air attacks are really an attack on the Kashmiri freedom fighters. "India has not yet learned that people struggling for freedom cannot be suppressed by force forever," he wrote.

Dr. Aulakh wrote that "the reason for these conflicts is the denial of self-determination by the country that proclaims itself 'the world's largest democracy.'" This is the cause not only of the conflict in Kargil, but many of the political problems in South Asia. India spends its money to build nuclear weapons and forcibly maintain its unstable, polyglot country while half its people live below the international poverty line. To make it worse, India convened a meeting last month with China, Cuba, Serbia, and other enemies of our country to "stop the U.S." Why are the overstressed taxpayers of America supporting this kind of government?

Only when free and fair plebiscites on independence are held in those regions that are seeking their freedom can India legitimately claim that it is a democratic power. India promised the people of Kashmir a plebiscite in 1948. It promised the Sikhs of Punjab, Kashmir, that they would have autonomy. India claims it is democratic and that there is no support for Khalistan. Then why not hold a free and fair vote? If India wants to be a world power and if it claims that it is democratic, then it should allow the people of Kashmir, Nagaland and others seeking their freedom from India to enjoy the same rights?

The United States, Canada and Great Britain are major world powers. Not only is a free and fair plebiscite the democratic way to settle these issues, it is how great powers conduct themselves. India claims that there is no support for Khalistan. Then why not hold a vote to make sure?

The war against the people of Kashmir shows the inherent weakness of the Indian government. It is time for the people and nations of South Asia to claim their own parliaments, moving them one step closer to a free and fair vote.

The war against the people of Kashmir shows the inherent weakness of the Indian government. Now is the time for the people and nations of South Asia to claim their freedom. America can support this by cutting off aid to India until it lets people have the freedom and by declaring its open support for the freedom movements of South Asia.

GURMIT SINGH AULAKH,
President, Council of Khalistan.

IN MEMORY AND TRIBUTE TO JAMES J. "JIMMY" CREAMER

HON. ROBERT A. WEGYAND
OF RHODE ISLAND
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. WEGYAND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay solemn tribute to a distinguished colleague and dear friend, James J. "Jimmy" Creamer. I must confess that I can hardly believe that this man, so full of life and love, is no longer with us. Just last week, I ran into Jimmy in the halls of the Rhode Island State House. We had a typical conversation, laughing at Jimmy’s stories and humorous insights into Rhode Island politics, and then he passed...