

One." The program recognizes individuals in our Nation's communities who are working to promote Christian values. One such person is Rebecca Mason, a 10-year old girl from the Third District of North Carolina, which I am proud to represent. Rebecca became frustrated with the state of our country after learning some frightening facts about the rate of crime and violence in our Nation's neighborhoods. Rebecca could not understand why more people of faith were not taking action, so she decided to do something about it. She created a petition for Christian values, calling upon all Americans to stand up and take action to promote and preserve the morals and values we learn from the Bible. Rebecca's efforts were featured on Dr. Kennedy's "Power of One" program. As a man of strong religious conviction myself and as Rebecca's Congressman, I was asked to participate in the program. It was an honor for me to be part of a television program that recognizes the citizens who are taking action to make their communities and their nation stronger. In fact, it reminded me of one of my favorite Bible verses from Isaiah book 6, verse 8. It says, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Kennedy, like Rebecca Mason, has answered God's call, and he has devoted his life to serving as a messenger of God's word. Today, I am proud to recognize his efforts during this exciting year of celebration to show my respect for his devotion and his commitment to spread the message of hope to all America. Thank you Dr. Kennedy, for reminding those of us who serve the American people—and all citizens—that faith and freedom go hand in hand. Happy anniversary. May God continue to Bless you and give you the strength to continue sharing His message with the world.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
GHENT BAND

**HON. JOHN E. SWEENEY**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 12, 1999*

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Ghent Band on their 100th anniversary in entertaining the communities of Columbia County, located in the heart of the 22nd Congressional District, which I proudly represent.

Founded in 1899 by 15 members, the Ghent Band continues to make history while other bands in New York have become history. Inspired by nationally touring bands like John Philip Sousa, the original 15 members gathered old, second hand instruments and began rehearsing weekly at the Old Ghent School House. To this day, the band plays on, serving as Columbia County's only full-fledged village band.

Mr. Speaker, for a full century the Ghent Band's music has filled the hearts of the young and old, creating lasting memories at the many parades and concerts at which they play. The Ghent Band holds a special place in my own heart as they were present at the in-

auguration celebrating my swearing in to the House of Representatives.

Given the diversity of age and background of the band's members, as well as their strong ties to the local community, I have no doubt that the Ghent Band will continue on for an additional 100 years.

Mr. Speaker, the Ghent Band is America at its best, representing all that is good in this nation. I wish its members and their families the best as they celebrate 100 years of serving and entertaining the Village of Ghent.

BIPARTISAN CONSENSUS MAN-  
AGED CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT  
OF 1999

SPEECH OF

**HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 6, 1999*

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2723, the bipartisan consensus Managed Care Improvement Act. This important piece of legislation is long overdue and I am pleased to be a cosponsor of this bipartisan bill that will reform the managed care industry. I commend Mr. NORWOOD and Mr. DINGELL for their diligent work and determination in bringing this bill to the floor today and the House leadership for scheduling debate on this bill.

H.R. 2723, will bring about necessary changes to the managed care industry by bringing the attention of HMOs back to the needs of the American public. For too long, these insurance companies have been driven by profits and have lost sight of their true responsibility, to provide a quality service to those Americans who pay for insurance each month. All too often we hear stories from our constituents who have had numerous conflicts with their insurance companies, ranging from denial of coverage for preventative procedures and medically necessary treatments to denial of reimbursement for trips to emergency rooms and specialists. Americans pay their monthly premiums and expect that if the time comes when they need to seek out medical assistance, they should not have to worry about whether or not their HMO is going to oppose the necessity of their visit to a doctor.

Americans should be able to see specialists such as a cardiologist or oncologist without obtaining a referral from their primary physician, a chore which merely takes up time, time that may be better served by immediately seeing a specialist. Moreover, women should have direct access to their obstetrician-gynecologist and parents should have the option to select a pediatrician as their child's primary physician. Under current guidelines, this is not an option. However, these issues would be addressed by the passage of H.R. 2723.

The major concern that has been brought to my attention by my constituents has been the issue of employer liability. I am gratified that this bill contains a self-executing managers amendment that will directly address this concern. With the passage of H.R. 2723, language will be implemented which clearly states that an employer can not be held liable

unless they are making medical decisions. An employer can provide health care coverage for their employees and set the parameters of that coverage with the knowledge that they will not be sued by an employee should the HMO make a negligible medical decision that results in injury or death.

The intent of this legislation is to make managed care coverage more user friendly. To provide the necessary information to policyholders up front so that the frequency of injuries and deaths due to negligent decisions by the HMO decreases. However, there will be times when an HMO fails to provide coverage for services that a policy holder is entitled to. It is for these cases, that the individual has the ability to hold the HMO accountable for its negligent decisions. In cases of personal injury or death, the individual deserves the right to sue the insurance company and hold them financially responsible for their irresponsible decisions. It is for this reason that I strongly support the liability portion of this bill.

I am confident that by requiring health plans to disclose information to policyholders regarding coverage of benefits, doctors, facilities, and claim procedures, the need to proceed to a judicial solution should not occur as often as opponents of this bill insist.

Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to stand up and fight for the rights of the American public and to support passage of this legislation.

VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL  
CENTER IN GRAND JUNCTION,  
COLORADO HONORED

**HON. SCOTT MCINNIS**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 12, 1999*

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to honor not one individual but a team who has dedicated their time, effort, and care into making the smallest VA hospital in the Country, the best. The employees of the Grand Junction VA hospital have changed health care in this country as we know it. Their unparalleled care for the patient has won them the Department of Veterans Affairs highest honor.

The Robert W. Carey Quality Award trophy is given to one facility each year to recognize organizational effectiveness and performance through quality management. It was the first time that the hospital submitted the entry form which was fifty pages long and took five months to process. The employees of the Grand Junction VA hospital patiently waited to hear back while a Department of Veteran Affairs panel reviewed applications. Soon after a panel visit to the hospital and a final ranking decision by a panel of outside judges, they were chosen for the award.

The basis for their winning the award are numerous and well founded. Among them, their work in the revolutionary, primary-care approach to health care that began in 1988. They call it a "virtual circle of care" in which patients see the same physician, nurse, clerk, and social worker each time they visit the hospital. This allows for more personalized care