

past and extending my sympathies to all the earthquake victims and their families. My prayers are with them.

Taiwan is a model of success in Asia. Through hard work and ingenuity, Taiwan has emerged as one of the strongest economies on the Pacific Rim and is a showcase democracy in the world. The accomplishments of Taiwan, whether economic or political, are truly impressive.

I am confident that Taiwan's future successes will remain impressive, despite the recent earthquake which has severely damaged Taiwan's economy and infrastructure. God-speed and good fortune to our friends in Taiwan as they rebuild their nation.

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TRIBUTE TO TODD OFFORD

**HON. RON PACKARD**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 13, 1999*

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Mr. Todd Offord as Reserve Firefighter of the Year for the City of Lake Forest. When Todd was 16 years old he began as a Fire Explorer and was certified in Fire Control and auto extrication. He also attended the Fire Explorer Academy at El Toro Marine Base. In 1989, Todd became a Paid Call Firefighter and has since attended the Driver/Operator academy, become certified as an Emergency Medical Technician, and attended the Orange County Fire Departments 562 hour Firefighter Academy.

In his time as a Reserve Firefighter, Todd has helped with yearly Christmas decorations, community fairs, serving food to the homeless and many other volunteer projects. Todd is currently employed by the El Toro Water District in customer service and continues to be a valuable asset to the Reserve Firefighters in Lake Forest.

Mr. Speaker, reserve firefighters provide key services in protecting communities and citizens, as well as our Nation's forests. Todd Offord has gone above and beyond the call of duty in his service to the Orange County Community. I am proud to recognize Todd Offord as Reserve Firefighter of the Year.

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HONORING BILL BURKE FOR HIS  
ROLE AS CHAIRMAN OF THE SAN  
DIEGO CHAPTER OF THE AGC

**HON. BRIAN P. BILBRAY**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 13, 1999*

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to honor and congratulate Bill Burke for the leadership and direction he has provided to the San Diego Chapter of the Associated General Contractors (AGC) over the last 23 years. As Chairman of AGC, his countless hours of persistent hard work have led to some great strides and advancements for general contractors in San Diego.

During Bill's tenure he provided fundamental leadership that expanded the tasks of the San

Diego AGC by moving them into a multi-dimensional organization that not only strives to accomplish the goals and achievements of the construction industry, but also provides apprenticeships, safety, and benefit programs. He has demonstrated great flexibility and creativity over the last two decades to keep ahead of the changing role of general contractors and the construction industry in San Diego County.

At the end of this year Bill Burke will be retiring from his leadership position. He will remain a constant standard and hard act to follow for all future AGC Chairmen, his impact on the construction industry in San Diego county will be felt for many future generations. I thank him for all his efforts and congratulate him on his retirement and wish him the best of luck in all future endeavors.

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WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES OF  
CONGRESS?

**HON. DIANA DeGETTE**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 13, 1999*

Ms. DeGETTE. Mr. Speaker, what are the priorities of this Congress? Today, the House voted on the Defense Appropriations Conference Report, the final vote to determine funding for the Department of Defense. The Defense Appropriations, Military Construction, and Energy and Water Appropriations bills together have provided \$289 billion in defense funds, which is \$8 billion more than was requested by the Administration. In addition, the Defense Appropriations Conference Report allocates \$1 billion for the procurement of "test" F-22 fighters and an additional \$275 million has been provided for the purchase of five unrequested F-15 jets. Extra funding, well beyond what is needed to maintain a strong defense, is being allocated to the Defense Department at the same time as programs that help the neediest Americans are being severely cut. Millions of children across the country are without health care, programs to help improve our children's education are being cut, and millions of people are living in poverty at a time when affordable housing is consistently decreasing. This Congress must better prioritize in order to provide for the needs of Americans.

Currently, 11 million children in the United States go without health insurance and 150,000 of them are in my home state of Colorado. Eight million children without health insurance could be insured using the excess \$8 billion in defense funding.

Several "test" F-22 fighters will be purchased by the United States at a cost of \$300 million per plane. Every uninsured child in Colorado who suffers because he or she cannot receive health care could be covered at half the price of a single F-22 fighter. Instead, the fighter jets will be produced while children in every state across America suffer due to a lack of needed health coverage.

Education is another area where deep funding cuts will harm our nation's children. Approximately \$3 billion has been targeted for cuts from the education budget for fiscal year

2000. These cuts damage education programs intended to assist over two million children. This proposal would cut programs that provide needed after school care, reading and math help for low-income children, and technology support for schools. Under current proposals, states would not receive grants to assist in School-to-Work programs and funding would be denied for drug and violence coordinators in middle schools across the country. The cost of a single F-22 fighter would provide approximately 750,000 low-income and needy children with lunches at school for a year through the National School Lunch program. In addition, about 675,000 needy students could be provided with school lunches at the cost of the five unrequested F-15 fighters provided for in the Defense Appropriations Conference Report. Instead, 2.9 billion dollars' worth of education programs are in danger of being underfunded.

Finally, even in today's booming economy, millions of Americans suffer from homelessness and poverty. According to a Congressional Research Service report by Morton J. Schusseim, "Housing the Poor: Federal Housing Program for Low-Income Families," on any given night, 600,000 people sleep on the streets because they have no home. In addition, 12.5 million people are classified by the government as having severe housing problems such as substandard and crowded living conditions. In recent years, there has been a 15.8 percent increase in the number of very-low-income households in the United States and the number of affordable housing units has decreased by 42 percent between 1974 and 1995. Severe physical deficiencies such as bad wiring, broken heating and dilapidated structures affect 3.1 million families that rent homes.

So, what are the priorities of this Congress? The answer lies in its actions. When defense is provided with billions of dollars more than what was requested, when too many kids remain uninsured, and when education initiatives and affordable housing programs are in danger of being cut by millions, it becomes crystal clear that the priorities of this Congress are grossly out of sync with those of the American people.

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FOCUSING ON ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN THE NEW BRAUNFELS  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

**HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 13, 1999*

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the education efforts of the New Braunfels Independent School District in collaboration with the Center for Leadership in Science, Mathematics and Technology at the Alamo Community College District. These two educational districts have joined to host a meeting entitled "The Community Focuses on Academic Excellence," scheduled for October 19, 1999, in New Braunfels, TX. The meeting will address the need for more students to engage in hands-on science exploration in grades K-12.

The New Braunfels Independent School District has demonstrated an exceptional dedication to expand the educational horizons of its students, particularly in science. Together, the New Braunfels Independent School District and Alamo Community College District have invited a keynote speaker, Dr. Lawrence Lowery from the Lawrence Hall of Science at U.C. Berkeley, to discuss the topic "How Students Learn." The United States Marine Corps will be on hand to present \$10,000 for an Annenberg Satellite Dish for use in all schools in New Braunfels. The commitment of the school districts, the support of the parents, and the generosity of the community will help expand the horizons of our children.

Science is key to understanding the world we live in. It is important for our students to have the type of hands-on education in science that is both challenging and rewarding. Without exposure to the sciences early on, our students will be left behind on the road of educational advancement. We have seen time and again that a commitment to higher standards of education is a commitment to excellence and a commitment to our future.

I would like to commend the New Braunfels Independent School District for its focus on its students. The efforts of teachers, parents, and a community of supporters will help us reach our common goal, academic excellence and a love of learning.

WILT CHAMBERLAIN'S  
PENNSYLVANIA LEGACY

HON. GEORGE W. GEKAS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 13, 1999

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to one of the greatest basketball players, and one of the most magnificent Pennsylvanians that ever lived. As the Representative from Hershey, Pennsylvania, I have a unique remembrance of Wilton Norman Chamberlain.

On the tragic occasion of his death we remember his awesome physical stature and stunning agility, his God given athletic prowess. Inevitably, we recall what is one of the greatest feats in all of sport: Wilt Chamberlain's 100 point game. Chamberlain's 100 point game, a record that will surely stand through the next millennium, took place on March 2, 1962, in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

Wilt Chamberlain, a Philadelphia native, began his career with the Philadelphia Warriors in 1959. He remained loyal to his team for many years, and to people all over Pennsylvania, as evidenced by the game at Hershey. To his credit and the credit of the NBA, the value of bringing professional basketball to people in reaches otherwise untouched by the big city teams was well recognized.

Wilt Chamberlain's 100 point game will be remembered as one of the greatest athletic accomplishments of all time. But it will be remembered by the people of Hershey for the great and imposing presence that left its impression there 37 years ago, and remains to this day.

BALANCED BUDGET ACT CUTS TO  
MEDICARE

HON. JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 13, 1999

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, Maine hospitals, home health agencies, and skilled nursing facilities are in a state of crisis. Congress must address this issue before we recess for the year.

I am proud of the fact that Maine health institutions are efficient and perform above the norm nationwide in regards to quality of care. But now our providers, especially those in rural areas, are suffering disproportionately under the Balanced Budget Act Medicare cuts, and our resources are stretched to the limit. With the BBA Medicare cuts, our hospitals will lose \$338 million over 5 years.

Maine has the lowest Medicare inpatient operating margins in the country. In fact, our operating margins are in the negative. Because of these already too-low Medicare reimbursement rates, any cuts to Medicare hurt Maine that much harder. There are no more margins left to cut. Cost shifting will occur and this will hurt all Maine citizens.

One area which particularly concerns me and my constituents is the effect of the interim payment system on home health agencies. The burden home health agencies have been asked to bear is extreme, especially when considering that the losses are spread among only 40 providers in the state. I hope that a fix can be developed for home health providers that includes the elimination of the 15 percent reduction in payments due to begin October 2000. Home health agencies in my district also ask that an outlier payment be added to the Interim Payment System to adequately account for high-need, high-cost patients. A flexible overpayment schedule, interest-free, would be helpful to providers, as well as a gradual raise in the per beneficiary limits for agencies falling under the national median and the extension of Periodic Interim Payments.

I am very concerned about the effects of the outpatient prospective payment system and the severe cuts Maine providers will experience under this reimbursement system. By HCFA's own admission in the May 7 published rule, rural hospitals will take the biggest hit in reimbursements from the outpatient PPS. The total reduction in the first year for all institutions will be \$900 million, or a 5.7 percent average reduction per facility. I hope we consider placing a ceiling on the level of cut any hospital would face to their outpatient reimbursements.

Skilled nursing facilities are under particular burdens under the BBA as well. The prospective payment system is reducing payments by 20 percent. Rural facilities, especially, do not have the operating margins to absorb such a drastic cut. There are no accounting methods to increase payments for medically complex cases. On a related front, many providers believe the \$1,500 annual cap on therapy services is arbitrary and very hurtful for seniors. Many of these seniors have multiple therapy needs which can run out in a matter of months under this tight cap.

Changes in reimbursement for Graduate Medical Education unintentionally hurt family practice training in districts such as my own. I hope that this body reviews the technical corrections to GME reimbursements contained in my bill, H.R. 1222, which addressed this issue. These corrections are especially important for rural communities, where there are still shortages of family practice physicians.

Finally, I hope we consider as part of BBA corrective legislation the incorporation of provisions of H.R. 1344, the Triple-A Rural Health Improvement Act, developed by the Rural Health Care Coalition of the House. This bill is designed to address further the need for health care access for seniors in rural areas.

We must take the initiative to attack the problem of inadequate provider reimbursements now. I urge my colleagues to support the restoration of some of the most-harmful BBA cuts.

CELEBRATING THE HARRY AND  
ROSE SAMSON FAMILY RE-  
SOURCE CENTER

HON. THOMAS M. BARRETT

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 13, 1999

Mr. BARRETT of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to share with my colleagues a few words of congratulations to the Neighborhood House of Milwaukee on the dedication of its Harry and Rose Samson Family Resource Center, as well as my sincere appreciation for the generosity of Harry Samson.

Neighborhood House has a long and rich history of service to children and families in my hometown of Milwaukee, WI. Its program services are delivered in a community setting and are tailored to meet the diverse needs of neighborhood residents. The goal has always been to build "Healthy Families in a Strong Community," and Neighborhood House has never forgotten that the one implies the other.

I have respected Harry Samson for years, and I have the deepest regard and admiration for his commitment to improving the lives of others in our community. Harry and his late wife, Rose have led by example, giving generously of their financial resources, their time and their creative energy to support the Children's Outing Association, Congregation Shalom, the Next Door Foundation, the Jewish Community Center, and other worthy organizations.

Today in Milwaukee, Harry Samson's many friends and admirers will join Neighborhood house leadership and staff and neighborhood residents in celebrating Harry's latest gift to Milwaukee: the Harry and Rose Samson Family Resource Center. The Center will be home to a new and expanded program of services at Neighborhood House. These include support groups to help parents and other childcare givers, employment and work search resources and workshops, a clothing exchange to help families meet the clothing needs of growing children, a play area that will serve both parents and area in-home child care providers, and a health and wellness program