IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 2420

HON. RICHARD H. BAKER
OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, November 17, 1999

Mr. BAKER. Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that America's schools, libraries, and rural clinics are allowed to capitalize on the newest computer and data communications technology.

In 1996, Congress and the Clinton Administration joined together to establish a program to extend the Internet to all our schools. That effort is underway—at a cost of about $2.45 billion a year, incidentally. But in this field, just like everywhere else, it is the weakest link in the chain that matters. And, the "weak link" here is the data communications network—or, more accurately, the lack of such a network.

Mr. Speaker, instead of trying to expand these networks by harnessing the power of competition, economic freedom, and individual choice, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) seems to be relying on yesterday's tools—heavy handed and restrictive regulation.

That's not my estimate; it's the considered judgment of two of this country's experts—Congressman JOHN DINGELL and his colleague, the Chairman of the House Telecommunications Subcommittee, Congressman TAUZIN.

Their appraisal of the situation is that we need to modernize and reform FCC regulation—because, otherwise, the data links which this country needs, are just not going to be available. That is the philosophy reflected in their bill, H.R. 2420. And, it is a pro-growth, pro-progress view which I want to embrace.

Mr. Speaker, if we can accomplish reform in this field, all of the experts are predicting that there can be a rapid expansion of our communications networks. That expansion, in turn, will help connect our schools, libraries, and clinics faster. And that will yield substantial public policy dividends.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE TEXAS REALTOR OF THE YEAR

HON. RALPH M. HALL
OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, November 17, 1999

Mr. HALL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my congratulations to Barbara Russell of Denton, Texas, who this year was named the 1998 Realtor of the Year by the Texas Association of Realtors.

Barbara has served on the Texas Association of Realtors Board of Directors and is a former regional vice president and chairman of the legislative and economic development committees. She also served two three-year terms on the National Association of Realtors Board of Directors.

In Denton, Barbara has earned many honors, including the Greater Denton/Wise County Association of Realtors President's Award, Women's Council of Realtors Gold Rule Award, Realtor of the Year and Associate of the Year. In addition, she is active in various civic and charitable organizations, including serving as former chairman of the board of the Denton Chamber of Commerce and serving four years on the Denton Planning and Zoning Commission.

Barbara has nearly 30 years of experience in the real estate business, and this recent award is a testament to her professional accomplishments and her hard work. She is married to Benny Russell, and they have two daughters and four grandchildren.

And Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I also did not pay tribute to the late Mary Claude Gay, a prominent realtor in Denton and associate of Barbara's. Mary Claude's contributions to her profession also have been significant, and she, too, was very influential in Denton's community life.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize Barbara Russell and Mary Claude Gay for their accomplishments in their profession and for their contributions to their community. The Texas Association of Realtors could not have selected a more giving and devoted Realtor of the Year. Barbara Russell is a class act and the epitome of the type of leadership and professionalism that bring respect and admiration for her profession.

As we adjourn today, and as we leave the floor of the House of Representatives for the last time this century, let us do so in respect and appreciation for the "Texas Realtor of the Year"—Barbara Russell.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2116,
VETERANS MILLENNIUM HEALTH CARE AND BENEFITS ACT

Mr. Speaker this bill is important not only because it sends an important signal to the veterans in the Houston community. Some 1,646,700 veterans live in the State of Texas alone. The Houston Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center is expected to receive and serve over 50,000 veterans in this year alone. I expect this measure to improve the quality of life for all our veterans who so proudly served our nation.

Mr. Speaker, I am fortunate to have the Houston Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center located in my congressional district. Having just celebrated fifty years of service to the veterans in the Houston community. Some 1,646,700 veterans live in the State of Texas alone. The Houston VA Medical Center expects to receive and serve over 50,000 veterans in this year alone. I expect this measure to improve the quality of life for all our veterans who so proudly served our nation.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is important not only because it sends an important signal to the men and women serving our nation in places like Bosnia, Kosovo, Germany, Korea, Japan and other far off places around the world. That message is simple, that when you serve our nation we will answer the plea of President Lincoln "to care for him who shall have borne the battle."

I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 2116 and care for the men and women who have borne the battle.