

This legislation provides a cost-effective means of providing assistance to those small rural hospitals who are struggling with the unintended consequences of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. As those of us who represent rural areas can attest to, rural hospitals are desperately in need of such assistance. According to a survey conducted by Texas CPAs in April of 2000, the operating margin for hospitals outside a Standard Metropolitan Area with under 50 licensed beds pre-BBA was \$26,000,000 while the operating margin post-BBA was negative \$7,900,000. Reimbursement has been reduced by over \$34 million since the BBA, while at the time the average rural hospital has incurred uncompensated and charity charges of \$1.1 million since the changes contained in the Balanced Budget Act went into effect. Unless action is taken this year to provide assistance for these hospitals, many of them will be forced to close their doors, leaving many rural areas without access to hospital services.

I believe I can speak for all of my colleagues when I say that while none of us want to endanger the Medicare trust fund, we also want to ensure that Medicare reforms do not drive valuable health care providers into bankruptcy. After all, denying Medicare recipients in rural areas access to quality health care breaks the promise the government makes to the American people when it requires them to pay taxes to finance the Medicare trust fund that they will receive quality health care in their golden years.

Therefore, I am pleased to advance this proposal, which was developed by experts in rural health care in my district, which provides help for rural health care without endangering the soundness of the Medicare trust fund. The proposal consists of four simple changes in current Medicare laws for "Essential Service Hospitals." An Essential Service Hospital is defined as a hospital located in a non-Metropolitan Statistical Area with 50 state-licensed beds or less. The specifics of the legislation are:

1. A wage index for Essential Service Hospitals set at 1.0—Essential Service Hospitals receive 26 percent less Medicare Reimbursement than hospitals in MSA area. This places rural areas at disadvantage in competing for high-quality employees with hospitals in urban areas. Setting the wage index at 1.0 will enhance the ability of rural hospitals to attract the best personal and thus ensure residents of rural areas can continue to receive quality health care.

2. Allow Essential Service Hospitals to treat 100 percent of Medicare copay and deductions which become hospital bad debts as an allowable cost—The BBA of 1997 reduced the amount of bad debts incurred because of uncollected Medicare copayments and deductions that hospitals can submit to Medicare for reimbursement as an allowable cost. This places an especially tough burden on Essential Service Hospitals which often have a high percentage of bad debts because they tend to have a high percentage of low-income populations among their clientele.

3. Exempt Essential Service Hospitals from the Outpatient Payment System (PPS)—Since rural hospitals lack the volume necessary to achieve a fair reimbursement rate under PPS,

it makes no sense to apply PPS to these hospitals. Exempting Essential Service Hospitals from PPS assures that they will have their reimbursement rate determined by a formula that matches their unique situation.

4. Provides a 20 percent Medicare Disproportionate Share (DSH) payment to Essential Service Hospitals—Since small rural hospitals tend to serve a larger number of low-income persons than the average hospital, they have a particular need for Medicare DSH payments. However, many of these hospitals are not benefiting from the DSH program, this legislation will help ensure these hospitals received the support from Medicare they need to continue providing vital health care to low-income residents of rural areas.

Considering that the BBA of 1997 has resulted in Medicare savings of over \$50 billion more than projected by Congress surely it is not too much to ask that Congress ensure Medicare patients in rural areas are not denied access to quality health care services because of the unintended consequences of the Balanced Budget Amendment. I therefore call on my colleagues to stand up for rural hospitals by cosponsoring the Essential Rural Hospital Preservation Act.

WILDFIRES IN THE WEST RAISE QUESTION ABOUT ADMINISTRATION ACTIONS

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 20, 2000

Mr. BEREUTER Mr. Speaker, this Member commends to his colleagues the following editorial from the September 8, 2000, Norfolk Daily News. The editorial questions the Administration's actions restricting the construction of wilderness roads which have allowed preventive measures designed to avoid blazing forest fires.

[From the Norfolk Daily News, Sept. 8, 2000]
POETIC JUSTICE IN ACCUSATIONS—CLINTON ADMINISTRATION DESERVES CRITICISM FOR POLICY THAT AIDED FIRES

President Clinton is no more to blame for the wildfires ravaging the West than he is responsible for the nation's economic prosperity. But there is a certain poetic justice in political efforts to portray him and Vice President Al Gore as villains in the frightening destruction of thousands of acres of forest.

Several Western politicians—who, not coincidentally, are Republicans and allies of George W. Bush—have taken particular aim at a sweeping White House executive order preventing the building of large numbers of wilderness roads needed for forest-thinning by the lumber industry. The rationale of the order was that the lumber industry would do critical damage to the forests. But some critics have maintained that, by cutting some smaller trees and removing the underbrush, the industry can help keep forests healthy and prevent small fires from becoming raging blazes.

Vice President Gore, who is constantly lambasting industries in his presidential campaign for supposed instances of greed and chicanery, was an outspoken supporter of the executive order. Judging by the language

he used, his thesis seems to be that making profits from trees is a premeditated and soulless insult to nature. A number of experts—and not just Republicans and industry spokesmen—agree, however, that some controlled lumbering activity in these areas can be a blessing to nature.

Mr. Gore's business-bashing rhetoric and other aspects of the Clinton roadless policy suggest it was at least as much an effort to score political points as an effort to protect wilderness. The administration, as a result, seems to have earned the politically motivated accusations being tossed its way during this dreadful summer of fires.

In the end, of course, the fires are mainly a result of a very hot, very dry summer and of unfortunate no-burn federal policies that scarcely made their first appearance when President Clinton was elected.

President Clinton and Vice President Gore simply happen to have been in office when the fires occurred, just as they simply happened to be in office when the end of the Cold War, high-tech productivity and Federal Reserve anti-inflation policies helped create good economic times.

TRIBUTE TO CAVE SPRING NATURE PARK

HON. KAREN MCCARTHY

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 20, 2000

Ms. MCCARTHY of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of Missouri's treasured historical and natural sites as it celebrates its 25th Anniversary. Twenty-two years ago as a Missouri State Representative, I had the privilege to join the members of the Cave Spring Association in creating and preserving the Cave Spring Nature Park as one of our country's celebrated historical sites.

The roots run deep in the area now named the Cave Spring Nature Park. From as far back as pre-pioneer times this site was referred to as the "Osage Trace." This name was attributed to the Indians who occupied the area: the Osage, Sac, Kansa, and Fox tribes. Later the area and its trails were surveyed and soon opened as trading routes to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Under the ownership of Jesse Barnes, this land would become one of the principal campgrounds for pioneer settlers, traders, and wagon trains heading west to discover the new territory. The cave spring was producing up to a million gallons of water a day to replenish the travelers and their horses, as well as creating a lush landscape.

It was this breathtaking landscape that would later attract horseback riders and picnickers including the young Harry Truman and Bess Wallace during their courtship. A picture of the infamous cave at this site would later be featured in a 1945 Life Magazine edition entitled "Truman's Missouri." From 1857 to 1877 the Cave Spring was owned by Harry Truman's grandfather, Solomon Young. Soon the Truman family would build their family farm just on the outskirts of the Cave Spring area, which is today appropriately known as Grandview. In the following years the Cave Spring would be the recognized by the Daughter's of the American Revolution as one of the foremost significant sites along the historic Santa

Fe Trail. Unfortunately, over the course of the next few decades the Cave Spring would fall into a period of dormancy and neglect in which the cave itself was in a "lost" state in which its whereabouts were unknown. It was not until the construction of a church that a large sinkhole was created which revealed the cave and subsequently the spring was rediscovered to a new world of appreciation. This brought new exploration and celebration of the Cave Spring and its surroundings. Soon after the rediscovery, the Cave Spring Association was formed to ensure that this site would receive the appreciation it has earned to ensure that its legacy will live on forever. Since 1975 the Cave Spring Nature Park and Historic Site has provided the northwestern Missouri region with a variety of natural and historic opportunities, specializing in enrichment programs for children, young adults, and families. The Association has worked tirelessly to preserve this site and the rich history that it bears.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in saluting the Cave Spring Nature Park and Historic Site and the entire Cave Spring Association for 25 years of service to the Greater Kansas City community.

IN HONOR OF THE 22ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE GRAY PANTHERS OF METRO DETROIT

HON. DAVID E. BONIOR

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 20, 2000

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor the 22d anniversary of one of Metro Detroit's most active and valuable organizations. For more than two decades, the Gray Panthers of Metro Detroit have been organized with the goal of advancing the causes of aging Americans and social justice for all.

The Gray Panthers were established on a national level in 1970. But it wasn't until 1978 that Lillian Rosinger, inspired by the dedication to social reform of Gray Panthers founder Maggie Kuhn, organized and was elected first convener of the Metro North Gray Panthers.

In the 22 years that followed, the all-volunteer network of grass roots activists has touched the lives of citizens across the tri-county area. They are a diverse combination of both younger and older people dreaming and working together for a better society. They have long championed the idea of a single payer health care system that will cover all Americans, young and old, rich or poor. The Gray Panthers have also taken strong, well-researched positions which support the strengthening of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

True to their founding, the Gray Panthers have vigorously opposed discrimination based on age, sex, and race. They have put their hearts, minds and bodies on the lines in rallies, protest marches and public gatherings nationwide. At the local level, they can be seen rallying in support of locked out newspaper strikers or organizing a "Medicare For All" petition drive. Through their newsletters, website and e-mail action alerts, members have contacted elected officials in support of

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

causes they cherish and in opposition to legislation they deem irresponsible.

Please join me in recognizing the Gray Panthers of Metro Detroit's 22d year as a force for positive social change in the Detroit and its surrounding areas.

INTRODUCTION OF THE DRUG COMPETITION ACT OF 2000

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 20, 2000

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Drug Competition Act of 2000.

This legislation would correct a grossly anti-competitive abuse by branded and generic drug companies of the generic drug approval process. Only recently have we learned that such companies, which usually operate as fierce competitors to the benefit of American consumers, can strike collusive agreements to trade multimillion dollar payoffs by the brand company for delays in the introduction of lower cost, generic alternatives.

These sweetheart deals have earned the scrutiny of the Federal Trade Commission and the Food and Drug Administration. The FTC recently undertook consent agreements and enforcement actions against several companies which have engaged in such deals. But more can be done to prevent them from recurring.

I am very pleased to have collaborated with Senator LEAHY of Vermont, the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, in drafting this legislation. The Drug Competition Act would simply require companies seeking to reach secret, anticompetitive agreements to disclose them to the FTC and FDA. Disclosure of these agreements would enable Federal authorities to ensure that existing antitrust and drug approval laws are enforced to the letter. In sum, American consumers can be protected from anticompetitive abuses by the application of a little "sunshine."

I am very pleased this bill is being introduced with bipartisan support, and I urge my colleagues to join us in cosponsoring the Drug Competition Act of 2000.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 20, 2000

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, due to illness, I was not able to vote during consideration of rollcall 46-476. Had I been present, I would have voted: "aye" on rollcall numbers 460-465, 469, 471-472 and 475; "no" on rollcall numbers 466-468, 470, 473-474, and 476.

September 20, 2000

IN RECOGNITION OF THE FOURTH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. MAC COLLINS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 20, 2000

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, it has been 2000 years since our Lord was borne, and for one hundred of those years, his people have been served by the Fourth Street Missionary Baptist Church. I wish that prior obligations did not prevent me from joining you as you celebrate this milestone in your impressive new sanctuary.

But I am reminded that Jesus said his church would be built of living stones—of people—who are far more important than any structure, no matter how great and how beautiful it is.

When Fourth Street Missionary Baptist Church was founded a century ago by Reverend Willie Carter and Reverend John Bellamy, the church family worshipped under a brush arbor of vine and fig tree leaves. A man of this world would have seen a small group praying under a humble roof of green which would turn brown by winter. But a man of the spirit would have seen God laying living foundation stones for a church that would still be standing and growing 100 years hence.

Like many church bodies, the Fourth Street Missionary Baptist Church evolved over time. Originally part of the Mount Canaan Baptist Church, its members formed the New Mount Canaan Baptist Church. In 1905, a plot of land was purchased on Fourth Street, where a small shelter was built and the church body met in the home of Deacon and Sister B.A. Parker. At this time, it adopted its present name. In 1935, reflecting the growing church body, a new sanctuary was built at the corner of Third Avenue and Fifth Street.

In 1961, Reverend Johnny Flakes Jr. accepted the call to pastor the church and helped lead the church into a bright future.

Under his leadership, the church was renovated in 1966. In 1977, a new two-story education building with a kitchen and banquet hall was built. In 1999, work was finished on your new state of the art sanctuary. More importantly, he was working, with God's grace, to build the real body of the church. Membership is over 3000, and growing, both in numbers and in spirit.

This church is a living demonstration of the power of God to work in men and women's lives. Rev. Flakes, your church has had a glorious first century, and God willing, it will have many more to come. Congratulations.

PARTNERSHIP FOR INTERNATIONAL FOOD RELIEF, H.R. 5224

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 20, 2000

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the International Food Relief Partnership Act, H.R. 5224, legislation that authorizes