

**INTRODUCTION OF THE EMPLOYEE  
HEALTH BENEFITS DISCLOSURE  
ACT**

**HON. RICHARD K. ARMEY**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 11, 2000*

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to introduce the Employee Health Benefits Disclosure Act of 2000, a small but important stepping-stone to the consumer-driven health-care marketplace of tomorrow.

This bill addresses an important problem. Today, most workers don't know how much money their workplace health coverage costs. They have no idea. Their employers usually only inform them about the "employee share" of the cost. The employer's share is left invisible.

Also left invisible is the generous taxpayer subsidy given to workplace health benefits under section 106 of the tax code.

Under that section, workers pay no income, payroll, or unemployment taxes on those benefits. Yet employees are almost always unaware of the fact. This is wrong. People have a right to know about the tax benefits they're receiving. They have a right to know how much their labor is really worth.

This bill gives workers that important information. It helps them become more informed employees and better health-care consumers.

How does it do this? It requires employers, who have more than 100 employees, and who provide health benefits, to communicate to their employees at least once a year the amount of the employer's share of the contribution.

This notice must be accompanied with the following sentence: "This contribution is part of your total compensation and reduces your cash wages and other compensation by a like amount." The requirement takes effect January 1, 2005.

I've tried to make the requirement as convenient as possible for employers. They may compute an average, rather than a specific amount per employee. And they may use the most convenient method of communication. They may use a letter, the weekly pay stub, the summary plan description, a slip inserted with the W-2 tax form, or any other reasonable means.

The important thing is not how the information is provided—but that it be provided, and in a clear and understandable form. I confess I'm not happy about imposing a new government mandate on employers. That goes against my grain. It rubs me the wrong way. But in this limited and unique case, I think the benefits far outweigh the costs.

It is good public policy for workers to know how much their labor is worth, and how their compensation is structured. Workers have a right to know this currently invisible information which bears so directly on their well-being and happiness. Employers have a duty to provide it.

Legislation is needed to make sure employers provide it in a clear, consistent, and understandable manner. Hence this bill.

I look forward to a day when health care in America is a true marketplace in which con-

sumers are king, where prices are constantly going down and quality is constantly going up, and where everyone gets the health care he needs when he needs it.

Only consumers can bring such a market into being—only consumers armed with full information.

**PIPELINE SAFETY IMPROVEMENT  
ACT OF 2000**

SPEECH OF

**HON. BOB FRANKS**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 10, 2000*

Mr. FRANKS of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, having experienced, first hand, a needless pipeline tragedy in Edison, NJ, pipeline safety is of particular concern to me and the other members of our delegation. While I applaud the Senate's efforts to pass comprehensive pipeline safety legislation this year, I remain concerned that their final product would have limited local participation in critical pipeline safety decisions. I have also been contacted by many local officials, representatives from citizens safety groups and environmental advocates who feel that S. 2438 does not adequately address their concerns. Although the legislative process rarely allows for a "perfect" piece of legislation which addresses every concern, the process by which this bill was brought to the House Floor did not allow for any improvement upon the base text. Therefore, I would have voted against this bill and remain hopeful that we will be able to reach some bi-partisan compromise before Congress adjourns.

**TRIBUTE TO EUGENE STANDIFER,  
JR.**

**HON. KAREN MCCARTHY**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 11, 2000*

Ms. MCCARTHY of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding individual from the State of Missouri. This year Eugene Standifer, Jr. will be joined by his friends and family to celebrate his 75th birthday.

In 1944, Gene Standifer began his career in public service as a member of the United States Army during World War II. He was honorably discharged in 1951. After returning home, he took a job with the U.S. Postal Service as a railway mail clerk sorting mail on a railway mail car traveling between Kansas City, Missouri and Denver, Colorado. While employed as a postal worker, Gene Standifer attended Rockhurst College where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in Accounting and Economics in 1957. Gene Standifer advanced his career in 1965 with the General Services Administration as a Supervisory Accountant. In 1970 he joined the Department of Housing and Urban Development as an Equal Employment Opportunity Compliance Specialist who investigated

and enforced fair housing laws and regulations. From 1972 until 1978, Gene Standifer worked for the Environmental Protection Agency as a Regional Equal Opportunity Officer that supervised the Kansas City regional offices. And until his retirement in 1986, Gene Standifer worked for the U.S. Department of Labor as the Area Director of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs.

Throughout his career Gene Standifer has been a great friend to his neighbors in the Kansas City community. He has served as Chairman of the Board for the East Area Community Coalition, President of the Central Citizens Crusade Against Crime, Board Member for the Ad Hoc Group Against Crime and the Urban League of Kansas City, and he is a lifetime member of the NAACP.

Gene Standifer was appointed to Commissioner of the Kansas City, Missouri Election Board by Governor Mel Carnahan in 1993. The Kansas City Election Board governance is an essential component to every election that takes place in our city. The Election Board ensures that the election process is fair and accessible to all citizens by providing the opportunity to register to vote, receive absentee ballots, have access to polling stations, and be informed of accurate election results. As Commissioner of the Kansas City Election Board, Gene Standifer has served in a dedicated, professional capacity that has earned him the respect and friendship of his peers and the members of the Kansas City Area political community. He has demonstrated outstanding results through his commitment to promote the democratic process. Gene Standifer's service has been an asset for our community.

As a champion of fairness and equity throughout his professional career, Gene embodies the essence of inclusiveness. He has met the challenges of his life with fortitude and commitment to doing the right thing. His engulfing smile always permeates an occasion.

Mr. Speaker, please join me and the Standifer family in wishing Eugene Standifer a very Happy 75th Birthday.

**EXPRESSING SORROW OF THE  
HOUSE AT THE DEATH OF THE  
HONORABLE BRUCE VENTO,  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM  
THE STATE OF MINNESOTA**

SPEECH OF

**HON. JAMES A. TRAFICANT, JR.**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 10, 2000*

Mr. TRAFICANT. Madam Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise to pay tribute to our colleague, Bruce Vento, who passed away this week. Bruce Vento was a hard working and extremely effective Member of this body. During his long tenure in Congress, Bruce Vento emerged as a true leader on environmental issues. One of the many legacies he left America was the protection and expansion of the national park system and urban parks.

Bruce Vento represented the very best Congress had to offer. Not only was he an effective advocate on issues vitally important to our nation, he was a vigorous advocate for his district and his native state of Minnesota.