

Camp Pendleton, California located in the congressional district he would later represent. He soon became active in local and civic affairs, first serving on the Carlsbad school board, then the Chamber of Commerce, served two years on the Carlsbad City Council and eventually became the mayor of Carlsbad in 1978. It was during these years that the people of the 48th district in California learned of Mr. PACKARD's ability to fairly and justly serve those he represented, and as a result, they entrusted him with their congressional seat by electing him as a write-in candidate in 1982.

Mr. PACKARD's career has been exemplified by the values of hard-work, honor and integrity that are all too often absent in society. Through his ability to work in a bipartisan manner, he has been one of the most potent and influential leaders in this body and for 18 years has worked tirelessly to serve his constituents and our nation. Although my colleagues and I will miss his presence, we wish him well as he prepares for retirement and pursues new challenges. RON, best wishes to you and your family.

#### TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE RON PACKARD, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLITTLE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. PACKARD).

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLITTLE) for yielding to me.

I am overwhelmed by my colleagues and the generous, kind things that they have said. I have had the privilege to serve in Congress for 18 years now. I shall be eternally grateful to my constituents, the voters of my district, in San Diego County, Orange County, and Riverside County for allowing me to represent them here in Congress. To participate in the greatest legislative body in the world is a privilege that only a few have experienced, and I have been blessed beyond measure with that privilege.

When I first came to Congress, there were several major goals that I had hoped we could achieve together in our government. We were awash in deficit spending, adding to the national debt between \$200 billion and \$400 billion a year. I wanted to see our government live within its revenues and balance its budget. I wanted to restructure the entitlements of welfare and Medicare and Social Security. I wanted to reduce the heavy tax burden of our taxpayers. I wanted to strengthen our defense. I wanted to reduce the size of government and make it more efficient and more effective.

Who could have dreamed 18 years ago that we would be able, Republicans and Democrats together, to accomplish these remarkable goals? It has been a great time to serve in the House of Representatives. The opportunity to

serve with each Member of Congress has been a wonderful treat, both sides of the aisle. I have not found it any more difficult to love and appreciate my Democratic friends than my Republican friends.

To work with a competent and loyal staff has been a great privilege. I have had great staff members throughout my career.

To serve with President Reagan and President Bush and, yes, with President Clinton, has been a very memorable experience for me.

I sincerely appreciate the kind and generous remarks of my colleagues from California and from all the other States that have been here. I love them dearly.

Lastly, I must express my deep love and admiration that I have for my wife, Jean. This job is particularly difficult for spouses and for family members. No Member of Congress could enjoy love and support and devotion more than I have from my wonderful wife and family. I am so fortunate.

I love what I do in this hallowed Chamber. I love America. I will miss dearly my colleagues, my constituents, my staff. I will miss the work. I love what we do here. I will not miss the uncertain schedule. I will not miss the fund-raising nor the campaigning. I will not miss the regular traveling from coast to coast. But I have learned that there are only three ways to leave this place, and two of them are real bad. I am leaving the right way, at the top of my career.

I am a praying man. I pray every day. And I will pray daily for all of my colleagues who continue this great work and service in this great deliberative body. I will miss you all very dearly. I love you and I love the work. I bid you a very fond farewell.

I want to thank those that put together this most memorable hour together. I deeply appreciate my colleagues, all of you. Thank you very, very much.

#### HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, this evening I am going to be joined with some of my colleagues on the Democratic side of the aisle to discuss health care and what we believe should be done in the waning days of this Congress. Unfortunately, most of what we are about to discuss is part of the unfinished agenda here which I have been somewhat critical of the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives for because these health care issues have not been resolved; yet they are very important to the average American.

When I talk about health care concerns, I believe that they are the Nation's number one priority right now. They concern matters that affect the daily lives of our constituents and which I think, if they were resolved and if they were attended to by the Republican leadership and passed and sent to the President in legislative form, would actually make a difference in people's lives. So for that reason I regret that on the issues such as prescription drugs for seniors under Medicare, HMO reform, and also increasing access to health care for those who are uninsured this Congress really has not accomplished much.

I do not really expect much to be accomplished in the next few days that we are here, but I do think it is unfortunate that the Republican leadership has so far, and has over the 2 years, refused to address these issues in a meaningful way.

I just wanted to summarize, if I could, and put them also in the context of the presidential debate, because I think that health care policy has really been one of the defining issues in the context of the presidential debate and the presidential campaign.

Let me mention first the issue of prescription drugs. We know that our senior citizens and the disabled, people who currently are eligible for Medicare, many of them do not have access to prescription drugs because it is not a basic benefit under the Medicare program. What the Democrats have been saying is that we would like it to be a basic Medicare benefit. We would like it to be included under the rubric of the Medicare program because we know that Medicare has been very successful in addressing the problems of hospital care, the need for hospital care and the need for physicians' care.

If a person now reaches the age of 65 or is eligible because they are disabled, they do get their hospital insurance taken care of under Medicare. And if they pay a certain amount a month, about \$40 or so per month, then they have also their physician's care taken care of. But that is not the case with prescription drugs. Some seniors are able to get a prescription drug benefit if they are fortunate enough to have an HMO in their area that may cover it in some way. But that is not the majority.

Some senior citizens outside of Medicare are able to get coverage because they have it as part of an employer retirement plan or maybe they are eligible for veterans benefits as part of the Federal Government; but generally most seniors do not get either adequate prescription drug coverage or, in many cases, no prescription drug coverage at all.

Basically, using the example of Medicare part B for physician's care, what the Democrats have been saying and what Vice President GORE has been