

FEHBP is a cost-effective and viable option that should be made available to all retirees.

The FY 1999 NDAA also provided authority to conduct two other demonstrations for Medicare-eligible retirees which CDR Torsch and the coalition collaborated on with the Armed Services Committees: TRICARE as second-payer to Medicare; and the enrollment in DOD's mail order and retail pharmacy programs.

CDR Torsch's unwavering efforts to provide a meaningful health care benefit to Medicare-eligible members of the uniformed services community culminated this year when Congress established in the FY 2001 National Defense Authorization Act a lifetime entitlement to TRICARE for service retirees, their family members and survivors. Effective on October 1, 2001, the TRICARE-for-Life option will not require participants in this program to pay enrollment fees or deductibles. CDR Torsch and the Military Coalition also advocated successfully to have Congress offer a TRICARE prescription drug benefit in the final FY 2001 NDAA. As evidence of her commitment and effectiveness in advocating on behalf of military retirees, Congress also adopted a key recommendation offered by CDR Torsch in her testimony earlier this year that beneficiaries should not be required to pay enrollment fees or premiums to participate because doing so would deny this benefit to those who need it most.

Taken together, these initiatives comprise the most significant improvements in military health care ever undertaken. Thanks in large measure to the dedication by CDR Torsch, TROA and other advocates of military retirees, Congress has demonstrated its commitment to providing lifetime health care to our nation's military personnel and their families. I commend their involvement in this area and believe these efforts should prove invaluable in reversing declining retention and readiness trends in all services.

Mr. Speaker, CDR Torsch has been a leader in every sense of the word—a leader in TROA, the Military Coalition and the entire retired community. Her health care contributions have made an indelible mark on the lives of millions of retirees that will benefit them for years to come. I urge you to join me in wishing her continued success in her new endeavors and in her continued service to this nation.

CONCERNING ABILENE  
PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

**HON. CHARLES W. STENHOLM**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 14, 2000*

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the 50th anniversary of one of Abilene's oldest performing arts organizations, the Abilene Philharmonic Orchestra on December 2 of this year. This great symphony orchestra enriches the cultural life of a city in a unique way; it creates a place where fine musicians want to live and teach and perform. In the 1950-opening season, concerts were held in the old Abilene High School with audiences of less than 100 people. Currently the

Abilene Philharmonic Orchestra performs in the Abilene Civic Center with crowds averaging 2,000. I would not only like to acknowledge this organization for their 50th anniversary, but also the impact they have had on the Abilene community.

HONORING A SPECIAL COLORADO  
FAMILY

**HON. BOB SCHAFFER**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 14, 2000*

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor a hard working family from Flagler, CO. Florence Fuller works with her daughter and son-in-law, Sally and Mike Santala on their farm in northeast Colorado. They survive Florence's husband, Eddie, who began the family tradition of finding new ways of conserving natural resources on their farm. It is that tradition that has earned the Fuller family the Farming Conservationist Award from the Colorado Association of Soil Conservation Districts at its 56th annual meeting in Grand Junction, Monday, November 13. Each year, the association awards the title of Conservationist of the Year to landowners who exemplify leadership in land stewardship.

The Fullers first came to Kit Carson County in 1948 and immediately took a leadership role in their local community. Eddie Fuller helped organize the Flagler Soil Conservation District in 1951 and acted as the organization's Secretary-Treasurer for 16 years. The Fuller farm now encompasses 860 acres of cropland, 97 acres of hay meadow, and 2,500 acres of rangeland at the base of the Colorado Rocky Mountains. It is because of the Fuller family's innovative work with rotational grazing techniques and other conservation methods that the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts has bestowed upon them such an honor, and it is because of their contributions to their community and the environment that I stand here to recognize them today.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT CONFEREES  
ON H.R. 4577, DEPARTMENTS OF  
LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN  
SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND  
RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS  
ACT 2001

SPEECH OF

**HON. JOE BARTON**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 31, 2000*

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose this motion. It is fitting this motion was brought on October 31, because this is pure Halloween politics by the minority party designed to scare Americans a week before the Presidential election. The timing of the motion, and the study upon which this motion is based, are questionable at best. One week before an election, the Minority Staff of the Government Reform Committee releases a re-

port criticizing the condition of Texas nursing homes.

Some have tried to pass this study off as non-partisan. I have a hard time believing such a claim. This study was conducted unbeknownst to the majority staff at the Government Reform Committee. This was not an effort to accurately gauge the conditions of Texas nursing homes. This was purely political. The Gore-Lieberman website posted the study and commentary on it before it was released to Majority Members of the Government Reform Committee. It also breeds suspicion that days before this report was released, the Democratic National Committee began an advertising campaign on the state of nursing homes in Texas.

If this was a non-partisan study then are we supposed to believe that it was a mere coincidence the study was released on the heels of these ads being run. Even if we are to blindly accept such a coincidence, the release of the study to the Gore-Lieberman campaign before it was given to Majority Members of the Government Reform Committee clearly demonstrate that this study was nothing more than partisan political propaganda.

More disheartening than the timed release of this study was the facts ascertained and the conclusions reached by the study are a clear misrepresentation of the conditions of nursing homes in Texas. I agree that we must take steps to improve the care that patients receive in nursing homes. However, as a Texan I take great umbrage at this one-sided hatchet job designed to embarrass my state.

If we look at the objective facts we find a much different picture of Texas nursing homes than painted by the Minority Staff Report. In September 2000, the non-partisan General Accounting Agency (GAO) issued a comprehensive study that directly disputes the claims made in the partisan minority report. The GAO concluded that the percentage of homes in Texas cited for harm and immediate jeopardy deficiencies were half what the partisan Minority study claims.

The Minority Staff study claims that over 50 percent of the nursing homes in Texas had violations that caused actual harm to residents or placed them at risk of death or serious injury. According to the September GAO report, the percentage of homes with actual harm and immediate jeopardy deficiencies from January 1997 to July 2000 were only 25 percent—half what the Minority report stated. We must work to reduce this number, but it also clearly demonstrates how the Minority report attempted to overstate the problem in a partisan effort to embarrass Texas.

The University of California San Francisco Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences conducted a nationwide study of nursing facility deficiencies in which Texas nursing homes rated better than most other states. The study examined the percentage of nursing homes with deficiencies in ten different areas; Comprehensive Assessments, Accident Prevention, Housekeeping, Dignity, Physical Restraints, Food Sanitation, Accidents, Quality of Care, Pressure Sores, and Comprehensive Care Plans. In Calendar Year 1998, the last year of the study, Texas nursing homes had lower indices of deficiencies than the normal average in eight of these categories.