

Even though expanding preventive benefits will cost money in the short term, the long term savings will be immense. Keeping people healthier will reduce the number of hospital admissions, operations, and drug prescriptions—three of Medicare's highest cost items.

I am confident that with the combined efforts of Congressman LEVIN and myself—along with Senators GRAHAM, JEFFORDS and BINGAMAN—the Medicare Wellness Act will be a significant part of any Medicare legislation that is considered this year.

MEDICARE WELLNESS ACT OF 2000 SUMMARY

The Medicare Wellness Act represents a concerted effort to change the fundamental focus of the Medicare program. It would change the program from a sickness program to a wellness program, one that treats illness before it happens.

Title I: Establishes the Healthy Seniors Promotion Program. This program will bring together all the agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services that address the medical, social and behavioral issues affecting the elderly and instruct them to conduct a series of studies that will increase knowledge about and utilization of prevention services among the elderly.

Title II: Adds several new preventative screening and counseling benefits to the Medicare program, including: screening for hypertension, counseling for tobacco cessation (for those with a history of tobacco use), screening for glaucoma (for high-risk beneficiaries), counseling for hormone replacement therapy, screening for vision and hearing loss, nutrition therapy (for high risk beneficiaries), expanded screening and counseling for osteoporosis, and screening for cholesterol (for beneficiaries with a history of heart disease).

Title III: Establishes a health risk appraisal and education program aimed at major behavioral risk factors such as diet, exercise, alcohol and tobacco use, and depression. This program will target both pre-65 individuals and current Medicare beneficiaries. The main goal of this program is to increase awareness among individuals of major risk factors that impact on health, to change personal health habits, improve health status, and save the Medicare program money.

Titles IV and V: Authorize prevention demonstration projects and require the Institute of Medicine to conduct a study every five years to assess the scientific validity of the entire Medicare prevention benefits package. The study will be reviewed by Congress using a "fast-track" process which will force Congress out of the business of micro-managing the Medicare program.

Title VI: Authorizes a demonstration project on depression screening. The results will be evaluated by the Institute of Medicine, which will make recommendations to Congress about whether to add this benefit to Medicare.

THE MEDICARE WELLNESS ACT OF 2000

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to join with my colleague, MARK FOLEY, in in-

roducing the Medicare Wellness Act of 2000. We believe this bill will accelerate Medicare's transformation from a "sickness" program to a "wellness" program. Helping seniors stay healthy improves quality of life for Medicare beneficiaries, and in the long run, it will save Medicare money on hospitals and nursing homes.

The Medicare Wellness Act would modernize Medicare by adding basic preventive care benefits. Most working Americans take these benefits—things like blood pressure screening, glaucoma testing, and cholesterol screening—for granted. Unfortunately, the Medicare program currently pays nothing if seniors choose to get these screenings.

In 1997, Congress added the first preventive care benefits to Medicare. For the first time, Medicare beneficiaries could get mammograms, colorectal cancer screening, and diabetes self-management services. Unfortunately, the number of seniors getting those screenings has not increased as much as we hoped. Part of the reason is that all those benefits are still subject to Medicare cost-sharing. For many seniors, that means they still can't afford to get the screenings they need. Another problem is that seniors simply are not aware of the new benefits. The Medicare Wellness Act would correct both problems by eliminating cost sharing for prevention services and authorizing new public education efforts.

In my congressional district, use of Medicare's prevention benefits is still disappointingly low. According to researchers at the Dartmouth Medical School, over 70% of my senior constituents do not receive annual mammograms, and over 80% are not screened for colorectal cancer. I believe the Medicare Wellness Act will help improve these rates, while also giving 1.4 million people in Michigan access to new prevention benefits.

We are pleased to be joined in this effort by Senators BOB GRAHAM, JIM JEFFORDS, and JEFF BINGAMAN, who have introduced companion legislation in the other body.

The bipartisan, bicameral consensus that Medicare needs to cover preventive benefits gives us a real opportunity to improve Medicare now. The sooner we act, the sooner senior citizens will have better health insurance.

FORTY-FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF TUNISIAN INDEPENDENCE

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the anniversary of the 44th year of Independence for the Republic of Tunisia, to be celebrated on March 20, 2000.

Legend has it that more than 200 years ago, Tunis, as token of esteem and friendship, sent one of its finest stallions to U.S. President George Washington. Unfortunately, customs officials in the nascent republic denied entry to the horse, which spent its remaining days in the port of Baltimore.

After this somewhat rocky start, I am pleased to note that U.S.-Tunisian relations

have improved considerably. Tunisia is about to celebrate its 44th anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Tunisia as an independent country, a time during which Tunisia has enjoyed a strong and healthy relationship with the United States.

I congratulate Tunisia for its many accomplishments, not the least of which is to have established a more democratic system of government, making every effort to broaden political debate, including passage of an electoral law that reserved 19 seats of the National assembly for members of opposition political parties.

Tunisia has a very impressive economic record, having turned to economic programs designed to privatize state owned companies and to reform the banking and financial sectors over the last decade.

As a result Tunisia's economy has grown at an average rate of 4.65 percent just in the last several years, and its economic success has had a beneficial impact on Tunisia's international standing. Tunisia is one of the few countries to graduate successfully from development assistance and to join the developed world.

Tunisia has also become a moderating force in the Middle East peace process, taking an active role within the international community in fighting terrorism, while maintaining internal stability in the face of external chaos.

I am pleased with the increasingly strong ties between the United States and Tunisia, and join the American people in congratulating the people of Tunisia on this historic occasion. I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

IN RECOGNITION OF TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, as this is Texas Public Schools Week, I wanted to take a moment to offer my thanks to the parents and teachers of my district and those across Texas for all of their hard work to make sure our children get the best education possible. Unfortunately, Congress and the federal bureaucracy continues to strip authority away from parents, teachers and local school boards. While Congress promises the American people that expansions of federal control over local schools will create an education utopia, the fact is the federal education bureaucracy has only made educating the next generation more difficult and diverted resources away from the classroom. For example, while the federal government provides less than 10% of education funding, many school districts find that over 50% of their paperwork is generated by federal mandates. The federal government also forces local school officials to jump through numerous hoops in order to get Washington to return a ridiculously small portion of taxpayer moneys to local public schools.

Over thirty years of centralized control of education has resulted in failure and frustrated parents. It is time for Washington to return control of the nation's school system to the

people who best know the needs of the children: local communities and parents. The key to doing so is to return control of the education dollar back to the American people.

In order to give control of education back to the people I have introduced the Family Education Freedom Act (HR 935). This bill provides parents with a \$3,000 per child tax credit for K-12 education expenses.

The Family Education Freedom Act fulfills the American people's goal of greater control over their children's education by simply allowing parents to keep more of their hard-earned money to spend on education rather than force them to send it to Washington to support education programs reflective of the values and priorities of Congress and the federal bureaucracy.

The Family Education Freedom Act will help parents strengthen their child's public education. Parents may use the credit to improve schools by helping to finance the purchase of education tools such as computers or extra-curricular activities such as music programs. Parents of public school students may also wish to use the credit to pay for special services for their children.

I have also introduced the Teacher Tax Cut (HR 937), which provides a \$1,000 tax credit for every teacher in America. Quality education is impossible without quality teaching. Yet, America's teachers remain underpaid compared to other professionals. Adding insult to injury, teachers often have to use their own money to purchase supplies for their classroom. For example, according to the Association of Texas Professional Educators, many Texas teachers spent between \$50-300 of their own money on school supplies during the 1998-99 school year!

Because America's teachers are underpaid because they are overtaxed, the best way to raise teacher take-home pay is to reduce their taxes. Raising teachers' take-home pay via a \$1,000 tax credit lets teachers know the American people and the Congress respect their work and encourages high-quality people to enter, and remain in, the teaching profession. I have also introduced the Education Improvement Tax Cut (HR 936), which provides a \$3,000 tax credit for cash or in-kind donations to public schools to support academic or extra-curricular programs. This legislation encourages local-citizens and community leaders to help strengthen local public schools. The Education Improvement Tax Cut Act also ensures that education funding matches the needs of individual communities. People in one community may use this credit to purchase computers, while children in another community may, at last, have access to a quality music program because of community leaders who took advantage of the tax credit contained in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, my education agenda of returning control over the education dollar to the American people is the best way to strengthen public education. First of all, unlike plans to expand the federal education bureaucracy, my bills are free of "guidelines" and restrictions that dilute the actual number of dollars spent to educate a child. In addition, the money does not have to go through federal and state bureaucrats, each of whom get a cut, before it reaches the classroom. Returning power

over the education dollar to the American people will also free public school teachers, administrators and principals from having to comply with numerous federal mandates. Therefore, school personnel will be able to devote their time to working with parents and other concerned citizens to make sure all children are receiving the best possible education.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I once again extend my thanks to all those who are involved in the education of our nation's children. I also call upon my colleagues to help strengthen public schools by returning control over the education dollar to parents and other concerned citizens, as well as raising teacher take-home pay by cutting their taxes, so that the American people can once again make the American education system the envy of the world.

IN HONOR OF LONNIE R. ANDERSON—WHITLEY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS AND WINNER OF F.L. DUPREE AWARD FOR EXEMPLARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION

HON. HAROLD ROGERS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. ROGERS. Mr. Speaker, we often hear about grand, universal plans for making positive changes in our nation's public education system. None of these plans, however, can substitute for the daily effort of educators working at the local level. It is these dedicated professionals, in tens of thousands of local school districts across the nation, who bear the responsibility for touching the lives of the students in their communities. These educators hold the key to the transformation of our nation's system of education—one student at a time.

Today, I want to honor one such professional in Whitley County, Kentucky. The Kentucky School Boards Association (KSBA) has recognized my constituent, Whitley School Superintendent Lonnie R. Anderson, for his distinguished service to the field of education. He has been awarded the KBSA's annual F.L. Dupree Award for exemplary contributions to education. The family of the late F.L. Dupree, Sr., a Lexington businessman and supporter of Kentucky public schools sponsors the award.

Superintendent Anderson has worked tirelessly for the parents and students served by the Whitley County School District over the past nine years. Through his hard work and dedication, he has been a driving force in bringing about positive changes in the school district, as well as the surrounding community.

Lonnie Anderson accepted the school district's top job in 1991 when the district ranked last among Kentucky's 176 public school districts and the county schools were required to be under state management. In 1999, after nearly a decade of Superintendent Anderson's leadership, the Whitley County School District was measured as one of the top districts in the state for academic improvement. During this period, the district has twice earned "re-

wards" rankings through the state's system of school assessment and accountability.

Superintendent Anderson is an alumnus of Cumberland College, Union College, and Eastern Kentucky University. He began his education career as a classroom teacher and coordinator of the gifted and talented program in Whitley County. Through a total of 17 years with the school district, he has also served as athletic director, food service director, Chapter I coordinator, and public relations coordinator.

In a recent article in the Corbin (KY) News-Journal, Anderson is credited with the following achievements for the Whitley County School District:

Augmented the district's reading curriculum with the Accelerated Reader Program and the Reading Coaches Program, which pairs high school students with at-risk second and third-graders. Anderson also employs a district reading specialist, established the Even Start Family Literacy Program for parents of young children and initiated a summer reading program.

Directed a school facility modernization effort that built three new elementary schools and established an alternative school. The program also resulted in a new science wing, library and kitchen at Whitley County High School and renovated a middle school and four elementary schools.

Developed the Parents as Volunteer Educators Program (PAVE), in which 600 parents now participate.

Implemented a cash management program that increased earnings on investments from \$52,545 in 1990 to \$332,986 in 1999.

Introduced an energy program with a utilities cost avoidance of over \$150,000 since its implementation in 1998.

Established a newspaper for the school district, The District Ed News, that spotlights student and school achievements and is distributed to every household in the district.

Initiated HEROES (Honoring Educators/Staff Recognizing Outstanding and Extraordinary Services) to honor staff members for years of service to the district.

United five separate adult education providers into one comprehensive program now serving twice the number of people.

One principal who supported Superintendent Anderson's nomination of this prestigious award correctly described him as "an agent of positive change" for the Whitley County School District.

I join educators, parents and students in Whitley County and across Kentucky in congratulating Superintendent Lonnie R. Anderson for being selected for this distinguished award and recognize his outstanding leadership and continued contribution to public education.

"A SOLDIERS STORY" TRIBUTE TO MR. WILLIAM ELLIS

HON. DAVE CAMP

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. William Ellis, a decorated soldier