

RENAMING THE JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN POST OFFICE THE LES ASPIN POST OFFICE BUILDING

HON. THOMAS M. BARRETT

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 29, 2000

Mr. BARRETT of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to share with my colleagues my great pride and respect for former colleague and friend, Les Aspin. I wholeheartedly support renaming the Janesville, Wisconsin Post Office as the Les Aspin Post Office.

Les Aspin was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1938. He graduated summa cum laude from Yale University, and later received a degree in politics, philosophy and economics from Oxford University. He completed his doctorate in economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. From 1969 to 1971, Aspin was distinguished professor of international policy at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

In 1971, Aspin was first elected to the United States House of Representatives from the First Congressional District of Wisconsin. During his 22 years in the House, his interest and dedication to international security, defense and arms control earned him Chairmanship on the House Armed Services Committee from 1985 to 1993. Following his tenure in Congress, he served as Secretary of Defense from 1993–1994 in the cabinet of President William J. Clinton. His unparalleled expertise and influence on Department of Defense issues have guided the development of a comprehensive defense policy for the United States.

In 1994, the Marquette University Les Aspin Center for Government was founded in his honor. The Aspin Center was established under the same ideals and integrity with which Dr. Aspin conducted his political career. The Aspin Center is designed to educate future leaders by giving students an opportunity to participate in the American political process through Congressional internships.

On May 21, 1995, our dear friend and esteemed colleague passed away at the age of 57. It is my honor to have served Wisconsin with the distinguished Dr. Les Aspin, and I believe that it is fitting for his memory to be honored in the district in which he served.

LEGISLATION TO HELP VETERANS INFECTED WITH THE HEPATITIS C VIRUS

HON. J.D. HAYWORTH

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 29, 2000

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my good friends from New York and Nevada, Chairman JACK QUINN and Congressman JIM GIBBONS, on introducing this important legislation that will help veterans infected with the hepatitis C virus to be treated and compensated by the Veterans Administration.

Hepatitis C is a potentially life-threatening disease that can affect the liver and lead to cirrhosis, liver cancer, and death. It is a slow, progressive disease that advances over 10 to 30 years. It is no wonder that hepatitis C wasn't identified until 1989. Hepatitis C is a blood-borne disease that is transmitted through blood contact. Those at high risk include patients who had hemodialysis, patients who had blood transfusions or organ transplants, and healthcare professionals (such as health care workers or medics) who may have come in contact with infected blood, instruments or needles.

Another high-risk population is our nation's military veterans. In fact, hepatitis C continues to be diagnosed at an alarming rate among our veteran population. The Veterans Administration estimates that 6.6 percent of veterans are infected with hepatitis C, a rate more than 3 times that of the general population. Of all of the military veteran populations who tested positive for hepatitis C throughout VA medical facilities nationwide in March 1999, Vietnam-era veterans accounted for 64 percent of the cases.

What prevents the VA from treating and compensating these infected veterans is the slow progression of the disease and the recent discovery of it. In most cases, more than a decade has passed from infection to discovery. For example, a medic treating a wounded comrade in Vietnam in 1967 could have been infected with the virus, but not tested positive nor shown symptoms until some 10 to 30 years later. The 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis and less-than-stellar military personnel record keeping only compounded the problem.

Our legislation gives presumptive service connection to hepatitis C infected veterans who most likely contracted it through handling blood, blood transfusions or hemodialysis. These criteria will cover combat field medics, doctors or medical personnel who handled blood, and soldiers who gave blood to save a buddy's life or received blood to save their own. Studies show that 365,000 blood transfusions were performed among U.S. personnel in Vietnam between 1967 and 1969 alone. At the same time, blood supplies shipped to Vietnam in the late 1960s and early 1970s had a high rate of infection. An NIH study at this time showed that 7 to 10 percent of all patients who received a blood transfusion during surgery developed hepatitis C.

Chairman QUINN, Mr. GIBBONS and I applaud the VA for its outreach program to identify and treat veterans. We also commend the VA's attempt to address the hepatitis C problem through regulation, but we believe statutory relief may be the only remedy that will truly help thousands of veterans. While regulations are a good start, the VA is not mandated to ensure that these veterans are treated and compensated. It can, at any time, change the regulations or refuse treatment if it runs low on discretionary funds. Only through statutory relief will we ensure that the VA has the dedicated resources and funding to handle all of these claims. Also, having a statutory requirement will put this major disease on par with other major presumptive diseases. Finally, at the April 13th Veterans' Benefit Subcommittee hearing, several veteran service organizations,

including the American Legion and the VFW, complained that the VA has already denied too many service connection claims by veterans with hepatitis C. In their testimony, AMVET stated that, among its members, the number of veterans being diagnosed with hepatitis C by the VA has increased, but the number being treated by the VA has not risen at all.

While Chairman QUINN, Mr. GIBBONS and I offer this bill as a remedy, we also offer it as a working document. We are willing to work with members of the Veterans Affairs Committee and our colleagues in this body as well as the Veterans Administration and veteran service organizations to produce a consensus bill. I am hopeful that we will be able to work out any differences and pass this legislation for our veterans.

In the heat of combat, we ask our young servicemen and women to risk exposure to unknown danger to save others with the understanding that we, as a nation, will take care of them in the future should they become sick. Mr. Speaker, the time has come to fulfill that promise.

RECOGNIZING ROBERT MONDAVI, RECIPIENT OF WINEVISION'S FIRST ANNUAL "VISIONARY AWARD"

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 29, 2000

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Robert Mondavi receiving WineVision's first annual Visionary Award—recognizing the person whose insight and foresight contributed in myriad ways to the U.S. wine community's overall betterment in the year 2000.

Robert Mondavi and employees of Robert Mondavi Corp. were instrumental in the past year in assuring the initiation of the WineVision process—an effort to develop an industry-wide strategic plan for the U.S. wine business. The winery, notably Michael Mondavi and Herbert Schmidt, was key in offering support, including becoming one of the first companies to contribute seed money.

All through the process, Robert Mondavi has provided inspiration, human resources and funding. As well, he has encouraged participation from other wineries and growers.

Robert Mondavi is known throughout the wine industry as the man whose vision of a successful American premium wine industry started America's wine renaissance in the 1960s. WineVision is proud to acknowledge his role in our community and recognize his contributions, those of his family and those of his winery.

Robert Mondavi began his success in the wine business in the 1940's when his father purchased the Charles Krug Winery. In the 1950's and 1960's, Robert became the first Napa Valley vintner to use cold fermentation extensively and popularized new styles of wine such as Chenin Blanc and Fume Blanc.

Robert Mondavi's winery is a culmination of a vision that he shared with his family. From