business. Increasingly, hospitals and other employers in the health care field are requiring their employees to work overtime. Our legislation—the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Patient Protection Act—would stop that unsafe and exploitative practice.

The Fair Labor Standards Act grants nurses the right to receive overtime compensation even though they are licensed professionals, but it does not limit the amount of overtime that nurses can work, nor does it permit them to refuse mandatory overtime. Our legislation would change that inequity. Under our bill, mandatory overtime for licensed health care employees (excluding physicians) would be prohibited. The bill amends the Fair Labor Standards Act to prohibit mandatory overtime beyond 8 hours in a single work day or 80 hours in any 14 day work period. The legislation provides an exception in cases of a natural disaster or a declaration of emergency by federal, state or local government officials. Voluntary overtime is also exempted.

Mr. Speaker, no employer should be allowed to force an employee to work overtime or face termination, unless there is a situation that requires immediate emergency action. In other cases, employees should have the right to refuse overtime. If workers are physically and psychologically able to work additional hours, that should be their choice; it should not be the decision of a supervisor or hospital administrator.

In the health care field, the issue is not just employees’ rights. More importantly, it is an issue of patient safety. When nurses are forced to put in long overtime hours on a regular basis against their own better judgment, it puts patients at risk. A nurse should not be on the job after the 15th or 16th consecutive hour, especially after he or she has told a supervisor “I can’t do this, I’ve been on the job too many hours today.”

Mr. Speaker, nursing is a physically and mentally demanding occupation. By the end of a regular shift, nurses are exhausted. Health care experts and common sense tell us that long hours take a toll on mental alertness, and mandatory overtime under such conditions can result in inadvertent and unintentional medical mistakes—medication errors, transcription errors, and judgment errors. When a nurse is tired, it is much more difficult to deliver quality, professional care to patients. Increasingly, however, nurses are being forced to work 16, 18, or even 20 consecutive hours in hospitals all across our nation.

Studies have shown that when a worker (especially a health care worker) exceeds 12 hours of work, and is fatigued, the likelihood that he or she will make an error increases. A report of the Institute of Medicine on medication errors substantiates these common sense assumptions. The report states that safe staffing and limits on mandatory overtime are essential components to prevent medication errors.

An investigative report by The Chicago Tribune found that patient safety was sacrificed when reductions in hospital staff resulted in registered nurses working long hours of overtime because they were more likely to make serious medical errors. The report found that nursing services were deliberately cut in order to preserve historic profit levels.

Extensions of Remarks

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to report that this legislation has broad support from the individuals most involved in this matter and the associations and organizations that represent them. These include the American Nurses Association (ANA), the California Nurses Association (CNA), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the Black Nurses Association and others. It is also supported by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), which represents nurses and health care workers at our nation’s veterans’ hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, we need to give nurses more power to decide when overtime hours hurt their job performance. A nurse knows better than anyone—better than his or her supervisor and certainly better than a profit-driven hospital administrator—when he or she is so exhausted that continuing to work could jeopardize the safety of patients. You don’t have to be a brain surgeon to know that forcing nurses to work 12 or 16 hours at a time is a prescription for bad health care.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot continue to allow hospitals to force nurses to work so many hours that the health and safety of patients are put at risk. I urge my colleagues to join me as a cosponsor and support the Registered Nurses’ and Patient’s Protection Act.

When I first met Bruce, he was my Congressman. He quickly became a friend and a mentor to a young Mom who sought to make a difference in the world. He taught by example, and his example was always to do the right thing. We shared a belief that strong communities begin with our families. The essence of Bruce Vento began with his family. His parents, Frank and Anne, to this very day speak to their children, grandchildren, and the great grandchildren with the boundless love, caring, and compassion—of their Minnesota family values. Values that helped them raise their eight children to work hard and care deeply.

Bruce always put our families, children, and seniors first. Those of us he represented weren’t his constituents—we were his friends and neighbors. A weekend couldn’t pass that you didn’t run into him having morning coffee at Skyline’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting his hair cut at Falzone’s, or maybe join him for lunch at Serlin’s, or getting
guiding me with his compassion, his wisdom and his strength. Forever teaching. Thank you, Bruce.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, four items that capture the essence of Congressman Bruce F. Vento; a man who represented all of us from the Eastside of life who believe that hard work, family values, educational opportunity, and a commitment to a greater community are the keys to a happy and successful life.

[From the Saint Paul Pioneer Press, June 30, 2000]

**Bruce Vento Just Another Guy from the East Side Who Went on to Do Great Things**

*By Garrison Kellor*

There was a dinner in Washington, D.C. Tuesday night to honor a guy from St. Paul's East Side.

The president dropped by and dozens of U.S. representatives, Republicans and Democrats. And at the end, when the guy from the East Side stood up to say his piece, he got a long, long standing ovation. You could have gone around the room and stolen everyone's dessert, they were so busy applauding him.

U.S. Rep. Bruce Vento, a modest man and a hard worker, is stepping down after 24 years representing the 4th Congressional District, and I must admit I voted for him all these years because I'm a yellow-dog Democrat and he's a Democrat. So now I'm a little taken back to see what a good man he is who I unthinkingly supported all these years.

This isn't how our 4th District teachers taught us to exercise the franchise, the 4th but a person doesn't have oceans of time to study up on candidates. I sure don't. I heard Mr. Vento speak once years ago, speak very movingly about the problem of homelessness and about the importance of wilderness, and that was good enough for me. But if he had stood on his hind legs and barked, I still would have voted for him.

Wilderness preservation and the plight of the homeless are not issues that pay a big political dividend. Work with them. Advocate and you're going to be hung in effigy and yelled at by large men in plaid shirts. Homeless people tend not to turn out in numbers at the ballot box.

But Mr. Vento applied himself to the issues he cared about, did his homework, made the round of his colleagues, carried the water, dug the ditches, fought the good fights, made the compromises, and wrote landmark legislation that became law and that made a real difference in the world. And I'm not sure how many of us in St. Paul are aware of this.

There have been only three congressmen from St. Paul in my memory, and that covers 50 years. Gene McCarthy, Joe Karth, Bruce Vento—all DFLers, all good men and all of them got to Congress on the strength of yellow-dog Democrats like me. They got re-elected simply by doing their job, representing working people, speaking the conscience of the Democratic Party, and applying themselves to the nuts and bolts of Congress.

A political party serves a big function that TV or newspapers can't. It pulls in idealistic young people, puts them to work in the cause, trains them, seasons them, and gives the talent that emerges a chance to rise. If it can produce a Bruce Vento, then a party has reason to exist, and if it can't, then it doesn't. Simple as that. Then it fades, as the DFL did.

People say it's inevitable for political parties to fade, part of the loss of the sense of community, blah blah blah, that people are cyborgs, selling their souls to lifestyle and media and so forth, but we are poorer for the loss of the parties and the devaluation of endorsement.

Bruce Vento never got to do the media-driven campaign, the sort in which high-priced consultants and media buyers spend 15 million bucks to make the candidate into a beautiful illusion.

Mr. Vento is the right man for that kind of politics. His eyebrows are too big; he isn't cool enough. He is a modest and principled and hard-working guy. He couldn't put this over in a 30-second commercial. He managed to get to Congress because there was a strong DFL Party that endorsed him, and so voters like me pulled the lever and gave Mr. Vento the wherewithal to be a great congressman. Which he, being a true East Sider, never told us he was. But which I now think he was.

Unknowingly, we did something great in sending him there. And our partisan loyalty gave him the freedom to take on thankless tasks, like protecting wilderness and dealing with the homeless.

I sat in back at Mr. Vento's dinner and thought what a shock it is when you realize that the congressman in the hands of people your own age. You go along for years thinking it's being run by jowly old guys in baggy suits and then you see that the jowly old guys are actually people you went to school with.

Mr. Vento is about my age, and I feel for him. He is fighting lung cancer and it has taken its toll on him. He looks haggard but game. His three boys were at the dinner in Washington, and their wives, and the event felt like a real valedictory. If Mr. Vento had wanted to make us all cry into our pudding, it wouldn't have taken much.

But he was upbeat and talking about the future and about national parks and the decoding of the human genome and saying, "All we need to do is take this new knowledge and apply it to public policy," and thanking everybody and grinning, and you had to admire him for his command of the 30-second commercial.

A man who is desperately ill and on his way out of public life stages a dinner that raises money for a scholarship fund for teachers. Mr. Vento is a true Substantial Man. He was given to dark business suits lightened by ties that said not all of life is serious. During the height of the Snoopy on Parade frenzy in St. Paul this summer, for instance, the congressman appeared at the Minnesota AFL-CIO Convention wearing a Snoopy tie.

Vento's public career began as a teacher, extended into service in the Minnesota Legislature and then nearly 24 years in Congress.

Although Vento was a technical master of the art of lawmaking in such arcane specialties as banking reform, he remained deeply passionate about the environment. As U.S. Rep. Bruce Vento of St. Paul takes on the challenges of treatment for lung cancer caused by asbestos, the affection of the people he has served in the East Metro area is sure to be returned. Ours included.

May the best of medical care and the best of wishes from the many people he has helped—unavailable in tough times help Vento prevail in this campaign to regain his health.

Vento, who has been commuting to work in Washington since 1977, announced Wednesday he will retire at year's end and is undergoing cancer treatment.

Vento has served the Fourth Congressional District of Minnesota, the hard-pressed communities of the homeless, the young and the needy with a personal passion to improve the quality of life. He has served the people he loves with great heart and humanity and the arcane art of legislating.

Vento is an Old Democrat in a New Democratic era. His reliable fidelity to ideals and to principles, the affection of the people he has served, the affection of the people who now work in dirty at work will be missed. To this day, his resume always notes that he worked as a laborer, a mail-

**EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS**

**March 29, 2001**

**5131**

**A MAN OF THE PEOPLE—BRUCE VENTO'S LEGACY ETCHED BY SERVICE**

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**[From the Saint Paul Pioneer Press, Feb. 3, 2000]**

**HE WORK A BLUE COLLAR AND A WHITE HAT**

Rep. Bruce F. Vento's last Christmas card pictures a smiling, healthy appearing grandpa caused by asbestos, the affection of the people he has served in the East Metro area is sure to be returned. Ours included.

**[From the Saint Paul Pioneer Press, Oct. 11, 2000]**

A MAN OF THE PEOPLE—B RUCE VENTO'S LEGACY ETCHED BY SERVICE
room clerk for this newspaper, a shop steward and teacher before getting that job that put him in charge of more than 100 students. Those include oversight of all America’s public lands and helping to rescue the financial system from the ruin of the savings and loan debacles.

Vento’s career in Congress, and before that in the Minnesota Legislature, represent an old-fashioned sense of public service in a new-fashioned and too-slick political era. He knew what private-public partnerships were before the concept became a sound bite for the ambitious. He has never been afraid of a fight when the issue and the people matter deeply.

The Reagan and Bush administrations were the source of frustration for the man from the Fourth. When the Democrats were thrown into the congressional minority in 1994, Vento found new rules but always kept his eye on the prize of Democrats retaking the reins. He noted with each election how much the Republican majority had narrowed. This year, Vento will not be in the equation. The House, Subcommittee—where he once worked as a mailroom clerk—called him “an Old Democrat in a New Democrat era” who exemplified “an old-fashioned sense of public service in a new-fashioned and too-slick political era.”

Noting that Vento will not be part of the Democratic fight to regain the House, the newspaper added a poetic tribute: “Larger things have taken over. But his mark will stand fast. An afternoon with only the sounds of the paddle dipping, the wind wafting and the birds singing in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area is the melody Bruce Vento makes in the Minnesota Legislature, representing a most dedicated, effective and popular member of the nation’s natural heritage is a passionate love for him.”

Vento’s hometown newspaper, the St. Paul Pioneer Press-Dispatch—where he once worked as a mailroom clerk—called him “an Old Democrat in a New Democrat era” who exemplified “an old-fashioned sense of public service in a new-fashioned and too-slick political era.”

Mr. Speaker, India is a significant recipient of American aid. Why should the taxpayers of this country pay taxes to support the corruption and tyranny of the Indian Government? There is, however, something that America, as the world’s only superpower, can do about it. America can stop sending aid to India and support self-determination for the people of Kashmir, Nagalim, and the NDA.

Mr. Speaker, I insert into the Record an article from the current issue of The Economist about the latest Indian Government bribery scandal. I commend it to all my congressional colleagues who care about spending our foreign aid dollars wisely.

[From The Economist, Mar. 24, 2001]