

an unrealistic and unresponsive Medicare fee schedule has done more to erode emergency medical service in rural America than any other threat to medical care in this country. Because Medicare fees fail to accurately reflect the rural medical environment, rural EMS is facing grave danger of being put out of business by a fee schedule that fails to recognize the actual costs confronting rural ambulance/EMS service.

Therefore, I am introducing the "Medicare Rural Ambulance Service Equity Act of 2001," to increase by 20 percent the payment under the Medicare program for ambulance services furnished to Medicare beneficiaries in rural areas.

For rural ambulance/EMS, the majority of their revenue (60 to 70 percent) comes via Medicare reimbursements. Unfortunately, existing reimbursement fee schedules do not accurately reflect real-world circumstances confronting rural service. New Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) (previously referred to as HCFA) fee schedules, anticipated to go into effect by early fall, will not adequately correct the problem. Rural ambulance/EMS providers in every State will remain the hardest hit under the new fee schedule due to their low-volume of calls and transfers each year.

Timely and accurate reimbursement schedules for ambulance/EMS services that accurately reflects real-world costs and expenses are critical to the rural providers' ability to continue to operate. Passage of the "Medicare Rural Ambulance Service Equity Act of 2001" will level the playing field for rural emergency medical service.

All too often we are seeing rural EMS providers go out of business—citing financial loss. The primary contributing factor they cite for their loss—an unrealistic and unresponsive Medicare reimbursement fee schedule.

Recently the town council in Avonmore, Pennsylvania voted to close their ambulance/EMS after 27 years. Their reason, they couldn't afford to remain in business. Why, because with nearly 68 percent of their revenues from Medicare reimbursements they couldn't afford any longer to maintain the service for the community—A sad but all too true reality confronting rural medical care in America.

The "Medical Rural Ambulance Service Equity Act of 2001" is not the panacea for the growing shortcomings of health care in America, but its 20 percent increase in reimbursement will stop the hemorrhaging that we are experiencing in rural emergency medical service.

We all have something to lose by not putting a halt to the erosion of rural EMS. Therefore, I call on all Members of Congress to immediately pass this important piece of health legislation.

A TRIBUTE TO SISTER SHARON BECKER, A HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY LEADER

HON. JERRY LEWIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 27, 2001

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I would like today to congratulate Sister Sharon

Becker of St. Mary Medical Center in Apple Valley, California, who has been elected to the leadership council of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange. In that position, she will be one of five Sisters who are responsible for giving direction to this health care community.

Since she joined St. Mary Medical Center in 1993, Sister Sharon's vision and leadership has helped make the hospital one of the most highly-regarded in the High Desert and recognized throughout San Bernardino County for its quality of care. Her dedication to serving the poor and disadvantaged has made St. Mary's a leader in services to the needy in the area. She has been forceful in convincing other community leaders to also ensure that a safety net remains in place for the truly needy.

While in Apple Valley, Sister Sharon developed a program for at-risk pregnant women that is now a full-fledged outreach center. She opened a High Desert office for Catholic Charities, making its disaster relief and services to the poor available for the first time. She established a Food Resource Center that provides a range of counseling services for families receiving government food assistance. She started an annual "Share the Warmth" drive to acquire shoes and coats for needy children. And she started an annual Thanksgiving food drive for needy families. She was one of the original members of the San Bernardino County Children and Families Commission.

As a member of the leadership council, Sister Sharon will help direct the ministries of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange. Through the St. Joseph Health Care System, the council oversees the operation of 15 acute health care facilities, as well as an array of clinics, home-health-care services and hospices in California, Texas and Arizona. The sisters have been ministering to the sick since 1912 in California, and their hospitals served 143,000 inpatients and 2.3 million outpatients in 2000.

Mr. Speaker, the patients who receive top-notch care at St. Mary's Medical Center will enthusiastically endorse Sister Sharon as a good choice to help run the ministries health care system. We will miss her direct leadership in the High Desert, but have no doubt that she will ensure that the entire system improves over her five-year term. Please join me in congratulating her and wishing her well in this important new role.

INTRODUCING THE RENTERS RELIEF ACT

HON. ELIOT L. ENGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 27, 2001

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation that addresses a crisis in our country. My bill, the Renters Relief Act, provides a refundable tax credit of up to \$2,500 for people paying more than 30 percent of their income toward housing costs.

Throughout our nation, millions of working families are struggling to make ends meet. Housing costs are often the greatest drain on a family's economic resources.

I would like to call to my colleagues' attention some disturbing facts from around the

country: In Atlanta, Georgia there are 11,907 families waiting for housing assistance from HUD; In the Los Angeles Metro region more than 400,000 renters have incomes less than 50 percent of the area median income, and pay over half of their income for rent or are living in severely substandard housing, the "worst" case scenario. In Boston, the average monthly fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the metro area is \$874, that means a family must earn at least \$35,000 or else they will be spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

We have heard the statistics over and over. The fact is we are not producing enough housing that is guaranteed for low and moderate-income people. We are not building nearly enough public housing to accommodate our needs. Incomes are not keeping up with housing costs. I have been frustrated at not being able to help more of my constituents.

In fact, three years ago Secretary Cuomo said that "Not even families working full-time at minimum wage can afford decent quality housing in the private rental market. This is not just a big city problem but affects America's growing suburbs as well."

HUD's own research indicates that a wide variety of market forces have contributed to this crisis of housing affordability through the 1990s. Among these are "continued suburbanization of population and employment, regulatory barriers to development of multifamily housing, underinvestment in affordable housing by local communities, continuing discriminatory barriers, and the simple economics of supply and demand in which rising incomes for higher income families drive up rents faster than the poorest families can afford. Also, the growth in the crisis during the 1990s can also be attributed to the elimination of Federal appropriations for additional rental vouchers between 1995 and 1998."

I urge my colleagues to turn the tide. Join me in moving the Renters Relief Act forward!

HONORING DR. BOBBY JONES OF NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE GOSPEL MUSIC INDUSTRY

HON. BOB CLEMENT

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 27, 2001

Mr. CLEMENT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Dr. Bobby Jones of Nashville, Tennessee. For more than twenty-five years, he has promoted and performed gospel music during his "Bobby Jones Gospel" shows worldwide. In fact, I have known him for a number of years and consider him to be a personal friend.

Bobby Jones is truly a pioneer in taking gospel music to a wider audience via television programming beginning with his local television show on WSMV—Channel 4 in Nashville, and over the past twenty years as a personality on Black Entertainment Television (BET). His programs have inspired, informed, and entertained a generation of Americans. In fact, "Bobby Jones Gospel" is credited with

being the first and only nationally syndicated black gospel television show.

Jones has also introduced a wealth of new musical talent to the world through his television shows. Artists such as Yolanda Adams, Kirk Franklin, and Hezekiah Walker first came to the attention of the public after being showcased on "Bobby Jones Gospel." Additionally, his video program on BET, is the only national black gospel video program to date. He also hosts a weekly syndicated gospel countdown show heard on radio stations across the nation.

Bobby Jones has always aspired to great things. The Henry County, Tennessee, native dreamed of a musical career at an early age, which drove him to graduate from high school at the age of 15 and to earn a bachelor's degree from Tennessee State University (TSU) at the age of 19. An education major, he went on to earn a master's degree from TSU, and doctorate from Vanderbilt University. Upon graduation, Jones successfully taught in both the Tennessee and Missouri school systems.

He is also credited with forming the now familiar "Black Expo,"—fairlike events, which take place across the Nation and celebrate the many contributions of African Americans to the community in which they take place.

Bobby Jones has been honored numerous times by his peers. In 1980, he received The Gabriel Award and an International Film Festival Award for writing and performing *Make A Joyful Noise*. In 1982, he was nominated for a Grammy Award, along with his group, *New Life*. The Gospel Music Association (GMA) honored him in 1984, with a Dove Award for *Black Contemporary Album of the Year*. That same year he picked up a Grammy Award for "Best Vocal Duo for a Soul/Gospel Performance" for the single he recorded with Barbara Mandrell, "I'm So Glad I'm Standing Here Today." He also won an NAACP Image Award in 1984. The GMA honored him with the "Commonwealth Award for Outstanding Contribution to Gospel Music" in 1990. In 1994, Jones was nominated for a Cable ACE Award.

His autobiography, "My 25 Years in Gospel Music: *Make a Joyful Noise*" was recently released by Doubleday Books. Another recent venture is his new television program "Bobby Jones Presents . . ." for the Word Network. This show contains classic performances from "Bobby Jones Gospel."

Jones is to be commended and honored for twenty-five years of outstanding service to the gospel music industry. He is a beloved figure who no doubt will continue to enlighten audiences for many years to come.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF THE
HELSINKI COMMISSION

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 27, 2001

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, twenty-five years ago this month, on June 3, 1976, a law was enacted creating the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. We know it as "the Helsinki Commission." One of the smallest and most unique bodies in the U.S. Gov-

ernment, it perhaps ranks among the most effective for its size. I have been proud to be a member of the Commission for the past 16 years.

When President Gerald Ford signed, in Helsinki in 1975, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, he said that "history will judge this Conference not by what we say here today, but by what we do tomorrow—not only by the promises we make, but by the promises we keep." That piece of rhetoric has not only been repeated in various forms by every United States President since; it has continually served as a basis for U.S. policy toward Europe.

Credit for this fact, and for the Commission's establishment, first goes to our late colleague here in the House, Millicent Fenwick, and the late-Senator Clifford Case, both of New Jersey. Observing the foundation of human rights groups in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to monitor and, it was hoped, to encourage their governments to keep the promises made in Helsinki, she and other Members of Congress felt it would be good to give them some signs of support. Keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, that this was in the midst of detente with Moscow, a polite dance of otherwise antagonistic great powers. It was a time when the nuclear warhead was thought to be more powerful than the human spirit, and the pursuit of human rights in the communist world was not considered sufficiently realistic, except perhaps as a propaganda tool with which to woo a divided European continent and polarized world.

The philosophy of the Commission was otherwise. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is, as the Helsinki Final Act indicates, a prerequisite for true peace and true security. As such, it is also a principle guiding relations between states, a legitimate matter for discussion among them. This philosophy, broadened today to include democratic norms such as free and fair elections and respect for the rule of law, remains the basis for the Commission's work.

Of course, the Commission was not meant to be a place for mere debate on approaches to foreign policy; it had actually to insert itself into the policy-making process. The Commission Chairman for the first decade, the late Dante Fascell of Florida, fought hard to do just that. It was, I would say, a bipartisan fight, with several different Congresses taking on several different Administrations. Moreover, it was not just a fight for influence in policy-making; it was a much tougher fight for better policies. The Commission staff, led during those early years by R. Spencer Oliver, was superb in this respect. It knew the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It worked with non-governmental organizations to increase public diplomacy and, subsequently, public support for human rights advocacy. The staff developed the ability to insert principle into policy at the negotiating table. Over time, as State Department and other Executive-branch officials would come and go, the Commission staff developed the institutional memory to recall what works and what doesn't, allowing human right as an element of East-West relations consistently to strength. With the Commission staff represented on U.S. delegations to follow-up and experts meetings which emerged from the

Final Act—collectively called the Helsinki process—our country addressed issues at the heart of Cold War, forthrightly confronting the Soviets and their allies in the presence of our European allies, neutral and non-aligned states and the more reluctant Warsaw Pact members. The Commission was viewed as unique in the role it played to "co-determine" with the Executive branch U.S. human rights policy toward the Soviet Union and East-Central Europe.

In 15 years at the East-West divide, the Commission also championed policies, like the Jackson-Vanik amendment, linking human rights to trade and other aspects of U.S. bilateral relationships. The concept of linkage has often been chastised by the foreign policy establishment, but it comes from the passion of our own country's democratic heritage and nature. With persistence and care, it ultimately proved successful for the United States and the countries concerned.

The Helsinki Commission also became the champion of engagement. Commission members did not simply speak out on human rights abuses; they also traveled to the Soviet Union and the communist countries of East-Central Europe, meeting dissidents and "refuseniks" and seeking to gain access to those in the prisons and prison camps. At first, the Commission was viewed as such a threat to the communist system that its existence would not be officially acknowledged, but Commissioners went anyway, in other congressional capacities until such time that barriers to the Commission were broken down. The Commission focus was on helping those who had first inspired the Commission's creation, namely the Helsinki and human rights monitors, who had soon been severely persecuted for assuming in the mid-1970s that they could act upon their rights. Ethnic rights, religious rights, movement, association and expression rights, all were under attack, and the Commission refused to give up its dedication to their defense.

Eventually, the hard work paid off, and the beginning of my tenure with the Commission coincided with the first signs under Gorbachev that East-West divisions were finally coming to an end. Sharing the chairmanship with my Senate counterparts—first Alfonse D'Amato of New York and then Dennis DeConcini of Arizona—the Commission argued against easing the pressure at the time it was beginning to produce results. We argued for the human rights counterpart of President Reagan's "zero option" for arms control, in which not only the thousands of dissenters and prospective emigrants saw benefits. They were joined by millions of everyday people—workers, farmers, students—suddenly feeling more openness, real freedom, and an opportunity with democracy. Dissidents on whose behalf the Commission fought—while so many others were labeling them insignificant fringe elements in society—were now being released and becoming government leaders, people like Polish Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek and Czech President Vaclav Havel. The independence of the Baltic States, whose forced incorporation into the USSR was never officially recognized by the United States, was actually reestablished, followed by others wishing to act upon the Helsinki right to self-determination. The