

MEDICARE HOME HEALTH AND VETERANS HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1998

SPEECH OF

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 9, 1998

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to explain why I must oppose H.R. 4567 even though I support reforming the Interim Payment System (IPS) and I certainly support expanding the health care options available to American veterans. However, I cannot support this bill because this solution to home care is inadequate and it raises taxes on Americans instead of cutting wasteful, unconstitutional spending to offset the bill's increases in expenditures.

I am pleased that Congress is at last taking action to address the problems created by the IPS. Unless the IPS is reformed, efficient home care agencies across the country may be forced to close. This would raise Medicare costs, as more seniors would be forced to enter nursing homes or forced to seek care from a limited number of home health care agencies. In fact, those agencies that survive the IPS will have been granted a virtual monopoly over the home care market. Only in Washington could punishing efficient businesses and creating a monopoly be sold as a cost-cutting measure!

Congress does need to act to ensure that affordable home care remains available to the millions of senior citizens who rely on home care. However, the proposal before us today does not address the concerns of small providers in states such as Texas. Instead, it increases the reimbursement rate of home care agencies in other states. I am also concerned that the reimbursement formula in this bill continues to saddle younger home health agencies with lower rates of reimbursement than similarly situated agencies who have been in operation longer. Any IPS reform worthy of support should place all health care agencies on a level playing field for reimbursements.

A member of my staff has been informed by a small home health care operator in my district that passage of this bill would allow them only to provide an additional eight visits per year. This will not keep home health patients with complex medical conditions out of nursing homes and hospitals. Congress should implement a real, budget-neutral home health care reform rather than waste our time and the taxpayers' money with the phony reform before us today.

Mr. Speaker, I also support the language of the bill expanding the health care options available to veterans' benefits. Ensuring the nation's veterans have a quality health care system should be one of the governments' top priorities. In fact, I am currently working on a plan to improve veterans' health care by allowing them greater access to Medical Savings Accounts (MSAs). However, I cannot, in good conscience, support the proposals before us today because, for all their good intentions, it is fatally flawed in implementation for it attempts to offset its new spending with a tax increase.

Now I know many of the bill's supporters will claim that this is not a tax increase just an adjustment in the qualifications for a tax benefit

or tightening a tax loophole. However, the fact is that by raising the threshold before a taxpayer can rollover their traditional IRA into a Roth IRA the federal government is forcing some people to pay higher taxes than they otherwise would, thus they are raising taxes. It is morally wrong for Congress to raise taxes on one group of Americans in order to provide benefits for another group of Americans.

Instead of raising taxes Congress should "offset" these programs by cutting spending in other areas. In particular, Congress should finance veterans health care by reducing expenditures wasted on global adventurism, such as the Bosnia mission. Congress should stop spending Americans blood and treasure to intervene in quarrels that do not concern the American people.

Similarly, Congress should seek funds for an increased expenditure on home care by ending federal support for institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which benefit wealthy bankers and powerful interests but not the American people. At a time when the federal government continues to grow to historic heights and meddles in every facet of American life I cannot believe that Congress cannot find expenditure cuts to finance the programs in this bill!

Mr. Speaker, I must also note that the only time this Congress seems concerned with offsets is when we are either cutting taxes or increasing benefits to groups like veterans or senior citizens. The problem is not a lack of funds but a refusal of this Congress to set proper priorities and put the needs of the American people first.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I call upon this Congress to reject this bill and instead support an IPS reform that is fair to all home care providers and does not finance worthwhile changes in Medicare by raising taxes. Instead, Congress should offset the cost to these worthy programs by cutting programs that do not benefit the American people.

HONORING SUNY BROOKLYN PROFESSOR ROBERT FURCHGOTT RECIPIENT OF THE NOBEL PRIZE FOR MEDICINE

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 13, 1998

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor distinguished Professor Emeritus Robert Furchgott recipient of the Nobel Prize for Medicine.

Professor Furchgott received the Nobel Prize for Medicine as a much deserved salute for a long, distinguished and continually evolving career. Furchgott's love for science began as a young man growing up in the great state of South Carolina. After earning a doctorate in biochemistry at Northwestern University in Illinois, he headed to New York's Cornell Medical Center. In 1956, he landed a position at SUNY Downstate (now called SUNY Health Science Center in Brooklyn). He remained there until his retirement in 1989, and is now a professor emeritus.

Doctor Furchgott, always modest and unassuming, stated that a lucky mistake led to his discovery of the role in nitric oxide in vascular relaxation. Those that know him best know

that this is his style. The Nobel Prize was not only for his pioneering discovery but it is also in recognition of his years of hard work and perseverance. Even as a tireless researcher, he has also been dedicated to the responsibility of shaping the next generation of pioneers. He never turns down students' request to read their research papers.

The professor, a giant in the field of medicine, is truly a role model and an inspiration for our children. A man of great conviction and passion for increasing the body of medical knowledge we will all benefit from, Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in saluting the achievement of Professor Robert Furchgott.

DANTE B. FASCELL NORTH-SOUTH CENTER ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 12, 1998

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I join the Chairman of the International Relations Committee, Mr. GILMAN of New York, and the Ranking Democratic Member of the Committee, Mr. HAMILTON of Indiana, in strongly supporting this legislation to rename the North South Center as the Dante B. Fascell North South Center.

Mr. Speaker, I had the great honor of serving in this House for 12 years without our distinguished former colleague from Florida, Dante B. Fascell, and for almost a decade of my service in the House, he was the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. In that position he played a critical role in dealing with many of the vital foreign policy issues of that time—the Iran-Contra scandal, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the effort to encourage the democratic political transition and the development market economies in the republics of the Newly Independent States and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the end of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany, the outrageous suppression of democracy and free speech at Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

Dante was a critical player, Mr. Speaker, when the House of Representatives considered the War Powers Act in 1974, and throughout his service in the Congress, he was adamantly committed to assuring the importance of the Congressional role in the formulation of our Nation's foreign policy. In the 1970's the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe took place with the involvement of the nations of both Western and Eastern Europe and the United States in an effort to improve relations between Western Europe and the Soviet Union and its client states. At this crucial time, Dante was one of the most insistent and effective voices in advocating the importance of respect for human rights as a key element of any agreement with the communist countries. It was largely through his leadership that the United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe—the Helsinki commission—was established.

Among the most farsighted concerns upon which Chairman Fascell focused his energies and attention, however, Mr. Speaker, was the