

has seen the possibility of how biofuels can stimulate rural economies. New fuels developed from crops could provide us with a renewable and sustainable energy supply and move our country beyond oil dependence—while also creating new markets for these crops.

Flo worked to bring "Opening Windows," a unique theater and human services project that addresses adolescent health and behavior issues from a rural perspective, to Colorado. This entertaining, provocative and value-neutral program deals with such issues as substance abuse, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, eating disorders, sexually transmitted diseases and suicide, and is based on extensive interviews with rural adolescent teenagers and their families. Each performance is followed by a facilitated dialogue involving the cast, local resource personnel, and the audience. This interactive program helps communities understand some of the dilemmas today's adolescents are trying to deal with, as new ways to approach these issues.

Flo will be missed at the CRDC, but I know she will continue to be a strong force working to improve Colorado. I urge my colleagues to join me in thanking Flo for her years of dedicated service to Colorado, and to rural residents and communities throughout our nation.

EXPAND MEDICARE MSA PROGRAM

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 5, 2003

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce legislation which enhances senior citizens' ability to control their health care and use Medicare money to pay for prescription drugs. This legislation accomplishes these important goals by removing the numerical limitations and sunset provisions in the Medicare Medical Savings Account (MSAS) program so that all seniors can take advantage of the Medicare MSA option.

Medicare MSAs consist of a special savings account containing Medicare funds for seniors to use for their routine medical expenses, including prescription drug costs. Seniors in a Medicare MSA program are also provided with a catastrophic insurance policy to cover non-routine expenses such as major surgery. Under an MSA plan, the choice of whether to use Medicare funds for prescription drug costs, or other services not available under traditional Medicare such as mammograms, are made by the senior, not by bureaucrats and politicians.

One of the major weaknesses of the Medicare program is that seniors do not have the ability to use Medicare dollars to cover the costs of prescription medicines, even though prescription drugs represent the major health care expenditure for many seniors. Medicare MSAs give those seniors who need to use Medicare funds for prescription drugs the ability to do so without expanding the power of the federal bureaucracy or forcing those seniors who currently have prescription drug coverage into a federal one-size-fits-all program.

Medicare MSAs will also ensure seniors access to a wide variety of health care services by minimizing the role of the federal bureauc-

racy. As many of my colleagues know, an increasing number of health care providers have withdrawn from the Medicare program because of the paperwork burden and constant interference with their practice by bureaucrats from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (previously known as the Health Care Financing Administration). The MSA program frees seniors and providers from this burden thus making it more likely that quality providers will remain in the Medicare program!

Mr. Speaker, the most important reason to enact this legislation is seniors should not be treated like children and told what health care services they can and cannot have by the federal government. We in Congress have a duty to preserve and protect the Medicare trust fund and keep the promise to America's seniors and working Americans, whose taxes finance Medicare, that they will have quality health care in their golden years.

However, we also have a duty to make sure that seniors can get the health care that suits their needs, instead of being forced into a cooking cutter program designed by Washington-DC-based bureaucrats! Medicare MSAs are a good first step toward allowing seniors the freedom to control their own health care.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to provide our senior citizens greater control of their health care, including the ability to use Medicare money to purchase prescription drugs by cosponsoring my legislation to expand the Medicare MSA program.

RECOGNIZING SERGEANT GREGORY W. VERBECK

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 5, 2003

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the life and career of one of the Monterey Park Police Department's finest officers, Sergeant Gregory W. Verbeck.

Sergeant Verbeck graduated from the Southern California Peace Officers Academy at Riverside City College in 1971. That same year, Sergeant Gregory W. Verbeck began his 31-year career with the Monterey Park Police Department. Sergeant Verbeck rose quickly in the force and on September 21, 1974, he was promoted to the rank of Police Agent. From 1978 to 1980, he was assigned to the Investigations Bureau working juvenile investigations and on January 24, 1980, he was promoted to Sergeant. Sergeant Verbeck also served as a K-9 Handler, a department firearms instructor, the department's fleet manager and the Monterey Park Emergency Communications Coordinator.

Outside of his official duties on the force, Sergeant Verbeck was a member and served as President of the Monterey Park Police Officers Association. He has also been active in the community as a member of the Eastside Optimist Club, as a board member of the Japanese Amateur Radio Society and Chair of the Community Relations Commission.

During his career, Sergeant Verbeck received over fifty letters and commendations for his unwavering commitment to service. These awards included Basic, Intermediate, Advanced, and Supervisory Police Certificates. In 1996, Sergeant Verbeck's excellence earned

him the Public Safety Employee of the Year Award.

Sergeant Verbeck has been a true professional, mentor and a friend to our community. He will be greatly missed by his many friends at the Monterey Park Police Department and the community. Mr. Speaker, I ask you to join me in expressing my appreciation for Sergeant Verbeck's lifetime of service and commitment to our community.

TRIBUTE TO SHERIFF BILL BLAIR

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 5, 2003

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to pay tribute to Sheriff Bill Blair of Delta County, Colorado. Bill Blair has been the Sheriff of Delta County for the past fourteen years where he has faithfully served his constituents with the honor, courage, and integrity that Americans have come to expect from their elected officials. Recently, Sheriff Blair has announced his retirement and, as he leaves office this January, I would like to pay tribute to his career and accomplishments before this body of Congress and this nation.

Throughout his life, Sheriff Blair has proven himself to be a dedicated American, committed to the service of his community and country. At age seventeen, Bill Blair joined the United States Navy where he faithfully served his country for twenty years. During his career in the military, Bill was an aircraft firefighter while on four aircraft carriers. Bill also served in the Vietnam War, where he received the Navy's Professional Service Award for meritorious service in both 1968 and 1972.

Soon after leaving the military, Bill Blair began his career in law enforcement, where he served the Delta County Sheriff's office as a reserve deputy and later as a deputy sheriff. He was promoted again as the department's first non-uniformed investigator for the Delta County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Blair was later appointed Undersheriff by then Sheriff Richard Miklich, a position that he held for two years. From there, Bill was appointed Sheriff in the middle of Miklich's final term of office.

As a former law enforcement officer, I am well aware of the dangers and hazards our police officers face today. These individuals work long hours, weekends, and holidays to guarantee their fellow citizens rights and protections. They work tirelessly and with great sacrifice to their personal and family lives to ensure our freedoms remain strong in our homes and communities. Their service and dedication deserves the recognition and thanks of this body of Congress, and that is why I am so honored to celebrate the retirement of a man who has given so much to his community and country.

Mr. Speaker, it is with sincere gratitude that I recognize Sheriff Bill Blair of Delta County, Colorado before this body of Congress and this nation. Sheriff Blair has served the citizens of Delta County with great character and integrity, and it is an honor to represent such an outstanding American in this Congress. I wish Bill all the best in his retirement.