COMMENDATION OF MARGARET GONTZ

HON. GEORGE W. GEKAS
OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, March 23, 1999

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend Ms. Margaret Gontz, who at the age of 72, gave up something that most people look forward to: her retirement. That was 10 years ago. Today, at 81, Ms. Gontz is one of the top employees in the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency in Harrisburg. She came back for family: to help her grand- son pay for college. And she came back for herself: she just wanted to be on the job. Ms. Gontz has been cited as an exemplary em- ployee at PHEAA—where most of her co-workers are in their 20s and 30s. Now she is being honored as “Pennsylvania’s Outstanding Older Worker,” which is being recognized as part of Prime Time Awards, a national celebra- tion of the contributions of older workers taking place this week in Washington. Ms. Gontz cites accuracy, timeliness and productivity as contributing to her success. “I rate myself as a normal person doing my job like I should do,” she says. Ms. Gontz, you are not a “nor- mal” person. You are very rare indeed.

THE URGENT NEED FOR A NATIONAL DRUG EXPERT

HON. JOE BARTON
OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, March 23, 1999

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I submit the following paper as a request for a con- stituent of mine from Burleson, Texas. His name is Kenneth Hunter and he collaborated with Prof. Rinaldo DeNuzzo on the following article which cites a need for a federal office with a national drug expert. It is not an endor- sement either for or against their effort, but a submission of their idea.

THE URGENT NEED FOR A DRUG EXPERT

In recognition of the dynamic changes which continue to occur in the delivery of health care services in the United States and globally, it is suggested that the President and/or Congress re-establish the office of Apothecary-General which disappeared from the United States Army in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. This skilled health care professional of equal status, while working in tandem with the Surgeon- General, would provide advice and counsel to the office of the President, the Congress and others. This professional with offices in Washington, DC, will serve to coordinate and oversee all aspects of mandated and other programs involving drug use or abuse by the general public, military, veterans, and others.

Originally, the Office of Apothecary was created by action of the American Congress in 1775. The need for such an official became evident to Dr. John Morgan, the second of four Medical Directors of the American Revolu- tionary Army. Morgan recognized the need for coordination of the valuable skills provided by the apothecaries as well as those by the surgeons. The Congress also estab- lished a military hospital care for the 20,000-man military involved in the Revolu- tionary War. As with other medical care personnel, the apothecaries were directed to visit and tend to the needs of those who were sick or wounded.

Dr. Morgan, physician-apothecary, as di- rector of the Department of Hospitals wrote to Dr. Jonathan Potts, deputy director, in- forming him that “a warrant to Mr. Andrew Craigie to act as an apothecary” had been issued. Potts was advised that the appoint- ment of Craigie was due to his experience. “Without such a one, I know not how you could either procure suf- ficient medicines for your department or dis- pense them when got.” Dr. Morgan was an influential advocate for the separation of medicine and pharmacy in America. He taught pharmacy and is credited with the in- troduction of prescription writing in America.

Morgan, additionally admonished Dr. Potts “to make it a part of the duty of mates to assist the apothecaries in dispensing medicines.” He states, “The Apothe- cary to all intent is to be looked on in rank as well as pay in the light of the surgeon and respectively accorded, it should in return, do part of the surgeon’s duty.” During the period of 1775–1780, there were several Apothecary-Generals serving in three of the four Revolutionary War Dis- tricts. In 1780, a reorganization of the mili- tary medical department concentrated all authority in one medical staff, and Andrew Craigie became sole Apothecary-General. He served as such until the end of the War when a treaty with Britain was signed in 1783.

Many apothecaries played vital roles in the American Colonists’ struggle for independ- ence. Among them was American military hero Dr. Hugh Mercer, physician-apothecary, who operated a pharmacy in Fredericksburg from 1771 until the beginning of the Revolu- tion. General Mercer suffered wounds and died on the battlefield in 1777. Following his death, the Congress approved a monument to be erected in Fredericksburg with the fol- lowing inscription:

“Sacred to the memory of Hugh Mercer, Brigadier-General in the Army of the United States. February 17, 1745–March 23, 1777. Of the wounds he received on the 3rd of the same month, near Princeton, N.J., bravely de- fending the liberties of America. The Con- gress of the United States, in testimony of his virtues and their gratitude, has caused this monument to be erected.”

Dr. Mercer’s historic apothecary shop is currently maintained by the Association for the Preservation of Virginian Antiquities in Fredericksburg, VA. It is open to the public.

Apothecary Christopher Marshall was com- missioned by the Continental Congress in 1776, the year the Declaration of Independ- ence was signed, to oversee service given to the needs of soldiers in Philadelphia hos- pitals. Two years later, the first Military Pharmacopea was issued in Philadelphia.

It is noted that the American Revolu- tionary War served to provide us with inde- pendent pharmacy and a foundation upon which the practice of pharmacy in America is based. For example, we had shops where medicines for consumer use were provided to meet needs away from the military.

The authors of this paper hope that their actions will start a ground swell movement to give new recognition to the practice of pharmacy and its practitioners in a rational and accountable way. If action is taken, the use of the Apothecary-General may lead to an increase in efficiency in the Federal Bureauc- racy, a significant decrease in the number of citizens incarcerated, and reduce Federal and State spending. We have the talent and leadership ability; so let’s save the taxes. This is now the time to re-establish the of- fice of Apothecary-General.