

85 year-old Medicare patient wishes to use an electric wheelchair because it helps her get around better, she ought to be assured that Medicare will cover up to the amount for a basic model.

During last year's debate on health care reform, one of the comments I heard most often from the families of northeast Ohio was concern about restrictions on patient choices. Health care is too personal to allow choices to be determined by Government bureaucrats.

This legislation would ensure beneficiaries true choice of medical equipment such as wheelchairs, hospital beds, walkers and other aids. In addition, the bill includes measure to protect beneficiaries from high pressure sales and allows the Health Care Financing Administration [HCFA] to establish guidelines for the purchase or rental of upgraded equipment.

Restrictions on coverage for medical equipment were established in response to fraud and abuse in the program. However, these restrictions have become outmoded and inflexible. This legislation would protect older Americans from the hard sell by equipment suppliers while providing the flexibility in their equipment choices.

It is not my intent to allow the industry to oversell grandma on the luxury models of all equipment, but we need to have some common sense about Medicare coverage. Why shouldn't Medicare beneficiaries have access to equipment that all Americans do? Why should they be penalized?

Furthermore, while this legislation ensures that additional choices are available to the elderly, this bill is revenue neutral to the Medicare Program. Medicare current covers medical equipment at a standard level. My legislation would simply ensure that Medicare beneficiaries could choose an upgraded model and be reimbursed from Medicare at the standard level. Thus, the U.S. taxpayer will pay no more for this choice legislation.

I urge my colleagues to join in cosponsoring this necessary legislation.

THE PASSING OF AN AMERICAN HERO

HON. RON WYDEN

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 7, 1995

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. Speaker, let us take a moment today to remember one of the great advocates for justice who died at the age of 89 on April 22—my friend and Gray Panthers colleague, Margaret Eliza Kuhn. I had the pleasure of knowing Maggie for 20 years. She was the inspiration for the Oregon Gray Panthers, pioneer advocacy organization that has worked to bring seniors and young people together in Oregon since 1975. Maggie is truly an American hero.

Maggie Kuhn founded the Gray Panthers in response to her forced retirement. Her goal was simple: unite the generations to serve as advocates for fundamental social change that would reduce injustice, discrimination, and oppression in our society.

Maggie was given a sewing machine to celebrate her retirement, a seemingly appropriate gift, but she never even found time to open it. She was too busy. Instead, she served as a tireless champion for those without a voice in our society.

Maggie Kuhn led the fight to root out discrimination against older Americans. Kuhn thought it was absurd to waste the valuable talents of older Americans, and helped to shatter the myth that growing older is synonymous with powerlessness, decrepitude, and weakness.

Kuhn saw a natural connection between young and old. She said that the mind needs exercise to stay healthy. Kuhn encouraged seniors to return to school. She encouraged older Americans to teach children, based on their vast life experiences.

Maggie Kuhn and the Gray Panthers have always had an aggressive agenda of social action. Maggie refused to let government and society stunt the productivity of seniors by forcing them to retire at age 65. She argued that forced retirement damages self-esteem and leads to feelings of uselessness. She felt it was unconscionable that this physical and psychological damage could be forcibly imposed as a person ages. Maggie fought mandatory retirement until she won.

Maggie Kuhn would be outraged today by the recent attacks on the role of seniors in our society. When talking about Medicare much of the media says seniors, not out of control health costs, are the problem. When talking about Social Security, seniors, not the use of the Social Security surplus to fund other programs, are again described as the problem. When it comes to the economy, again seniors are described as the problem and held out as takers, not producers.

The fact is millions of seniors are producers, not takers, and Maggie led the way for older people to use their skills to make our communities better places every day. Seniors are part of the solution, not problems as so often portrayed in today's media.

Older Americans are making valuable contributions every day in many ways around the country. Stop in at your local blood bank, school lunch program, or your favorite charity. You'll see that seniors are the glue that holds these programs together. They are the National Senior Service Corps, the Peace Corps, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program [RSVP], and AmeriCorps. Just look around—seniors are helping—because Maggie Kuhn helped open the doors for older Americans.

Maggie's credo was age and youth in action, and I'm pleased that this House is beginning to understand the need for policies that bring the generations together. Recently, the House voted for my amendment to promote kinship care, which gives seniors and other adult relatives the opportunity to support and raise children, as an alternative to forcing children from broken homes into foster care run by strangers. Enacting a national plan to promote kinship care would be an ideal way to honor Maggie Kuhn, who led the fight to bring younger and older people together.

Maggie hated waste and foolish bureaucracy. Democrats and Republicans alike can work together to reduce fraud and waste in vital government services and protect consumers. In support of this objective, Congress should pass the bipartisan legislation introduced by the chairs of the House Older Americans Caucus that would attack fraudulent and unethical practices in the sale of private long-term care insurance.

In the days ahead, Congress will debate many important issues of social justice. Let us remember Maggie Kuhn's life and support

government policies that empower and liberate our citizens.

Maggie Kuhn led a life of unselfish service to others. She felt that the greatest sin was to waste time and to waste human potential. She lived her life to the fullest. Millions of Americans, young and old, have been touched by her work.

Maggie Kuhn was once asked how she would like to be remembered. She recited her favorite epitaph: "Here lies so-and-so, under the only stone she left unturned."

Maggie Kuhn, a true American hero, will be much missed.

BIENNIAL CONGRESSIONAL REFORM

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 7, 1995

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing a resolution providing for the biennial review of the structure and organization of Congress.

One of my major conclusions from my work last Congress on the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress is that the institution is better served if congressional reform is treated more as an ongoing, continual process rather than something taken up in an omnibus way every few decades. Congress has set up three major bipartisan, bicameral reform efforts in recent times—the 1945, 1965, and 1993 Joint Committees on the Organization of Congress. All three panels were given extremely broad mandates—to look at virtually all aspects of Congress in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The panel last Congress took up everything from committee jurisdiction reform and the congressional budget process to ethics reform and congressional compliance with the laws we pass for everyone else. We conducted scores of hearings, heard from hundreds of witnesses, looked over thousands of pages of testimony, considered hundreds of reform ideas, and issued reports totalling several thousand pages.

In my view, it would be far preferable to have the House take up a congressional reform resolution each Congress:

First, the task would be much more manageable. Members would be able to focus attention on the key reform issues of the day, rather than consider the entire range of procedural and organizational matters over from previous Congresses.

Second, political tensions would be lessened. Letting systematic institutional reform slide for several years only allows problems to fester and heightens partisan tensions.

Third, continual attention to reform is needed. We live in a rapidly changing world and need to keep the institution of Congress up to date on a regular basis.

Fourth, public confidence in Congress would be bolstered. Regular, systematic reform of Congress should help improve its operations and remove unnecessary impediments to legislative action.

Thus I strongly favor bringing a congressional reform resolution to the House floor every Congress, and letting Members work their will on the major reform issues of the

day. That is what the resolution I am introducing today would help to bring about. It has three main components:

The first, and main, part, Section 1, would require the House Committee on Rules each Congress to consider submitting to the House a congressional reform resolution. My proposal does not require that they report out and send such a resolution to the floor. It instead says that they should consider submitting such a resolution to the House, and—if they decide against such a resolution—they would have to explain—as part of their end-of-Congress report required in Section 3 below—why they thought congressional reform was not needed.

The biennial reform resolution proposed in Section 1 would draw upon two sources of information, among others:

Section 2 provides for a general floor debate on congressional reform during consideration of the legislative branch appropriations bill. Just as we set aside time for a Humphrey-Hawkins debate on the economy each session during consideration of the budget resolution, so we should set aside time for regular debate on how well Congress is working, allowing the main committee involved in congressional reform to take part in the discussion. The time of the year when we are funding Congress would be an appropriate time to discuss how well Congress is working.

Section 3 requires that the Committee on Rules, as part of its oversight agenda, submit a systematic and comprehensive report at the end of each Congress on the effectiveness of House organization, operations, and procedures. Earlier this year the House required each committee, including Rules, to submit an end-of-Congress report on its overnight activities. My resolution would require that a section of the Rules Committee report specifically take up the need for congressional reform—what was done on reform during that Congress and what might the areas of future reform.

Mr. Speaker, interest in congressional reform tends to ebb and flow according to the changing interests of the main House players in reform, the shifting national agenda, the varying amounts of media coverage given to the operations of Congress, and the changing winds of public interest in major reform. I believe we need to regularize the process so that whoever is in charge of reform in the future will be looking seriously at scheduling and debating a congressional reform resolution each Congress.

My idea is not a new one. The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 stated the need for a congressional panel to "make a continuing study of the organization and operation of the Congress." Moreover, the 1974 bipartisan House Select Committee on Committees, headed up by Richard Bolling, stated: "A key aspect of any viable reorganization is provision for continuing evaluation of its effectiveness, and for periodic adjustments in the institution as new situations arise." I believe it is time to finally follow through on these recommendations and regularize the congressional reform process.

A TRIBUTE TO MELVIN AND JOSEPHINE CARLSON

HON. JOHN W. OLVER

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 7, 1995

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, on June 9, 1945, Melvin and Josephine Carlson were married in the Holy Name Church in West Roxbury, MA.

That is 50 years, for those of you who may not be mathematically inclined. On the occasion of this monumental anniversary, I must take time out to pay tribute to their lives together.

Melvin and Joey met at Fort Devens Army Base in Ayer, MA. For Melvin, an illustrious military career was in the works. A World War II combat veteran of Guadalcanal and Bougainville fighting, he holds Legion of Merit, Purple Heart, and Combat Infantry Badge honors. He is also authorized to wear the Distinguished Unit badge.

Melvin worked for General Electric, and is recently retired from New England Confectionery Co. as director of research and development.

Josephine, a graduate of Regis College in Weston, MA, taught elementary students at St. Dominici's School in Brookline, MA. These days, it is reported that she spends some of her time gardening, reading, and making afghans for her grandchildren.

Speaking of children, Melvin and Josephine have three: Joseph Eric, Richard Melvin, and Elaine Marie, each of who coincidentally went to Boston College. Melvin and Joey have two grandchildren: Heather Ann and Eric Joseph Carlson.

I hear that, in addition to spending as much time as possible with their children and grandchildren, they are very active in their church, and they are loved by many good friends, both old and new.

Fifty years is quite an achievement. I hope my colleagues will join me in wishing Melvin and Josephine Carlson many more memorable years together. Congratulations and happy anniversary.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET—FISCAL YEAR 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 18, 1995

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 67) setting forth the congressional budget for the U.S. Government for the fiscal years 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002:

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of the Congressional Black Caucus substitute budget for fiscal year 1996. The CBC substitute is a caring budget, it shows compassion for the American people and is one that the American people can be proud of. It not only balances the budget, the measure is responsive to the housing, health, education, and employment training needs of the American people.

Unlike the Republicans' budget proposals, House Concurrent Resolution 67, which holds our elderly hostage to their compromised health care condition and economic status, the Congressional Black Caucus substitute treats our elderly with the dignity and respect that they not only deserve—but have earned. Adequate funding is provided for the older Americans' programs, including essential nutrition programs, low-income home-energy assistance, and assisted housing. Medicare is preserved.

The lives of more 2,000,000 Medicare seniors in Texas would be dramatically impacted, and by the year 2002 each Medicare senior in Texas would be asked to pay an additional \$1,112 out-of-pocket expenses. Each would be forced to pay \$4,000 more for fiscal years 1996 through 2002 to make up for the cuts. We want the future to be free but not on the backs of seniors and those most vulnerable. Unlike the Republicans' budget proposal which forces our elderly to choose between food and heat, under the CBC alternative their quality of life is enhanced.

The CBC substitute is also kind to our Nation's children, including those yet to be born. It provides adequate funding for Healthy Start, Child Care, and Head Start. Our children are our future. They have placed their future in our hands, we cannot sacrifice the trust.

In addition, the CBC substitute budget strengthens support for higher education, student aid, TRIO, education for the disadvantaged, school reform, biomedical research, and community infrastructure. The CBC has heard the voice of the American people, and responded with a sound budget that is fair, responsible, and overturns the Republicans' assault on our Nation's most vulnerable citizens—the children, the elderly, the Veterans, and hard-working families.

The Congressional Black Caucus substitute budget stands on its own merits. We know we must maintain a strong national defense—but we also know we must establish our fiscal policy and priorities in a responsible and compassionate manner.

THE AVERAGE AMERICAN HAS REASON TO BE ANGRY

HON. BERNARD SANDERS

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 7, 1995

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I submit the following article for the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

(From the Christian Science Monitor, June 1, 1995)

THE AVERAGE AMERICAN HAS REASON TO BE ANGRY—LOW PAY, LONG HOURS, AND A WIDENING GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR

(By Bernard Sanders)

It has recently been widely reported that the average American is angry. Well, the average American should be angry.

Since 1973, the working people of this country have worked longer hours, earned less, and lost much of the economic security they previously had. During the last 22 years, 80 percent of American families have experienced falling or stagnant real incomes. Meanwhile, average Americans are experiencing a major drop in their standard of living, while the rich and powerful have never had it so good.