

to Government service. While budgetary bottom lines may sometimes seem cold, a responsible government treats its workers as national assets to be valued and esteemed.

And it is to no less than this level of appreciation that the Department of Energy is legally obligated.

As we look toward the uncertain future, it is reasonable that we remind ourselves of our past commitments, of our promises made. In this context, I wish to submit for the record the very promise made by the Federal Government to DOE workers who do our Nation's work at the defense nuclear facilities across our Nation.

The reference is a law passed in the second session of the 102d Congress, Public Law 102-484, the DOD Authorization Act, Subtitle E, Section 3161:

Subtitle E—Defense Nuclear Workers

SEC. 3161. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES WORK FORCE RESTRUCTURING PLAN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Upon determination that a change in the workforce at a defense nuclear facility is necessary, the Secretary of Energy (hereinafter in this subtitle referred to as the "Secretary") shall develop a plan for restructuring the work force for the defense nuclear facility that takes into account—

(1) the reconfiguration of the defense nuclear facility; and

(2) the plan for the nuclear weapons stockpile that is the most recently prepared plan at the time of the development of the plan referred to in this subsection.

(b) CONSULTATION.—(1) In developing a plan referred to in subsection (a) and any updates of the plan under subsection (e), the Secretary shall consult with the Secretary of Labor, appropriate representatives of local and national collective-bargaining units of individuals employed at Department of Energy defense nuclear facilities, appropriate representatives of departments and agencies of State and local governments, appropriate representatives of State and local institutions of higher education, and appropriate representatives of community groups in communities affected by the restructuring plan.

(2) The Secretary shall determine appropriate representatives of the units, governments, institutions, and groups referred to in paragraph (1).

(c) OBJECTIVES.—In preparing the plan required under subsection (a), the Secretary shall be guided by the following objectives:

(1) Changes in the work force at a Department of Energy defense nuclear facility—

(A) Should be accomplished so as to minimize social and economic impacts;

(B) Should be made only after the provision of notice of such changes not later than 120 days before the commencement of such changes to such employees and the communities in which such facilities are located; and

(C) Should be accomplished, when possible, through the use of retraining, early retirement, attrition, and other options that minimize layoffs.

(2) Employees whose employment in positions at such facilities is terminated shall, to the extent practicable, receive preference in any hiring of the Department of Energy (consistent with applicable employment seniority plans or practices of the Department of Energy and with section 3152 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991 (Public Law 101-189; 103 Stat. 1682)).

(3) Employees shall to the extent practicable, be retrained for work in environ-

mental restoration and waste management activities at such facilities or other facilities of the Department of Energy.

(4) The Department of Energy should provide relocation assistance to employees who are transferred to other Department of Energy facilities as a result of the plan.

(5) The Department of Energy should assist terminated employees in obtaining appropriate retraining, education, and reemployment assistance (including employment placement assistance).

(6) The Department of Energy should provide local impact assistance to communities that are affected by the restructuring plan and coordinate the provision of such assistance with—

(A) programs carried out by the Department of Labor pursuant to the Job Training Partnership Act (29 U.S.C. 1501 et seq.);

(B) programs carried out pursuant to the Defense Economic Adjustment, Diversification, Conversion, and Stabilization Act of 1990 (Part D of Public Law 101-510; 10 U.S.C. 2391 note); and

(C) programs carried out by the Department of Commerce pursuant to title IX of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3241 et seq.).

(d) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary shall, subject to the availability of appropriations for such purpose, work on an ongoing basis with representatives of the Department of Labor, work force bargaining units, and States and local communities in carrying out a plan required under subsection (a).

(a) PLAN UPDATES.—Not later than one year after issuing a plan referred to in subsection (a) and on an annual basis thereafter, the Secretary shall issue an update of the plan. Each updated plan under this subsection shall—

(1) be guided by the objectives referred to in subsection (c), taking into account any changes in the function or mission of the Department of Energy defense nuclear facilities and any other changes in circumstances that the Secretary determines to be relevant;

(2) contain an evaluation by the Secretary of the implementation of the plan during the year preceding the report; and

(3) contain such other information and provide for such other matter as the Secretary determines to be relevant.

(f) SUBMITTAL TO CONGRESS.—(1) The Secretary shall submit to Congress a plan referred to in subsection (a) with respect to a defense nuclear facility within 90 days after the date on which a notice of changes described in subsection (c)(1)(B) is provided to employees of the facility, or 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, whichever is later.

(2) The Secretary shall submit to Congress any update of the plan under subsection (e) immediately upon completion of any such update.

TRIBUTE TO BENICIA MIDDLE SCHOOL

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Benicia Middle School, in Benicia, CA, for receiving the National Blue Ribbon Award for excellence from the U.S. Department of Education. This is the highest honor that a public or private school can receive in recognition of academic excellence and attaining national educational goals.

Benicia Middle School was chosen from among 500 nominations nationwide, and is only one of 87 middle schools honored with this prestigious award.

I would like to commend the hard work and dedication of the parents, teachers, and students of Benicia Middle School and the Benicia community for their efforts in attaining national, State, and local educational goals. Benicia Middle School started on the blue ribbon path in 1994 when the California Department of Education recognized them as a California distinguished school. This marked them as the top 2 percent of all middle schools and high schools in the State of California. In 1995, the California Department of Education nominated Benicia Middle School for the National Blue Ribbon School Award. The school underwent an intensive application and interview process before being selected for this honor.

Benicia Middle School can now proudly say that they are among the best in the Nation. They can attribute their success to team effort and a commitment to excellence that they have demonstrated in their academic program. They educate the students at Benicia Middle School as strong leaders in a safe, supportive, and drug-free environment. I am proud of the commitment of the Benicia community toward preparing our youth for the future.

I would like to share with my colleagues the attached article from the Solano Times, Thursday, February 22, 1996: "School Is a Blue Ribbon Winner."

[From the Solano Times, Feb. 22, 1996]

SCHOOL IS A BLUE RIBBON WINNER

(By Catherine D. Jacobson)

Benicia Middle School is one of the best schools in the nation.

Recently named a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education, the school received the announcement 17 months after the initial application.

"We are honored and we are proud," said Carole Hiltman, Benicia Middle School principal. "To earn this kind of prestigious recognition from a national review is exciting and validates our hard work. These schools become models."

The blue ribbon status recognizes both public and private schools based on their effectiveness in meeting national education goals and standards of quality.

Each school's success in furthering intellectual, social, physical and moral growth of all students, including those with disabilities, is emphasized.

Through a 30-page application and a site visit, Benicia Middle School administrators presented evidence to Department of Education officials that students are developing a solid foundation of reading, writing and math, in addition to reasoning and problem-solving skills.

Hiltman said hundreds of hours were spent in researching, writing and assembling the application, submitted in September 1994.

"This has been a long effort, and it's nice to see the uplifting spirit," she said, noting the honor is especially rewarding given the disruption of the campus during major construction renovations.

Benicia Middle School will be rewarded with a bronzed plaque to be placed at the campus. It is one of 87 middle schools across the nation to receive the prestigious honor this year.

The road to the National Blue Ribbon award started in 1994, with Benicia Middle School being named a California Distinguished School. State officials then nominated the school for the national award.

Benicia Middle School was one of 27 middle schools and 17 high schools nominated in the state, representing the upper 2 percent of all junior and senior high schools in California.

Jim Krouscas, a physical education teacher and president of the site council at the middle school, attributed the blue ribbon award to the community and parental support, students, and, particularly, veteran teachers.

"This award started 20 years ago when these teachers decided Benicia Middle School would be a school of excellence and not mediocrity," said Krouscas.

Superintendent Annette O'Connor said, "Everyone contributed to making Benicia Middle School the fine institution of learning it has become."

"I am proud of the whole staff and pleased to show the community that we are recognized as exemplary wherever we are reviewed."

Mayrene Bates of the Solano County Office of Education said the blue ribbon selection is due to the people behind the scenes.

"Things like this don't just happen," she said.

Hiltman hopes the honor leads to an even stronger support for the school, through financial or technical assistance.

"We'd like to attract a large corporation to form a blue ribbon partnership to support the school," she said.

The entire middle school staff participated in the application, although principal writers were Hiltman, Linda Cole, district director of instructional services, and teachers Russell Ho, Sherry Knight, Kathy Maloney, Rami Muth, Greg Reed, and Kathy Wright.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE LAWRENCEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING TEAM

HON. GLENN POSHARD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. POSHARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Lawrenceville High School wrestling team, which grappled its way to a stellar 22-3 record and the State finals. Despite not taking the title, the season was a remarkable success, as the wrestlers combined with the school's basketball team to be the only high school in Illinois to have two teams participate in their respective State tournaments. I would like to congratulate the wrestling squad on a job well done. They carried themselves with dignity and are outstanding representatives of their community.

Wrestling is a team sport that is comprised of numerous individual battles. The mental discipline required is monumental, for not only must the athlete concentrate on his opponent, but he must be aware of his team's standing in the meet. Combined with the rigors of having to make weight and the intense conditioning required to participate, these student-athletes are a truly dedicated unit. The Indians captured titles at the Lawrence County, Cumberland Holiday, Argenta Oreana, and Mattoon tournaments before claiming the North Egyptian conference and sectional crowns. Led by a strong corps of seniors, Lawrenceville returns four juniors as well as four sophomores, and should be primed to make another run at the State championship next season. Head coach Jim Dunn prepared his team expertly, and was ably assisted by coaches Terry Hoke and Keeley Meek.

Mr. Speaker, Lawrenceville has a fine athletic tradition that is embodied by its wrestling team. I am glad that these students have gotten to participate in such a first-rate program, and that they have worked hard to maintain these high standards and fulfill their potential. That is the true measure of success. I am proud to represent Lawrenceville in the U.S. Congress. The 1995-96 Lawrenceville High School wrestling team: Jeremy Harrington, Cory Jones, Chris Seed, Ryan Seitzinger, David Stanker, Alan Couch, Oliver Glenn, Cohn Cognat, Chris Gray, Nathan Hill, David Sechrest, Eric Seitzinger, and Sam Sanders. Statisticians are Jamie Dunn, Jodi Taylor, and Lisa Weyer.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ESTEBAN EDWARD TORRES

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. TORRES. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent on official business for certain votes on Friday, March 29, 1996. Had I been present on the House floor I would have cast my votes as follows: Roll No. 108: Nay on ordering the previous question on H. Res. 394; Roll No. 109: Yes on approving the journal; and, Roll No. 110: Nay on agreeing to conference report H. Rept. 104-481.

HONORING CONTINENTAL NEWS- PAPER FOR 13 YEARS OF SERV- ICE TO THE HISPANIC COMMU- NITY

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Continental newspaper on its 13th anniversary of dedicated service and commitment to the U.S. Hispanic community.

Under the direct influence of its main advisors, Mario Ciria Jr. and Ofelia Dones, the paper has emerged as one of the Nation's leading information sources for the Hispanic community. Ms. Dones is the only female publisher of a weekly Hispanic newspaper in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area. Together, Mario, Ofelia, and their gifted staff have worked to produce a highly enlightening and entertaining source of information for members of the Hispanic community on a weekly basis.

Continental has established a strong and diverse base of support, and it serves a vast area that covers New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Florida, and Pennsylvania. Continental's reporting efforts center around its main office in Union City, NJ. However, the paper is widely read in New York City and the paper's roots are a product of the city's interest.

Continental prides itself on its fair and accurate coverage of events and issues of interest to its readers. The newspaper's editorial section has frequently taken a bold stand against the brutal dictatorship now enslaving the island of Cuba. Many of its journalists have uncovered horrifying stories of human rights violations by the Castro tyranny and thus have

incorporated a strong stand against the Castro regime.

Moreover, Continental has long been dedicated in its effort to convey essential information to members of the Hispanic community. It is because of this dedication and public service that I am proud to honor this very deserving news source.

HEALTH COVERAGE AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. JENNIFER DUNN

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 28, 1996

Ms. DUNN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Health Coverage Availability and Affordability Act of 1996. This legislation solves the health insurance problems most common among my constituents in Washington State—eliminating job lock and preexisting conditions while keeping the costs of premiums down.

A critical component of our efforts to keep the cost of health insurance down is the set of provisions to reduce fraud and abuse in our Nation's health care system.

According to the General Accounting Office, each year as much as 10 percent of our Nation's total health care expenditures are lost to fraud and abuse. With annual health care costs in the United States approaching \$1 trillion, fraud and abuse is robbing taxpayers and policyholders of about \$100 billion each year.

Let me repeat that because it is an important fact: fraud and abuse is costing our constituents about \$100 billion each year.

Despite the enormity of the problem, the GAO concluded that "only a small fraction of the fraud and abuse committed against the health care system is identified."

The Department of Health and Human Services has estimated that Medicare and Medicaid programs alone lose as much as \$31 billion annually to fraud and abuse.

And who pays? Patients, that is who. And in the case of Medicare and Medicaid, taxpayers pay for health care fraud and abuse in the form of higher health care costs and higher premiums.

For all these reasons attacking fraud and abuse is an essential component of the measure before us today.

For instance, we get tough on fraudulent and unscrupulous suppliers and providers who game the system in order to reap billions of dollars.

Through the establishment of the Medicare Integrity Program, we greatly increase Medicare's ability to prevent payments for fraudulent, or erroneous claims, and to identify illegal billing schemes early to avoid large losses.

We provide incentives for individual beneficiaries to report fraudulent, abusive, or wasteful claims practices.

Under the bill, a Health Care Fraud and Abuse Account with the Federal hospital trust fund is created. Moneys derived from the newly coordinated health care antifraud and abuse programs will be transferred into the trust for the expressed purposes of fighting fraud and abuse.

This new funding is vital because there has been a 45-percent drop in per claim spending