

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

on Medicare fraud and abuse prevention activities since 1989, despite historic savings rates in excess of \$10 for every \$1 invested in prevention. Our plan devotes more resources to the fight against fraud and abuse.

We also toughen criminal laws and enforcement tools for intentional fraud and abuse. The lack of a specific Federal health care fraud criminal statute, coupled with weak sanctions, has significantly hampered law enforcement's efforts to combat health care fraud. That is why it is so necessary to create this new criminal offense for activities such as theft, embezzlement, false statements, and money laundering. We then provide for mandatory forfeiture of property in such cases. In addition, civil monetary penalties will be substantially increased from \$2,000 to \$10,000 for each item or service involved. All of these efforts will serve to deter future abuses.

Strengthening prevention, increased funding for the battle against fraud and abuse, better coordination and enforcement, new criminal fraud statutes—all of these are included in this bill. I urge my colleagues to support our effort to end this annual \$100 billion rip-off of taxpayers by supporting the bill.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, it was necessary for me to return to my district on Thursday, March 28, before the final vote of the day was taken. I would have voted "no" on the procedural motion to H.R. 3136; "yes" on the final passage of H.R. 3136, "yes" on ordering the previous question on the modified closed rule (H. Res. 392) for H.R. 3103; "no" on the amendment in the nature of a substitute (H. Res. 392) to H.R. 3103; "no" on the motion to recommit H.R. 3103; "yes" on passage of H.R. 3103; "yes" on agreeing to the conference report on H.R. 2854.

NATIVE-AMERICAN HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND SELF-DETERMINATION ACT OF 1996

HON. TIM JOHNSON

OF SOUTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong support for the Native American Housing and Self-Determination Act introduced by Housing Subcommittee Chairman LAZIO. I am an original cosponsor of this bill because I believe there is a pressing need to assess and reorganize native American housing programs in this country. Chairman LAZIO's bill is a strong step in the right direction. However, my primary concern in adding my name to this bill is to insure that the needs of native Americans in my State and across the country are given serious attention and consideration, and that Indian tribes have a leading role in the development of this lasting legislation.

There are nine federally recognized tribes in South Dakota, whose members collectively

make up one of the largest native American populations in any State. At the same time, South Dakota has 3 of the 10 poorest counties in the Nation, all of which are within reservation boundaries. Unemployment on these extremely rural reservations averages about 50 percent. Yet economic depression on rural Indian reservations is not unique to my State. I believe strongly that housing is an integral and most basic component to economic development for Indian and non-Indian communities alike.

Federal expenditures for social programs continue to exceed investments for economic growth in Indian country. Tribal leaders in my State and elsewhere have struggled to break the cycle of dependence upon the Federal Government. In keeping with this Nation's special trust responsibility to sovereign Indian nations, I believe Federal programs must promote the self-determination and self-sufficiency of Indian communities. I support the premise of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act because Congress must prioritize programs which develop infrastructure on reservations and enhance economic growth for tribal communities. Additionally, the extreme health problems that many Indian communities face can be linked directly to inadequate housing, problems that can begin to be addressed through this Indian self-determination legislation.

I agree with Chairman LAZIO and the Native American Indian Housing Council that Indian housing should be divorced from public housing programs because of the unique needs of Indian country and the many economic challenges that must be overcome. I am particularly supportive of the funding initiative outlined in this legislation which is based on the section 108 loan guarantee for Community Development Block Grant funds. The flexibility in funding and in the administration of housing programs that this bill promotes is the key to tribal self-sufficiency and self-determination in housing management. Ultimately, this self-determination will result in increased access to safe, affordable housing for native American people nationwide.

The unique housing needs of Indian country warrant a continued Federal commitment to successful tribal housing programs. I look forward to working with Chairman LAZIO, my colleagues, and Indian tribes nationwide to make the Native American Housing and Self-Determination Act a reality, with the health and welfare of Indian tribes our foremost priority.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in recognition and celebration of the outstanding contributions of women to the history of this Nation and to society as a whole. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this special order and to add my voice to the chorus of praise for those women who have contributed so much.

In primary and secondary schools across the country, young women and young girls are being exposed to the accomplishments of notable women of history. While they can appre-

ciate the heroism and the ingenuity of these women, they may not yet fully understand that many of these accomplishments came at great individual sacrifice, were not fully appreciated at the time they occurred, and were often the result of long struggles to gain the opportunity to excel at their chosen pursuit.

Women's History Month also provides an important lesson to our young men and young boys in those same classes. They learn to recognize that their classmates, their sisters, their mothers, and all women have dreams similar to their own of careers and contributions. These boys can then better appreciate that women are equally valuable and equally capable of leading society in the next breakthrough in whatever field one chooses to pursue.

At the same time, we adults are reminded that while great progress has been made, particularly within our lifetimes, sufficient progress remains illusive. Too often our wives, daughters, and friends share with us the frustrations of obstacles to their careers rarely faced by males. These challenges come in the form of harassment, doubting of ability, and unfair choices placed on women concerning family objectives as opposed to career objectives that are not similarly placed upon men.

The children in our classrooms today need to enter a work force that is free of harassment, free of bias, and full of respect, full of opportunity and full of challenge. As our children enter and succeed in the workplace they need to look back at the contributions of the women who broke ground in their particular field. In so doing, they will appreciate not only the contributions of these women but also the barriers that have been removed to women as a result of their persistence.

There are no career fields in which we, as a Nation, can afford to restrict the contributions of talented, motivated workers. Our society cannot afford the disruptions caused by the lack of respect shown towards successful women in the work place.

Similarly, our society can not afford to minimize the contribution of women who choose to interrupt, delay, or forego their careers in order to tend to the needs of their families. Whether single or married, women today bear a disproportional share of the work involved in keeping our families strong and on a positive track. The struggles of mothers today, who seek to raise their children in a safe and moral environment, are unlikely to be the subject of the history lessons but are of historic proportions.

As we consider and honor the notable figures of the distant and recent past, we should also go home today and honor the historical women of the future and encourage their pursuits.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN W. TAYLOR

HON. ROBERT A. BORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, today I join with the family and many friends of John W. Taylor to offer congratulations on his retirement as the Director of the United Auto Workers and good luck to a man of courage and vision who has devoted his life to helping the working people of America.