

Jeremy Rathburn, a graduate of Washington Elementary. He enjoys basketball, soccer, rollerblading, and trading cards, just as all kids his age do.

What sets him apart is something most kids, as well as adults, would not do.

It is so unique, in fact, that his aunt contacted our office. She said, "Jeremy is a real good boy and I'm proud of him. I thought he should be recognized." And indeed he should. Jeremy turned in \$250 that he found on the floor of McDonald's.

The Greensburg Police Department returned the money to the rightful owner and recognized Jeremy's honesty in front of his classmates.

Jeremy also received a reward from the owner of the money, a certificate from Mayor Shel Smith, and McDonald's gift certificates.

Today, we only hear about the problems surrounding the youth of society—drugs, crime, violence.

It is truly comforting to hear stories of honesty, integrity, and good deed.

Children are taught the difference between right and wrong.

Jeremy Rathburn recognized that difference and I am pleased to recognize him for his virtuous behavior. That, Mr. Speaker, concludes my report from Indiana.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind Members that we are trying to accommodate the gentleman from New York; however, 5-minute requests have precedence over longer special orders and within the bounds of the rules of the House, all matters are able to be discussed.

THE VANISHING AMERICAN DREAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. MASCARA] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MASCARA. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to talk about the vanishing American dream and what we need to do to restore that vision of hope once widely held by hard-working Americans.

It is no secret that American families today are upset and afraid of what their tomorrow's may hold. Each one of us hears their concern every time we talk with constituents back home.

Back in the 1950's and 1960's, the road to a middle-class life was clearly marked. You made your way through high school, got a job in the local mill or plant, and in 5 or 10 years, you were well on your way to a secure future for yourself and your children.

Unfortunately, that comfort level does not exist today. Despite our growing national economy, low unemployment, and increasing productivity, Americans are no longer secure in their jobs and lives.

Recent polling shows they are very afraid the ax may fall tomorrow and any day they could be handed a pink slip, losing their job, their savings, their home, their hope for tomorrow.

A recent poll I took of my own constituents puts this issue into even sharper focus. When I asked what are the top five issues facing the country and our local area, the most frequent answers from nearly 8,000 respondents were too much unemployment, a lack of fair wages, and a need for more jobs.

It is no secret that working Americans blame big corporations for many of their woes. They greatly resent the incredible salaries paid to some top executives and firmly believe that workers have lost their jobs to pay for the CEO's golden parachute.

They will tell you that being loyal to a firm and working hard no longer counts. Tomorrow you could still be out the door.

Workers know the world is not going to go back to the way things operated in the 1950's. They understand global competition and the need for American firms and workers to face the reality of the new economic order.

All they are asking for is a return to fairness, a renewal of respect for the value of hard work, and a restoration of policies that ensure workers share in the financial success of their employers.

They especially want those of us serving in Congress to hear their plea and to take action to make life better for their families.

Members on my side of the aisle recently unveiled the families first agenda which includes a variety of realistic, moderate, achievable proposals for turning this situation around.

At the top of our list of legislative proposals are several that would provide security for working families by helping to ensure they are paid fair wages, have health care coverage for their children, and are afforded greater access to portable pension plans.

We also intend to open up educational and economic opportunities by proposing tax deductions for vocational and college educations and increasing efforts to help small businesses prosper.

While corporations have been downsizing, since the late 1980's, small businesses have created millions of new jobs. Many American families dream about operating their own small businesses. We need to give them the chance to succeed.

The last major component of this plank is called responsibility. Democrats believe the Government must be responsible and balance its budget. We acknowledge individuals must be responsible and there is a need for welfare reform, and a need for increased enforcement of child support orders, and a need to prevent teen pregnancies. Importantly, we also seek corporate responsibility, ensuring pensions and the environment are protected while offering incentives to encourage businesses to be more family and worker friendly.

One portion of this agenda which I personally recommend to my leadership was a section urging development of State infrastructure banks. Millions

of miles of roads and water systems in our country are near total collapse. Every day, millions of dollars in commerce and productivity are lost forever because goods cannot be transported on our highways. Countless cities and towns across this country face a major crisis as aging water and sewer systems—many well over 100 years old—simply fail.

Before coming to Congress, I served as chair of the board of Washington County, PA commissioners for 15 years. My major focus in life was, and continues to be, economic development for southwestern Pennsylvania.

My district lost hundreds of thousands of jobs in the 1970's and 1980's as mines and steel mills closed. Several of the counties I represent are among the poorest in Pennsylvania.

So it should be no surprise that during my years as a county commissioner I worked day and night to attract new businesses to my region. Through a variety of innovative financing methods and working cooperatively with business operators, I was successful in bringing 12,000 new jobs to the county.

Since coming to Congress, I have continued to work hard for my district, promoting a number of economic development projects including construction of the Mon-Fayette Expressway, a major thoroughfare that would bring economic renewal to many areas of my district.

My point this evening is to urge that we all listen to hardworking families. We must begin to bring some of those innovative economic development tools used at the local level here to Congress.

I think if we do, we can begin to restore the faith of American workers and the American dream which should still be a reality for each and every American.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MICA] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. MICA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. WISE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

WEST MICHIGAN HAS LOW-COST, QUALITY HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. EHLERS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I take the floor today to highlight two studies

that were completed by the Center for Health Affairs and the Michigan Health and Hospital Association regarding the excellent health care that is delivered in my district and throughout west Michigan. The studies show that west Michigan hospitals have lower costs while also delivering health care that is consistently equal to or better than the expected rates for lengths of stay and mortality. These factors combined help to illustrate the fact that health care in west Michigan is both low in cost and high in quality, and that we can serve as a model for national efforts to reform our health care system.

Over the past 10 years, we have seen national consumer health care prices increasing significantly. Last year's increase in consumer health care prices of 4.5 percent was the lowest in 22 years, but this increase is still nearly two times the increase in overall consumer prices. So you can understand why a report illustrating the low cost of hospital care in west Michigan is an important event. These low costs can be attributed to several factors, but the most significant ones are that administrators are operating efficient hospitals, doctors are making responsible decisions about appropriate care, and patients are not over-utilizing health care resources.

The most traditional measure of hospital resources in inpatient bed capacity, measured by beds per 1,000 residents. The number of beds in west Michigan hospitals has decreased by 26 percent over the past 10 years. This reflects the changing philosophy in the health care sector toward less intrusive treatments, shorter hospital stays, the use of outpatient and home care, and greater emphasis on preventive care. In west Michigan, the number of acute care beds per 1,000 people dropped to 2.35 in 1993, meaning that we had 1,700 fewer beds than would be expected at the statewide average. And the State average is still below the national average of 3.3 beds per 1,000 people.

In addition, the admission rate to acute care hospitals in west Michigan is 28 percent lower than the average rate across the State and throughout the Great Lakes region. The length of time that a person is expected to stay in the hospital upon admission has also fallen considerably in west Michigan from 1980 to 1993. The average length of stay at 5.3 days is over 15 percent lower than the national average. In terms of length of stay for selected medical cases, west Michigan hospitals performed better than expected in all categories. The days of care per 1,000 people in west Michigan is 35 percent lower than the days of care per 1,000 people at the national average. Finally, the per person operating costs in west Michigan hospitals are 30 percent lower than the statewide average, and the expenses per admission are also 10 percent lower than the State expense per admission.

All these statistics may be numbing, but together these data show that west

Michigan hospitals are leading the State and the Nation in developing low-cost, quality hospital care. The entire health care community is working together in west Michigan to find ways to lower the cost of health care, while still increasing the quality of the services delivered. I applaud health care providers in my region for the innovation and leadership that they have demonstrated. And I would like to highlight two hospitals in the Third District, Blodgett Memorial Medical Center and Butterworth Hospital, for being recognized for the second year in a row as one of the top 100 hospitals in the Nation. Hospitals included in this report, which is conducted by HCIA, Inc. and Mercer Health Care Consulting, reduced expenses per adjusted discharge, lowered mortality, and cut length of stay. If all hospitals emulated this performance, hospital expenses would decline by 17 percent, inpatient mortality would drop by 24 percent, and average lengths of stay would decrease by almost a day. These are the kind of results that we are going to need in order to decrease health care costs in a way that does not decrease the quality of care.

These results will also help us address the rapidly increasing rate of spending in the Medicare program. The Social Security Board of Trustees' report for the Medicare trust fund illustrates the grim prognosis that the rate of increased spending poses for the Medicare trust fund. One way that we can slow this increase in spending is by utilizing alternatives to fee-for-service coverage.

It is ironic, however, that the low cost of health care in west Michigan currently hinders our ability to attract Medicare managed-care organizations. In order to determine payments to managed care plans, Medicare uses a formula that is based on 95 percent of the average amount that Medicare pays per beneficiary for fee-for-service care. Low-cost areas, like west Michigan, receive dramatically lower managed care payments, based on this formula. As a result, the payments are too small to attract managed care organizations. This comes down to a basic issue of fairness because Medicare beneficiaries pay the same amount to participate in the program, but those in high-cost, high-utilization areas are able to access better benefits through managed care. It is improper that areas, such as west Michigan, that have worked hard to keep their medical costs low are then penalized with less adequate Medicare coverage. If we expect to help lower Medicare spending through the use of alternatives to fee-for-service coverage, we must ensure that managed care payments are developed in a fair manner.

I address the House today to commend west Michigan for the low-cost health care that its hospitals have developed. As we proceed with Medicare and other health care reform, I urge this body to take steps to ensure that we do

not penalize low-cost areas, like west Michigan, as they try to develop alternatives to fee-for-service coverage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia [Ms. NORTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. JONES] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. JONES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. COBURN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. COBURN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. STOCKMAN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. STOCKMAN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. SHADEGG] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. SHADEGG addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. DIAZ-BALART] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. DIAZ-BALART addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE HONORABLE HAMILTON FISH, JR.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May