

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE HEALTH CARE PROTECTION ACT OF 1997

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 10, 1997

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce today, H.R. 1836, the Federal Employee Health Care Protection Act of 1997. This is significant legislation for our Federal employees and taxpayers because it will help strengthen the integrity and standards of the Federal Employees Health Benefit [FEHB] Program, and allow it to maintain its reputation as a high quality and cost-effective program. H.R. 1836 includes three main provisions that will improve and protect the FEHB Program. First, it gives OPM better tools to deal swiftly with health care providers who try to defraud or abuse the FEHB Program, second, it requires full disclosure of discounted rate agreements between health care providers and health benefit carriers to prevent the fraudulent use of such discounts, and third, it provides the same Federal health benefits coverage for Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and Federal Reserve Board employees that other Federal employees have.

The FEHB Program is the largest employer-sponsored health insurance system in the country. In 1997, the \$16 billion FEHB Program will insure more than 9 million Federal employees, retirees, and their dependents. Partial portability, no preexisting condition limitation, and an annual open enrollment period are facets of the FEHB Program that make it an extremely attractive health care system. The free enterprise-based program has effectively contained costs through private sector competition with limited governmental intervention. The program is often cited as a model of efficiency and effectiveness that the private sector and the public sector should attempt to replicate. The bill I introduced today will improve the program and its performance, without changing the market principles that are the key to the program's success.

One of the most important provisions of this bill addresses the debarment of health care providers engaging in fraudulent practices. This provision would strengthen the ability of OPM to bar FEHB Program participation by, and impose monetary penalties on, health care providers in the FEHB Program who engage in professional or financial misconduct. Under this bill, the administrative sanctions authority would conform more closely with the Medicare Program, particularly with regard to grounds for imposing sanctions and the general availability of post-termination appellate rights.

Another important component of this bill is that it would provide consistent health benefit coverage for employees of the Federal Reserve Board [FED] and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation [FDIC]. A number of years ago the FED decided to drop out of the FEHB Program and offer its employees a sep-

arate health care plan. Then, in 1993, the FED elected to abandon this health care experiment and offer its employees only FEHB health care options. However, under current law, all employees must have 5 years of continuous enrollment in the FEHB Program to carry their health benefit coverage into retirement. As a result a number of employees who retired during the years when the FED had its own health care system, and some employees currently approaching retirement, are not eligible for FEHB coverage. The FDIC faces a similar situation because it plans to eliminate its alternative health insurance plan at the end of 1997, and go with FEHB options. Without this legislation, the FDIC and the Board will have to establish a non-FEHB plan for those employees who are ineligible for coverage. This would be administratively burdensome and costly to these Federal agencies and, ultimately, to taxpayers. Under this proposal, these ineligible employees would be offered FEHB coverage at no additional cost to the Government.

The third key provision in this bill would require FEHB carriers and their subcontractors to disclose in writing any discounted rate contracts with health care providers. If carriers do not include the required disclosure, they will be prohibited from accessing discounts. I believe that this language is necessary because it will eliminate the practice of silent preferred provider networks [PPO's]. Under conventional PPO arrangements, networks offer enrollees discounted fees to use network providers, or preferred providers. However, under silent PPO's, these discounts are being applied to patients that are not contractually covered by the PPO network. I have great concerns over the ethics and legality of the practice of these types of organizations. The effect of such practices is to reduce carriers' free market bargaining power. It also undermines the value of, and jeopardizes the expansion of, legitimate PPO networks. According to the American Hospital Association, discounts paid to silent PPO's may account for as much as \$1 billion in costs for providers throughout the industry. This type of abusive practice should not be allowed in the health care arena, and I believe that the language in this bill will address this problem and protect providers, patients, and legitimate PPO's.

I believe that the changes made in this legislative proposal are important to help improve and strengthen the FEHB Program. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this essential legislation.

STATEMENT BY PATRICK EDWARD HOULE, CANAAN MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL, REGARDING CENSORSHIP AND EDUCATION

HON. BERNARD SANDERS

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 10, 1997

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of my colleagues, I would like to have printed

in the RECORD this statement by a high school student from Canaan Memorial High School in Vermont, who was speaking at my recent town meeting on issues facing young people.

Mr. HOULE: Congressman Sanders, imagine if you will a world where you have personal choice and freedom to express your inner thoughts and soul through forms of art and media. It would be a world where if someone was offended, they would make the choice not to listen, but they would not try to suppress your right to express it. In this world everyone respects an individual's right to free expression and speech.

Recently K-Mart has said they refuse to sell CDS with offensive lyrics. This is blatant censorship. When someone tries to take away your right to hear something, it is censorship.

There have been many incidents in the United States recently in which censorship has become a factor. For example, in Arizona Newt Gingrich calls for the closing of the Flag Art Exhibit. In Florida a Cuban scholar's visit was canceled after a citizens protest. In Utah a printing company refused to reproduce photos for a women's magazine. In Michigan a "Where Do Queers Come From" exhibit at a local college was closed. And finally in Kentucky, "Blasphemous art" caused an outcry at the University of Kentucky. In school libraries Ernest Hemingway's novels are banned as are several good pieces of literature. Around the world films are banned and are censored. Film festivals and exhibitions are censored as well.

Our grounds for this censorship is broad and well-defined, but are speculative and opinionated. Unfortunately, opinions vary and freedom of speech is a right, but unfortunately rights are being ignored and opinions are preordained.

As you can see, censorship is alive and well in America where our First Amendment right is supposed to be enforced. It has gotten so bad around the world that the life of Salman Rushdie was threatened for writing *The Satanic Verses*. It's gotten so bad that we've had to turn to a porno king, Larry Flynt as a savior of the First Amendment right.

Basically what it comes down to is if it offends you, you can always turn the other cheek. Pornography even has its value. Some people just cannot live without their pornography, and if it was not for pornography they could be doing much worse things.

If you deny someone's right to see something or say something that they want to say, that eventually they are just going to explode.

I myself do not want a burned flag, but I think if someone wants to protest that way it should be allowed because I know myself I do not pledge allegiance to the flag, I pledge allegiance to the country.

In conclusion, one can censor a work of art but not the idea. The idea will fester and come out in a much more explosive, sometimes more violent way.

Thank you for your time, Congressman Sanders. We hope you help us fight for the cause in your position of leadership.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

HONORING ST. MARTIN OF TOURS
SCHOOL AS A BLUE RIBBON
SCHOOL

HON. LOUIS STOKES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 10, 1997

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor St. Martin of Tours School in Maple Heights, OH, of my district, for being selected as a Blue Ribbon School. I would also like to recognize the school's principal, Mrs. Rozann Swanson, M.A.Ed., for the excellent leadership she has provided to the St. Martin of Tours academic community. This year, the U.S. Department of Education gave this prestigious award to only 263 public and private elementary and middle schools across the Nation in recognition of their effectiveness in meeting local, State, and national education goals.

St. Martin of Tours School is very deserving of this distinguished achievement. As we seek to improve education across the Nation, this school serves as a model of educational excellence. St. Martin of Tours School won the Blue Ribbon Award because of its high academic standards, warm and nurturing environment, innovative programs and methods of instruction, as well as parental involvement. This is a school where faculty, staff, students, and parents join together in community to ensure that the students are fully equipped for success in our changing global economy.

At St. Martin of Tours School, instruction is based on the goals of fully engaging the interest, thinking, and participation of students. Active learning lessons allow students to gain knowledge and understanding of subject matter by doing, acting, inquiring, and discovering. Teaching is respected as an art, and instruction is approached as much more than simply imparting factual information. Faculty serve as facilitators for their classes and carefully guide their students intellectual growth. Additionally, the school's curriculum is focused on building students' critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my best wishes to St. Martin of Tours School and offer congratulations to the students, faculty, and administration of St. Martin of Tours School in Maple Heights, OH, for their dedication, leadership, and standards of excellence.

A CONGRATULATORY STATEMENT
TO SANJAY SHARMA

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 10, 1997

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Sanjay Sharma, a junior at St. Ignatius College Prep in Chicago, IL, who has been named a national winner for the 1997 Voice of Democracy Program for the State of Illinois, and the recipient of the \$2,500 Troy and Sandy Rothbart Memorial Scholarship Award. Sanjay, who lives in Elmwood Park is the son of Ms. Prabha Sharma.

Sanjay was sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1612 in Chicago, IL. The program requires high school student entrants to write and record a 3- to 5-minute essay on

an announced patriotic theme. This year's theme, "Democracy—Above and Beyond," attracted over 109,000 students to participate in the competition nationwide.

The Voice of Democracy Scholarship Program was started 50 years ago by the National Association of Broadcasters, the Electronic Industries Association, and the State Association of Broadcasters, with the endorsement of the U.S. Office of Education. Starting in the 1958–59 program year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars became a secondary sponsor in cooperation with other sponsors.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight a part of Sanjay Sharma's well-written essay on democracy.

Democracy is a form of government above and beyond all other forms of government because democracy explores our human essence. Democracy explores what it means to be an American and what makes each and every one of us who we are and who we can be. The United States of America has emerged as a pillar among nations, through the 220 years of ups and downs of its charismatic history. You can't help but realize that there has got to be something special about this democracy business. The power of democracy delves into our hearts, our minds, and our inner beings, revealing to us, that Destiny, Fate, and Choice are all the same breeze that floats over eternity and turns the windmill of our lives.

I am including the entire text of Sanjay Sharma's essay on democracy for the RECORD. All of us in the Seventh Congressional District of Illinois are rightfully proud of Sanjay Sharma.

"DEMOCRACY—ABOVE AND BEYOND"

(By Sanjay Sharma)

Democracy is a form of government above and beyond all other forms of government because democracy explores our human essence. Democracy explores what it means to be an American and what makes each and every one of us who we are and who we can be. The United States of America has emerged as a pillar among nations, through the 220 years of the ups-and-downs of its charismatic history. You can't help but realize that there has got to be something special about this democracy business. The power of democracy delves into our hearts, our minds, and our inner beings, revealing to us, that Destiny, Fate, and Choice are all the same breeze that floats over eternity and turns the windmill of our lives.

Inside each one of us there burns a flame of love, hope, and leadership; and from that flame, there shines a light of character and personality. This light, inside each of us, is enveloped by a cocoon of windows that are enclosed by shutters. One by one, Democracy throws up those shutters, opens those windows, and allows the light within us to shine forth.

Bringing freedom, responsibility, and opportunity into our lives, democracy challenges us to live up to our greatest individual potential and pool our talents and ideas together as a nation, in harmony and progress. And truly the glories of democracy guiding our inner strengths are exhibited in the events of our past and present and the prospects for our future.

Throughout history, an American legacy has taken shape from the past wonders of democracy. In the early foundations of the United States, the opportunities of democracy brought out a light of innovation and pioneering in the millions of immigrants who came from around the world and answered democracy's call by helping to build America. Esterian Mazzuca was a little girl

when she arrived from Italy, when she returned to Ellis Island seventy-four years later, she came with eighty-one American descendants. In the 1960's the power of the freedoms of democracy was brilliantly displayed, as lights of unity and hope beamed forth from Martin Luther King, Jr. And his followers in their peaceful demonstrations against segregation. And in 1985, the responsibilities of democracy unveiled lights of goodwill and service in forty-five music celebrities who gathered together to record: "We Are The World" and donate the album's earning (almost \$62 million) to the poverty-stricken nations of Africa. Now think, for a moment, about a time when you gathered together with others of the good of a common cause. The warmth and belonging you felt was the warmth of a ray of inner light shining from one of the opened windows inside of you—opened by the power of democracy.

The sands of time are piled in our hands, as memories are being made in our present day and age. In Missoula, Montana, when the children needed a merry-go-round, Chuck Kaparich started to carve the horses himself, and as the contagious democracy spread, soon schoolkids had collected one million pennies and grown-ups assisted in the carving. After four years of communal effort, Missoula has one heck of a merry-go-round. As a little girl performs with her class in their first school pageant, singing her heart out, a tear of joy falls from her parent's eye. The joyous teardrop—a beautiful symbol of the efforts, choices, and qualities which illuminate democracy. A grandmother and grandfather look high into the blackness of the night sky as a rocket scoots upwards, then disappears beyond the stars, only to burst forth in a fountain of blazing reds and blues, in the true fashion of a Fourth-of-July firework. As the night sky is lit up in celebration, there is, for a moment, a twinkle in their eyes—a symbol of the light with which democracy guides America.

As we look toward the future, we are awed by the dawn of a new century—the 21st century. The younger generations of Americans now must grow with democracy and kindle their own inner lights of unity, hope, and leadership shining in democracy's freedoms, responsibilities, and opportunities.

In its wonderful uniqueness, democracy finds a balance between absolute freedom and absolute control. The guiding light of democracy shines above and beyond, showing us that even freedom does not come free; freedom and opportunity demand our devotion and perseverance—in turn, democracy challenges us to use our talents, ideas, and skills, to carry the nation to its greatest potential.

HONORING HEMPFIELD HIGH
SCHOOL STUDENTS COMPETING
IN THE "WE THE PEOPLE"
FINALS

HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 10, 1997

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to honor several students from Hempfield High School in Lancaster County, PA who have recently traveled to Washington to compete in the "We the People . . . The Citizen and the Constitution" national finals.

These Hempfield students—who were part of teacher Elaine Savukas's advanced placement government classes—won first and second place in the Pennsylvania "We the People" contest.