

consolidation of an individual's plan benefits, for example, if a buyer's plan is involved in a merger or consolidation with the seller's plan or if the buyer's plan receives a transfer from the seller's plan, the buyer is not subject to requirements that would not apply if the buyer's plan had not accepted a transfer from the seller's plan.

The Secretary of the Treasury may also issue guidance under which a plan may provide the notice only 15 days before the effective date in cases in which a 45-day advance notice would be unduly burdensome either because the amendment is contingent on a merger, acquisition, disposition or other similar transaction or because 45-day advance notice would be impracticable (such as where benefits are being reduced as part of a liquidation or reorganization in bankruptcy or insolvency proceedings).

Sanctions: An excise tax applies to a failure to satisfy the notice requirements and, in the case of an egregious violation, the individual is entitled to the greater of the benefit under the amended plan or the plan before the amendment. Except in the case of a multiemployer plan, the tax is imposed on the employer. If a plan (other than a multiemployer plan) is sponsored by a party other than an employer, it is intended that the plan sponsor will be treated as the employer for this purpose. An egregious violation includes a situation in which there has been no intentional failure to provide notice, but the employer fails to take reasonable corrective steps after discovering that there was a failure to provide notice to some individuals.

Effective date exception where information provided within 120 days of enactment: The notice and information required under the Act is not required to be provided earlier than 120 days after the date of enactment of the Act. For example, if a large pension plan is amended to reduce benefits effective on the day after the enactment of the Act, the amendment could go into effect on the day after the enactment of the Act, but the plan could provide the required enhanced notice and related information (and also furnish any requested individual benefit statements) as late as 120 days after the date of enactment.

HONORING THE BROOKLYN CHINESE-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION'S EIGHTH AVENUE SENIOR CENTER ON ITS SIX YEARS OF SERVICE

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 7, 1999

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the achievements of the Brooklyn Chinese-American Association, and the sixth anniversary of its Eighth Avenue Senior Center.

For more than a decade, the Brooklyn Chinese-American Association has provided vital assistance to tens of thousands of the Chinese-American residents who constitute one of New York's fastest-growing communities. Six years ago, recognizing a critical need in this community, the Association opened the Eighth Avenue Senior Center, which provides daily congregate meals, citizenship classes,

medical check-ups and screenings, monthly birthday parties, field trips and many other services.

Operating out of modest facilities but with exceptional heart and dedication, the center has a membership of almost 2,000 and offers services to over 160 senior members daily.

The centerpiece of this year's sixth anniversary commemoration is the Millennial Roundtable Celebration. Fulfilling an extraordinary and touching ceremony, tables will be organized with seating for 12 seniors who are each at least 84 years of age—totaling 1,000 years. For the first time, to commemorate the end of the century and the turn of the millennium, a Double Millennial Roundtable will be featured, with seating for 23 seniors who are at least 87 years of age and totaling 2,000 years of age.

A poet wrote, "I like spring, but it is too young. I like summer, but it is too proud. So I like best of all autumn, because its tone is mellow, its colors are richer, and it is tinged with a little sorrow. Its golden richness speaks not of the innocence of spring, nor the power of summer, but of the mellowness and kindly wisdom of approaching age."

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join me when I commend the Eighth Avenue Senior Center, and the Brooklyn Chinese-American Association, for its work to ensure golden richness in the lives of our seniors.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2990, QUALITY CARE FOR THE UNINSURED ACT OF 1999, AND H.R. 2723, BIPARTISAN CONSENSUS MANAGED CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. JAY INSLEE

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 6, 1999

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the rigged rule for debate on the patients' bill of rights. Ever since this session began, I have been working with my colleagues to bring 'bipartisan patients' bill of rights to the floor for a vote. But now that Republicans have been forced to allow a vote on the bipartisan consensus managed care bill, they have written a rule designed to kill the measure.

Instead of providing a fair and open rule considering the patients' bill of rights, the Republican Leadership has stacked the deck by writing a rule that blends the managed care bill with a measure riddled with special interest "poison pills" designed to kill the measure, and that denies us the opportunity to offset any potential revenue losses from the measure.

The Republican Leadership is combining the bipartisan managed care bill with a so-called insurance access bill, which is not paid for. In addition, the Republican leadership is denying a bipartisan group of members the right to offer an amendment to offset the cost of the bill and be fiscally responsible.

If we can defeat this flawed rule, bipartisan advocates of managed care reform will return with a fair and open rule that will permit enactment of managed care reform. My constituents deserve patients' bill of rights. I urge my colleagues to vote down this rule and to support

real managed care reform and bipartisan patients' bill of rights.

HONORING THE RAMSEY FIRE DEPARTMENT ON ITS 100TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. MARGE ROUKEMA

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 7, 1999

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Ramsey Fire Department on its 100th Anniversary. This volunteer unit is one of the finest in New Jersey and deserves the thanks and support of every resident of our community.

Volunteer firefighters are among the most dedicated public servants in our communities. They set aside their own convenience—indeed, their own safety—to protect the lives and property of their neighbors and ask nothing in return. Volunteer firefighters turn out to do their duty in the darkness of freezing winter nights and in the heat of suffocating summer days without hesitation.

The Ramsey Fire Department was established in 1899 with 32 original members. The new fire company made a \$25 deposit on their first fire engine, an 1885 Babcock Chemical Wagon purchased second-hand from the Rutherford Fire Department. The Dater family of Ramsey donated property near the railroad tracks for the first firehouse, built at a cost of \$197, and the Ramsey Fire Department was in business. The first alarm was a brush fire near the tracks in April and the first building fire followed in January 1900.

The department grew quickly during the early years of the century, soon adding a horse-drawn ladder wagon and going to motorized fire trucks in 1912. A modern pumper was added in 1927 and the Ladies Auxiliary was founded in 1935 with 23 charter members. Additional equipment was purchased in subsequent years and the Island Avenue fire station constructed in 1951 to accommodate the growing fleet. A substation in the form of a three-bay addition to the borough garage was added in the 1960s. The 1970s saw the formation of the Junior Fire Brigade to encourage young people to become involved and a conversion from the traditional "fire engine red" paint scheme on equipment to lime yellow.

The Ramsey Fire Department has twice received the Box 54 Unit Citation Award from the New Jersey-New York Volunteer Firemen's Association for daring rescues, once in 1975 and again in 1984. In 1981, the department found itself the victim of arson when fire destroyed the second floor of the Island Avenue building. The building was repaired and rededicated the next year.

Major renovations of the fire department headquarters on Island Avenue were completed in 1992, including a room to display antique fire apparatus, a new radio room, a chief officer's room, an office for administrative officers and a 150-foot radio communications tower. Since 1996, the headquarters building has been known as the Robert E. Litchult Fire Safety Building in honor of Litchult, who served a record 63 years with the department.

Responding to nationwide difficulties in recruiting volunteer firefighters, the department

in 1994 formed a Recruitment and Retention Program to solicit new members.

Throughout its long and distinguished history, the Ramsey Fire Department has protected both lives and property through professionalism, dedication and skill of its many members. The department has grown vastly in personnel, equipment and other resources. Today, it is among the finest firefighting organizations in the State of New Jersey. Members constantly train to improve performance in order to do their jobs as safely and efficiently as possible.

The Ramsey Fire Department has come a long way from its founding. Today's state-of-the-art fire engines and high-tech equipment put Ramsey on par with any other fire department in the region. But it takes more than equipment and buildings to run a fire department. It takes dedicated, hard-working individuals willing to put the safety and property of their neighbors first. People like President Ken Bell and Fire Chief George Sutherland and all the officers and firefighters of the Ramsey Fire Department deserve our most special thanks.

The Ramsey Fire Department was founded 100 years ago on the principle of neighbors helping neighbors. That principal has made the department a success and will continue to do so in the future.

I would like to ask my colleagues in the House to join me in congratulating the Ramsey Fire Department on 100 years of meritorious service to the community, and in paying tribute to the brave and dedicated firefighters who have sacrificed personal safety in response to the needs of others. All past and present members of this very professional "volunteer" fire department deserve our deepest thanks for their work on the behalf of our community.

THE SENIOR CITIZENS
PROTECTION ACT

HON. RICK LAZIO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 7, 1999

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill to cut fraud and abuse in our Medicare system, restore balance in our health care system, and give us all a better quality of life. Federal, state, and local governments need more tools at their disposal to crack down on rampant health care fraud. Congress needs to empower law enforcement to preserve and protect Medicare, decrease the crime rate, and let each and every one of us feel safe and secure in our retirement years.

The Health and Human Services' Office of the Inspector General recently released startling information on their audit of the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA). According to the audit, the Medicare Program lost \$20 billion in fraud and improper payments in Fiscal Year 1997. What is unconscionable is that only \$4 billion was recovered.

A recently published Focus Group Study of Medicare Insurance Counselors found that most officials believe a significant amount of fraud exists and continues to undermine the Medicare program. In the study, many experts said HCFA took no action after being notified of fraud. The May 1998 study further cited that

HCFA did not have adequate systems and procedures in place to root out fraud.

A major reason health care fraud is at historic levels is because current law bars state officials from even investigating Medicare fraud. They are limited to investigating suspected fraud in the Medicaid. This creates an enforcement gap because an entity defrauding Medicaid is often linked to fraud in other federal health programs.

An example from my district on Long Island illustrates this predicament perfectly. A provider was suspected of defrauding Medicaid. The state and its Medicaid Fraud Control Unit began an investigation. That investigation spilled over into allegations of Medicare fraud and the state could not investigate because it lacked the requisite authority. Despite repeated requests from the state, the Federal Government did not investigate or prosecute the allegations. While the state was trying to wrest control of the investigation for the Federal Government, the provider billed nearly \$2 million. If the state had the power to investigate, some fraud could have been stopped and stolen money would have been recovered and returned to the government coffers.

My bill, the Senior Citizens Protection Act of 1999, will empower the states and their Medicaid Fraud Control Units by allowing them to investigate Medicare fraud cases when Medicaid fraud has been alleged.

A second reason health care fraud remains unchecked is because current law prohibits states from investigating patient abuse in assisted living and residential-care facilities. Currently, a state only has the authority to investigate patient abuse in facilities that receive Medicaid reimbursement, usually nursing facilities. Yet today, more and more of our friends and family reside in assisted living and other residential-care facilities. Normally, federal and local governments do not investigate suspected patient abuse in these non-traditional health care facilities and the state lacks the power to delve into these cases. The result is a high number of cases falling through the cracks.

My bill would authorize the states and the Medicaid Fraud Control Units to investigate these patient abuse cases in long-term care facilities.

The government should be doing more—much more—to combat fraud and abuse. "White collar" crimes in the health care industry can be stopped. The Senior Citizens Protection Act requires coordination of anti-fraud efforts, keeps our senior citizens safe, returns all recoveries to the Federal Government, and does not cost the Federal Government anything.

Our government should be given all the tools necessary to combat fraud in our health care system and give Americans the peace of mind that their moms and dads are well cared for in their retirement years. We need to ferret out providers who rip off the system, and Americans need to rest comfortably at night knowing our family members and friends receive the highest quality health care without the fear of being physically, mentally, or financially abused. I urge my colleagues to support the Senior Citizens Protection Act of 1999 because it will provide health care security to our seniors and restore their trust in the people who care for them from morning until night.

HONORING THE MADERA COLLEGE
CENTER

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 7, 1999

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Madera College Center for the State Center Community College District. The Board of Trustees for the college held a groundbreaking ceremony for the first permanent building on their campus on September 24, 1999.

The Madera Center has been in existence for approximately 15 years. The college offers a wide variety of programs and opportunities for students. The full-service campus includes a library, bookstore, distance learning classroom, cafeteria, and computer laboratories. Utilizing services and course catalogs from its sister institution, Reedley College, the Madera Community College Center is able to afford its students a choice of more than 40 Associate Degrees and Certificates of Achievement.

The building for which ground was broken will consist of a lecture hall, library, classrooms, laboratories and offices. It is projected that the facility will be completed by August 2000, allowing for the attendance of students for the fall 2000 semester. In addition, parking lots and play fields will be installed as a part of this \$12.7 million development project.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Madera College Center and its Board of Trustees, for their dedication to providing quality education to students in the Madera area. I urge my colleagues to join me in wishing the Madera Center many more years of success and continued growth.

IN HONOR OF CAPT. CLELL NEIL
AMMERMAN, U.S. NAVY (RET.)

HON. ELTON GALLEGLY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 7, 1999

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Capt. Clell Neil Ammerman, U.S. Navy (Ret.), who passed away last week.

Captain Ammerman had a long and distinguished career serving his country in the United States Navy. He graduated with honors from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1954 and quickly proved himself as a capable officer. In 1957, he commanded the USS *Ely*, one of the first ships to transit the new St. Lawrence Seaway. In 1958, he was assigned to the National Security Agency, and in 1961 received his master's degree in applied mathematics and physics.

Captain Ammerman returned to the sea, and in August 1964 was involved in the initial action in the Gulf of Tonkin as an officer aboard the USS *Oklahoma City*. In 1967, he completed his work in the field of nuclear weapons effects at the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory in Livermore, California, for which he received the Joint Services Commendation Medal.

After another year at sea, Captain Ammerman served as Assistant to the Deputy Director, Research and Technology, ODDR&E. That stint earned him the Legion of