

Broughton, Brett Trott, Zach Hollins, Jay Adkins, Dustin Jones, and Luke Ferguson.

HONORING ROBSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL BAND

HON. SOLOMON P. ORTIZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to shine the light on a performance later this week on the west side of the Capitol. I would like to invite all of you and your staff to hear the Robstown High School Band from my hometown of Robstown, TX.

Many of you have heard me talk about my hometown. Robstown is the biggest little town in Texas. Robstown has given the community, the state and the nation much of which they can be proud. Some prominent politicians at the local, the state and the national level hail from this big little town.

Robstown has thrilled us with their state baseball titles. The Cottonpickers baseball team is consistently underrated by the opposition from the bigger, more affluent school districts.

This week, however, Robstown High School sends its band to entertain us on the lower west terrace of the U.S. Capitol on April 23 from 1:30 to 2:15. The 120 young people in the band will be in the area on an educational trip during which they will see the museums and monuments Washington has to offer.

I hope all my colleagues will join me in welcoming the Robstown High School band to the U.S. Capitol.

IN RECOGNITION OF RICHARD BEDARD

HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Richard Bedard, who is retiring this year after nearly 38 years of service to the Worcester Public Schools.

Dick Bedard began his career where it counts the most—in the classroom, as a math and physics teacher. From there he moved into administrative positions, including Audiovisual Director, Director of Instructional Media, and, most recently School Plant Manager.

As the man in charge of the physical plant of the Worcester Public Schools, Dick Bedard has done an extraordinary job of keeping our schools safe, clean and conducive to learning. He was in the lead as Worcester opened 5 new schools; 3 more are on the way.

Through all of this, Dick Bedard has approached his responsibilities with good humor, hard work and dedication. He is widely respected in the city of Worcester as a man who gets the job done. And although we will miss him and his expertise, it is only fair to finally share him with his wife Joan, their four children and their five grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I know this entire House joins me in congratulating Dick Bedard for a job very well done, and expressing our best wishes for a healthy, productive and very well-earned retirement.

A FRIENDLY WAGER

HON. NICK SMITH

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge two great college basketball teams that met in the Final Four of the NCAA tournament. In a meeting of the House Agriculture Committee last month, Rep. BOB ETHERIDGE of North Carolina and I entered into a friendly wager on whether Michigan State University or Duke University would win their semifinal match up.

The wager called for the loser to furnish each member of the Agriculture Committee with a wholesome food product from his state. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge that Michigan State University's great basketball team, the Big 10 champion, riding a record win streak, lost an exciting and close game to Duke University.

Mr. Speaker, to pay off this wager, I want to officially announce that I am furnishing each member of the Agriculture Committee with a bag of Michigan navy beans and I would like to note that Michigan is one of the top navy bean producers in the world. In addition, I'm furnishing each member with a box of Kellogg's new Smart Start cereal. Kellogg, which is based in Battle Creek, MI, is one of the world's top breakfast cereal producers.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the fine example of effort and determination of all the players in the NCAA tournament.

IN HONOR OF THE U.S CHAMPION MOORPARK HIGH SCHOOL DE-CATHLON TEAM

HON. ELTON GALLEGLY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Moorpark High School Academic Decathlon as the U.S. National Decathlon Champions.

This is the first time a team from Ventura County, California, has won this premiere scholastic contest. In fact, it's the first time a team from Ventura County has competed in the nationals. Team members Arturo Barragan, Alexandria Dove, John Ellis, Valerie Lake, Nick Lange, Mitul Patel, Ari Shaw and Rebecca Wershba are now recognized as the best and the brightest in the country. They are the pride of their county and their country.

These youngsters won by literally dedicating their lives to the challenge. For months, these teen-agers studied at school until 10 p.m., then hit a coffee shop or a student's home to study some more. They gave up weekends, vacations, part-time jobs and time with their families.

Their coaches, head coach Larry Jones and assistance coach Michelle Bergman, did the same. Larry Jones has said he will retire. Not everyone believes him. But, at a minimum, he and Michelle have earned some relaxation in the glow of a job well done. We wish both of them the best in whatever their futures bring.

Moorpark High School fielded two teams to complete in the Ventura County Academic De-

cathlon on February 6. Moorpark High's two teams bested all the rest, coming in first and second. The A Team then competed against the best in California on March 12, coming away with the state title, and opening the way for their national title this weekend.

Mr. Speaker, one of the team members, Ari Shaw, served as an intern in my office last year. He brought the knowledge gained inside the halls of Congress to the contest by giving a speech on his experiences here, a speech that won him several accolades. It should please my colleagues to know that our young people leave Capitol Hill with positive memories.

As we get ready to approve the Education Flexibility bill this week and consider other education measures this year, let us keep in mind the members of the Moorpark High School Academic Decathlon team and all the worthy competitors they faced from schools across our great nation. These are the real people behind our efforts to improve our schools. They are representative of those striving to get the best education they can, to be the best they can. It is incumbent upon us to keep them to reach their goals.

Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues will join me in applauding eight such real people who achieved a very prestigious goal—Arturo Barragan, Alexandra Dove, John Ellis, Valerie Lake, Nick Lange, Mitul Patel, Ari Shaw and Rebecca Wershba—the U.S. champion Moorpark High School Academic Decathlon Team.

“EXTRAORDINARILY EWING” OFFERS VALUABLE LESSON IN CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call the attention of my colleagues to a remarkable example of community service and civic responsibility that is occurring in my Congressional District in central New Jersey.

Two years ago, alarmed at low voter turnout, local parent Candace Mueller, of Ewing, New Jersey, formed “Extraordinarily Ewing” a group of PTA members, parents, business people and taxpayers committed to getting the word out about the importance of participating in school board elections and being involved in local education issues.

This community-based effort to educate citizens about the importance and responsibility of voting, and in taking part in other matters relating to local elections, has been a remarkable success. Since the program was started, voting turnout has increased and residents have taken more interest in issues like the local school budget. The effect of this involvement has been contagious, leading to a more informed, more involved citizenry, regardless of their position on the issues.

At the urging of the citizens of “Extraordinarily Ewing,” today in Ewing has been designated “Take Your Child to Vote Day.” The campaign, which urges parents and guardians to take twenty minutes out of their busy

schedules to go to the polls with their children to vote is an important lesson in civic responsibility. By seeing their parents voting, young people understand very clearly the importance of being involved in their community and its decisions.

The efforts of "Extraordinarily Ewing" have been recognized by Ewing Mayor Al Bridges, the Town Council and by County Executive, Robert Prunetti. "Extraordinarily Ewing's" efforts have also been spotlighted by the *Ewing Weekly Times* and *The Trenton Times*.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when voter participation and involvement is on the wane, the efforts of "Extraordinarily Ewing" are a refreshing reminder of the importance of being involved. The efforts of these parents and business people offer a valuable lesson in civic responsibility for all of us.

I hope that my colleagues will join me in recognizing this group and these efforts.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION BENEFIT FOR ALL SENIORS IS URGENTLY NEEDED; GOOD HEALTH CARE REQUIRES ACCESS TO PHARMACEUTICAL TREATMENT

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, today, Representatives HENRY WAXMAN, JOHN DINGELL, myself and others are introducing the Access to Rx Medications in Medicare Act of 1999. Senators EDWARD KENNEDY (D-Mass.) and JAY ROCKEFELLER (D-W. Va.) are introducing the bill in the Senate. It provides a basic, affordable Part B benefit of \$1,700 per year that will cover 80% of pharmaceutical costs for all seniors and eligible disabled individuals with more than \$200 in annual drug costs. The bill also helps all Medicare beneficiaries by covering 100% of their costs above \$3,000 in annual out-of-pocket prescription drug expenditures.

The benefit is to be administered by private-sector entities such as pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), insurers, or networks or wholesale and retail pharmacies, which would competitively bid for Medicare's business. Entities contracting with HHS to provide the drug benefit would be required to meet certain standards, including establishing an adequate formulary and an exceptions process to the formulary, as well as a 24-hour counseling program for enrollees, an education program for medical providers on appropriate prescribing and dispensation of covered drugs, and drug utilization review.

To stabilize employer-sponsored retiree health coverage, we're proposing to subsidize employer's coverage by paying companies a capitated amount that would otherwise be paid to a private entity—but only if that coverage is at least as good as what Medicare is offering. In return, employers would have to agree to pay the cost of their retirees' Medicare Part B prescription drug premium for at least a year.

Clearly, adding a prescription drug benefit to Medicare is not an inexpensive proposition. But the price of leaving pharmaceutical medications out of the programs' benefits package and instead paying for unnecessary hospitalizations for those who just 'try to do without' is also high. The Food and Drug Adminis-

tration estimated that the cost of hospitalizations caused by inappropriate use of prescription medicines was \$20 billion annually higher in 1995.

There are several financing options that I hope will be considered as the Medicare prescription drug debate advances. One is to assess tobacco companies for what they cost the program to treat smoke-related illnesses. A second is to support a strategy of recouping Medicare expenditures on tobacco-related diseases through suits against Big Tobacco. A third is to consider dedicating a portion of projected budgetary surpluses to paying for Medicare drug coverage.

Debate about the financing options for a Medicare drug benefit will inevitably be contentious. But there is no better time to join this debate than today—when the program's solvency has been extended until 2015 even without an infusion of money from budgetary surpluses. With an infusion, the solvency timeline stretches far into the future—until 2027.

It is time to turn our attention to meeting the needs of the growing number of senior citizens who are being rapidly priced out of drug coverage. Adding a prescription drug benefit is an investment—one of the most important we can make—in the health of tens of millions of our citizens.

I recently sent out a survey to seniors in my district to assess the prices they pay for a range of specific prescription medications. Their responses were both revealing and sad. Asked what percentage of her monthly \$547 income is dedicated to prescription drugs, one elderly woman suffering from osteoporosis replied very simply: "I cannot afford them." Queried about how this makes her feel, she said: "I just try to cope."

Another of my constituents, who has asthma, wrote: "During the winter and spring my asthma is particularly bad and I have to use my inhaler quite often; and I sometimes am not able to purchase another, and I limit my use." Asked whether she has ever had to choose between paying for items like food or electricity because of the high cost of prescription drugs, she said: "Yes, and I felt frightened."

People who are sick need pharmaceutical treatment. Many who aren't take pharmaceuticals to stave off illness. In my case, taking Zocor lowers my blood cholesterol and helps reduce my risk of winding up in the hospital for costly bypass surgery.

There are millions more elderly Americans with similar stories in congressional districts across the country. There are people who suffer from lack of medically appropriate access to pharmaceutical treatment.

I submit that for a health plan in the year 2000 not to offer pharmaceutical care is preposterous.

In today's era of unprecedented prosperity, who would say "No" to legislation providing prescription drug coverage to the one group that would benefit most—our nation's seniors?

In the 105th Congress, we invested in children's health when we enacted the State Children's Health Insurance Program. Now we must fix the huge hole in Medicare's benefit package. If we don't a bolder future Congress will.

TRIBUTE TO HARRISON COBB

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, few people I know have committed as much intellectual attention to the topic of natural resources as my long-time friend and constituent, Mr. Harrison Cobb, of Fort Collins, Colorado. My first acquaintance with Mr. Cobb was made in 1987. He invited me into his home and spent generous time allowing me the benefit of his vast education, experience, and passion for mining.

Supremely dedicated to preserving the environmental integrity of America's western heritage, Mr. Cobb's civic devotion is to influence public debate about natural resources issues with balanced opinion employing practical, logical, and scientific reason, and historical perspective. His persuasive treatment of natural resource questions is unmatched. Mr. Cobb is, in my opinion, a giant among his colleagues in the field of mineral extraction.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Cobb's contributions are bigger still in scope. His professional talents have been directed toward many of the broader topics confronting all Americans: Economics, national character, education, and cultural decay are issues about which Mr. Cobb has engaged his countrymen and to which he has held many public officials accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the example of Mr. Cobb to my colleagues in the House, and hereby submit to the RECORD for their consideration some thoughts of Mr. Cobb's conveyed in a letter he recently posted to me.

HARRISON S. COBB,
Ft. Collins, CO.

The world's most important commodity, after air and water, is ROCK. Everything that we use, need and want comes out of rock. Even food, clothing and housing are taken from soil, which is disintegrated rock.

To get the autos, aeroplanes, trains, toothpaste fluoride, catalytic convertors, printing presses, electric power, running tap water and almost everything else out of the solid rock, it HAS to be mined. Thus far there's no other way to produce it.

The primary purposes of mountains are not skiing, hiking or viewing. Mountains are the only places where you can walk directly into the inside of the earth and look for those things so necessary to our lives. There may be equally rich sources of gold, copper, iron, platinum, fluorite, tungsten, molybdenum under the Kansas-Nebraska prairie, but who can sink through 2000 feet of sedimentary rock in order to start prospecting for them?

Here and there natural forces have squeezed the somewhat plastic inside of the earth up through cracks in the sedimentaries, forming protuberances that we call mountains, giving us our only opportunities to see and search for those minerals that occur only inside the earth. This is the primary purpose of and use for mountains.

The enviros and the bureaucratic Lilliputians who aim to end mining through over-regulation, land withdrawals, Kyoto treaties and UN heritage sites demonstrate lack of education and complete ignorance of fact. In the end, the people will suffer—but who cares about that?

CONGRESSMAN BOB: This is just to add to your ammunition. Thanks for good work.

HARRISON.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to Mr. Cobb for his love of our mighty nation, for his consistent