

child. Third, business and institutional property managers can call their local fire marshal for advice on how to arson-proof their buildings. This is especially important for church leaders who have in recent years seen their places of worship come under attack by arsonists.

In my home State of Delaware our State Fire Marshall's office provides the resources to investigate fires, as well as maintaining an excellent Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Program that helps hundreds of Delaware families each year deal with this very troubling problem. In 1997, the last for which full data is available, those 20 years of age and under accounted for 50 percent of all arson fires in the United States. Of that total, 39.9 percent were committed by youths under the age of 15.

Mr. Speaker, it is with a great sense of urgency that I encourage all Americans to be aware and concerned with the burdensome cost that arson inflicts on our society. As Delaware's Congressman and a Member of the Congressional Fire Service Caucus, I strongly urge everyone to contact their local fire officials to learn more about what they can do to extinguish the arsonists' match.

TRIBUTE TO THE KEENE SENTINEL, NEW HAMPSHIRE'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER

HON. CHARLES F. BASS

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 6, 1999

Mr. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to The Keene Sentinel. 1999 marks the bicentennial of The Sentinel, the oldest newspaper in New Hampshire, and the fifth oldest paper in the nation to be published continuously under the same name.

Under the guiding hand of publisher John Prentiss, the first edition of the New Hampshire Sentinel was issued in Keene on March 23, 1799. After 89 years as a weekly paper, The Sentinel began daily publication in 1890, and became a seven-day publication with the launch of a Sunday edition in 1996.

With the exception of 30 years in the 1800s, The Sentinel has been owned and operated by only two families: John Prentiss and his descendants, and then the Ewing family, which acquired the newspaper in 1954. The paper has enjoyed local and independent ownership throughout its 200 years.

Mr. Speaker, The Keene Sentinel, based in Cheshire County, serves the many communities of the Monadnock Region in southwestern New Hampshire. During the last two centuries, The Sentinel has chronicled the cultural, economic and social history of the region.

When John Prentiss first began publishing the paper in 1799, he had just one assistant. As Keene and the towns in the surrounding area have grown, the newspaper has expanded to meet the needs of the community. Today, with a circulation of 15,000, The Sentinel employs more than 100 people.

The Keene Sentinel has become a force in the community, advocating for open government, land use planning, and environmentally sensitive economic development in the Monadnock Region.

Mr. Speaker, I celebrate the institutional history of The Sentinel as well as the service the

paper has provided to the community during the past 200 years.

KENTUCKY NURSES WEEK

HON. ANNE M. NORTHUP

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 6, 1999

Mrs. NORTHUP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a group of Kentuckians who have truly been called to serve others. Each day, thousands of children and adults walk into countless clinics, hospitals and care facilities to receive care and nurses comfort to those who are most in need. This week, I am pleased to join Kentuckians across the Commonwealth to celebrate "Kentucky Nurses Week."

Beginning today and lasting until May 12th, we will celebrate and honor the work that nurses do for each one of us. I am certain that each member of this body has had an experience with a nurse they can remember. From the school nurses who helped us clean off that scraped knee to the trauma room nurse ready during times of enormous distress, we can all appreciate the work the nurses do for our communities. With the hard work and compassion of nurses, we are able to receive the quality health care we deserve and expect for ourselves and our loved ones.

So today and for the next week, we in Kentucky will take an extra moment to offer a kind word or a special thank you to our nurses. The days are long, the work not always glamorous, but each day we are profoundly affected by the work of nurses, and I for one say thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO REFORM THE \$1500 REHAB CAP

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 6, 1999

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 made some long-overdue savings in Medicare and has resulted in extending the life of the Part A Trust Fund from about 2001 to 2015. As budget policy, it has been a success.

There are some health policy problems, however.

In the BBA, we capped most outpatient rehabilitation services at \$1500 per patient per year for physical and speech-language therapy, and for occupational therapy. This was good budget policy, in that it provided an immediate limit to a sector that was growing at totally unacceptable rates that seemed to have little to do with the true need for rehabilitation services. It is terrible health policy, however, because in fact there are individuals who desperately need more than \$1500 in therapy.

I am introducing The Medicare Rehabilitation Benefit Equity Act today to provide exceptions from the \$1500 cap for those who clearly need extra services. It will also require that we move to a diagnostic payment system that makes good health policy sense. Under my proposal, the \$1500 dollar limitations on services will be replaced by a patient classification system effective January 1, 2002.

While the BBA policy needs to be modified, some limitations on rehabilitation services were clearly necessary. Between 1990 and 1996 Medicare expenditures for outpatient rehabilitation therapy rose 18 percent annually, totaling \$962 million in 1996. During that time, outpatient rehabilitation spending shifted substantially away from hospitals and toward rehabilitation agencies and comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation facilities (CORFs). Payments to agencies and CORFs rose at an average annual rate of 23 percent and 35 percent, respectively.

Clearly, Congress had to act—and using a meat-ax approach—we did. It is time to revisit this issue and substitute some decent health policy for blunt budget policy. The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission recently examined the potential impact of the coverage limits and found that some patients were more likely to exceed the dollar limits than others. The Commission found that hip fracture patients had the highest median payments and stroke patients incurred the next highest payments. While Medicare spent, on average, about \$700 per outpatient rehabilitation patient in 1996, half of all stroke patients exceeded the \$1500 physical and speech therapy limit. In contrast, less than 20 percent of patients with back disorders exceeded the physical and speech therapy limit. In 1996 about one-third of patients treated in non-hospital settings (rehabilitation agencies and CORFs) incurred payments in excess of \$1500 for outpatient physical and speech therapy or \$1500 for occupational therapy. Half of the patients affected by the limits exceeded them by \$1,000 or more.

My legislation will minimize the inequity and disruption of the BBA limits without substantially affecting the program savings. It allows for a system of exceptions identical to those proposed in legislation by Senator GRASSLEY. It then requires the Department of Health and Human Services to develop and implement a new coverage and payment policy of outpatient physical and speech-language therapy services and outpatient occupational therapy services. Instead of uniform, but arbitrary, dollar limitations, the new policy would be based on classification of individuals by diagnostic category and severity of diagnosis, in both inpatient and outpatient settings.

The Medicare Rehabilitation Benefit Equity Act also requires that the revised coverage policy of setting durational limits on outpatient physical and speech language therapy and occupational therapy services by diagnostic category be implemented in a budget-neutral manner. This change in payment is related to overall utilization, it will not change the use of fee schedules or affect the payment rates for providers of these services. The payment methodology will be designed to be budget neutral in relation to the exceptions policy created by this legislation. Current law provisions to adjust the annual coverage limits on outpatient rehabilitation therapy services by the medical economic index (MEI), beginning in 2002, are retained.

The Medicare Rehabilitation Benefit Equity Act recognizes that the Department of Health and Human Services' Health Care Financing Administration currently lacks the data necessary to implement a coverage policy based on a patient classification system on January 1, 2000. It further recognizes that assuring services for Medicare beneficiaries in the year

2000 is HCFA's number one priority. For these reasons, a phased—and longer than desired—transition to a patient classification coverage policy is necessary.

I urge my fellow Members of Congress to join me in support of the Medicare Rehabilitation Benefit Equity Act of 1999. Together we can ensure that implementation of the BBA dollar limits on outpatient rehabilitation services will not disproportionately affect our most vulnerable Medicare beneficiaries.

TRIBUTE TO BILL "BULL"
DAVIDSON

HON. MARION BERRY

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 6, 1999

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, I was saddened to learn of the passing of Bill Davidson, affectionally known as "Bull" in Stuttgart, Arkansas on Saturday, May 2. Everyone who follows Arkansas State University football is familiar with this personable and talented man but I'd like to take this opportunity to enlighten my colleagues about this gentleman who will always be regarded as one of the greatest coaches ASU has ever had.

Bill was originally from Manila, AR but had lived for many years in Jonesboro, AR, home of Arkansas State University. His involvement with ASU began in 1953 when he was a center-linebacker on the football team and continued when named the offensive coordinator in 1963 for then head coach Bennie Ellender. In addition to being the offensive coordinator, Bill also served as the offensive line coach. He was one of the primary reasons ASU when undefeated in 1970 and were named National Champs for their division. When Coach Ellender left for Tulane University in 1971, Coach Davidson was placed at the helm. The first few years of Bill's tenure were somewhat lean, but the 1973 team finished 8-3 and portended future success. This success was realized in 1975 with an undefeated season and 16 players from that team signing pro contracts. It is considered by many ASU fans as the greatest ASU football team in the school's history. Unfortunately for ASU, in 1979 Bill gave up the head coaching reins primarily due to a severe problem back which had plagued him for some time. He then became an associate athletic director until his retirement in 1990. Bill was twice named Southland Conference Coach of the Year and was inducted into the Arkansas State University Hall of Honor in 1984.

I know there are college head coaches that have had more on field success than Coach Davidson, though his 51-31-1 record during his tenure is very respectable, however, I doubt any would surpass his ability to motivate and inspire his players. This was achieved in a number of ways and that is the mark of a great football coach, not just being proficient with X's and O's but discerning the team's personality and adapting their style of coaching to it.

It would also be difficult to find a coach who was more beloved by his players. Often ending a tough practice with all the players gathered around him, Bill would tell a joke or two and send everyone to the showers with a smile on their faces. His stories about other

players he played with or coached were also in great demand and guaranteed to break-up any listener. It was this wit and humor that enabled Coach Davidson to be a very effective recruiter of top high school football players throughout the country.

The people of Northeast Arkansas and ASU in particular will miss "Bull" Davidson but his legacy will be the young men in whom he instilled many of life's valuable lessons: physical and mental toughness, perseverance, dedication, and perhaps the most important of all, not making excuses for any failure that might befall them.

Bill is survived by his wife Donna and his daughter Sharon to whom I send my most sincere condolences.

BANKRUPTCY REFORM ACT OF 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. PATRICK J. KENNEDY

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 5, 1999

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 833) to amend title II of the United States Code, and for further purposes:

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, H.R. 833 provides fair and reasonable bankruptcy reform to a system that is badly in need of repair. Chapter 7 of the Bankruptcy Code was established to help honest, debt burdened individuals gain a fresh start. In 1982, when economic times were tough, less than 400,000 individuals used this portion of the Code, which forgives all existing debts.

Oddly, in today's economy in which real per capita annual disposable income is growing, unemployment rates are low, and the market is strong, Chapter 7 filings are at a record high with over 1.4 million people asking to be discharged from about \$50 billion in debt. Currently it is estimated that over 70% of bankruptcy filers use Chapter 7. Last year, 1.4 million personal bankruptcies were filed, an increase of 94.7 percent over 1990. By contrast business filings have remained steady over the last two decades. As my House colleague Congressman RICK BOUCHER aptly said, "bankruptcy was never meant to be used as a financial planning tool, but it is becoming a first stop rather than a last resort" to those who have the ability to pay a portion of their debts, but choose to ignore their responsibilities.

Clearly, the Congress has a responsibility to address this issue. Our nation simply cannot afford widespread abuse in our bankruptcy system. Consumers pay an estimated \$500 dollars per year in additional "hidden taxes" by companies trying to make up for the cost of bankruptcy losses. For this reason, I have joined the fight in promoting federal legislation that actively seeks to reform the Code and target those who abuse the system at the expense of others.

The Bankruptcy Reform Act, which passed yesterday with overwhelming bipartisan support will force those who should file under Chapter 13, and pay a portion of their debt, to meet their responsibilities. It insists that a debtor demonstrate that full bankruptcy relief under Chapter 7 is warranted. Those who do

not meet this needs-based test will be subject to a formula based on the debtor's income and obligations. The bill also ensures that debtors know all their financial options before they file bankruptcy. Often, debtors are the prey of entities that push debtors into bankruptcy without an explanation. This initiative will crack down on these practices. The bill also includes a House passed amendment that will require greater disclosure to debtors by credit card companies and other creditors about the types of fees and payments schedules that consumers may incur. By balancing the needs of creditors and debtors, this bill achieves meaningful bankruptcy reform.

NATIONAL TEACHER
APPRECIATION WEEK

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 6, 1999

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, this week is National Teacher Appreciation Week, and I want to honor the teachers of the Eight Congressional District of Massachusetts. Almost 5,000 teachers in over 176 schools educate approximately 86,000 students in the 8th district alone.

Many of today's schools are in disrepair. They are bulging at the seams. Students do not have chairs to sit on, let alone textbooks from which to learn. Despite limited resources, teachers persistently surpass these obstacles and devise new ways to stimulate our children to achieve.

So many teachers go the extra mile to ensure that their students are learning. They provide a variety of additional services, from assisting a student after school hours with their homework to giving up their Saturday to coach basketball. Teachers are more than just educators. They serve as mentors, managers, counselors, confidants and friends. Although they are not always rewarded or even acknowledged for their daily selfless acts, teachers continue to give of themselves in order to instruct our children.

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, several teachers have exemplified outstanding dedication to their jobs: Joseph Sullivan, who was bestowed with the honor of being elected to the Massachusetts Teacher Association board; Michele Owaross, who just recently led a group of 10th and 11th graders on a trip to China to study the society and culture of another country; Lucinda Leveille who brought six students to Russia recently and was honored for her attempt to promote international awareness by the Russian Government; and Jamal Prince, Chelsea's indoor track coach who was named "Coach of the Year" by *The Boston Globe*.

Likewise, in Chelsea, Massachusetts, Adele Lubarsky has been teaching at the Sokolowski school in Chelsea since 1972. In those 27 years, Ms. Lubarsky has certainly kept active. As a 3rd grade Spanish bilingual elementary school teacher, she has set high standards to guarantee that her students will achieve now and in the future. Ms. Lubarsky also serves as a "mentor teacher" whereby she models lessons for other teachers and assists newcomers. Due to her dedication, she was awarded the 1996 "Outstanding Teacher of