

Ramsey County Historical Society, speaking of the Gibbs historic site and the other sesquicentennial celebrators.

While they all share a common thread—growing together—each has had a distinct role in Minnesota history. The sesquicentennial is the perfect time, say celebration organizers, to educate people about those rules.

"It gives us an opportunity or an excuse to look back on the past," said Brian Horrigan, curator for "Tales of the Territory Minnesota 1849-1958," an exhibit that will open this fall at the historical society's Minnesota History Center. "It's important for people to understand the connection between the present and the past."

One goal is to dispel common misconceptions about the state's heritage, he said.

"I think people think in polar terms, that here were white settlers and Indians, when in fact there was a mix of people here," Horrigan said.

Also, he said, not all Minnesotans see the 150th anniversary of the Minnesota Territory as worthy of celebration.

"It was like an earthquake or a tidal wave—it was catastrophic for the Indians," he said of the population boom in the mid-1800s.

Recognizing such perspectives is part of a new way of viewing history, Horrigan said. It recognizes that "Minnesota" existed before it had its name, he said.

We're trying to bring Minnesota more in line with this new Western history, looking at the history of settlement not as history of triumphant conquering of the land. This is a much more complex story," he said.

While paying tribute to the territory, the society also is celebrating its creation, which preceded the state it serves by nine years.

Gibbs Farm this year is attempting something similar as it focuses on the Dakota Indians.

"Most people don't have a clue what sort of society they had," Farnham said. "It was a very fine culture. They had the very highest standards of workmanship. They were very efficient gardeners . . . I think it's just we plain don't know, and that's part of what I see our role is in commemorating the 150th anniversary."

Gibbs Farm, established by Jane BeDow Gibbs and her husband, Herman Gibbs, is open May 1 through Oct. 31 and features special events each weekend.

"One of the things we are going to be doing this summer is breaking ground to build a replica of the original sod house, which was built in 1849," Farnham said. An interpretation of Jane Gibbs' association with the Dakota Indians will also be added, she said and the creation of a Dakota bark lodge will demonstrate Dakota heritage.

St. Paul and the three East Metro counties are also showcasing their heritage.

"We're celebrating our distinguished past and our promising future," said St. Paul's Otto. "We're celebrating what we have. We're celebrating what brings personality and charm to St. Paul."

That includes hosting, along with the Pioneer Press, 150 Pioneer Parties throughout the city. Events will span the whole year and include the city and surrounding area.

The Pioneer Press' role shows its continuing commitment to the community, said Marti Buscaglia, Pioneer Press vice president for market development.

"We have had a relationship with the community for 150 years and have been very much a part of that community, both in forming it and being its voice and its mirror," Buscaglia said. "As we go forward, it's important for us to continue that relationship with the community and to really serve

as the local paper for St. Paul and the surrounding suburbs . . . to get to know our customers better, find out what their needs are and be able to give them what it is they want from their newspaper and from the newspaper as a corporate citizen."

At the county level, Ramsey is encouraging residents to volunteer at events.

Ramsey County is very community oriented," said Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt. "There's nothing more community oriented than celebrating your history."

Residents can learn a lot along the way, she said.

"A lot of people are surprised—It's like '150 years? Really?'" she said.

As for the future, ensuring that St. Paul and Ramsey County remain economically strong is a goal, Reinhardt said.

In Washington County, organizers are celebrating the area's opportunities as well as its past, said Washington County Commissioner Dick Stafford.

"We can drive, in a few miles, from lakes and streams to oil refineries and moderate to million-dollar homes," Stafford said. "We've got every kind of industry you can imagine and every kind of recreation you can imagine . . . You've got every ethnic background you can think of, you've got every profession you can think of. It's probably a great microcosm of America."

Dakota County's sesquicentennial is "a work in progress," said Patrice Bataglia, county commissioner and co-chair of the project. Besides celebrating, the county hopes to educate residents, she said.

"What's so important is that it's the fastest-growing county," Bataglia said, citing the thousands of people who move to the area each year. "So many people who are moving to Dakota County are looking for an identity with Dakota County."

Reinhardt believes everyone can benefit from 150th anniversary celebrations.

"You really need to look back in order to know how you got to where you are and figure out where you want to be," said the Ramsey County commissioner.

"It's a celebration of our ancestors and our history, but more important than that, it's looking at how far we've come."

BANKRUPTCY REFORM ACT OF 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. PATSY T. MINK

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 6, 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 11 of the United States Code, and for further purposes:

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Chairman, I rise to express my opposition to the passage of H.R. 833, the Bankruptcy Reform Act of 1999. I will vote 'No' on final passage, not because I believe that the bankruptcy system doesn't need reformulation, but because H.R. 833 is an unbalanced piece of legislation which does not offer the flexibility to accommodate the diverse circumstances confronted by debtors and bankruptcy courts.

The American Bankruptcy system was designed to give individuals who found themselves in insurmountable debt the chance to start over again. H.R. 833 threatens the promise of a fresh start by forcing the myriad situations debtors face into a narrow, rigid formula.

The strict, Internal Revenue Service "means test" used to calculate the average monthly expenses for all debtors does not even account for regional income and cost of living differences. In my own state of Hawaii, the cost of living is high. This provision will unjustly penalize my constituents who seek bankruptcy relief because their actual, higher living costs will be ignored. H.R. 833's proponents consistently refused proposals to create a more flexible means test.

H.R. 833 strips bankruptcy judges of the power to determine that exceptional circumstances exist in certain cases and adjust monthly expense allowances to accommodate such situations. Instead of seeking to find the best course of action to help debtors become solvent, H.R. 833, as amended, allows bankruptcy trustees who transfer their clients' petitions from Chapter 7 to Chapter 13 to be paid for doing so. This is bad, lop-sided policy.

H.R. 833 rewards credit card companies' practice of pushing easy credit on debt heavy clients. They are the only winners in this debate. The policy to force more debtors from Chapter 7 bankruptcy into Chapter 13 bankruptcy benefits only those creditors whose debts are dischargeable in Chapter 7 and not under Chapter 13: Credit Card Companies. H.R. 833 makes credit card debt non-dischargeable under Chapter 13 and puts these debts in the same category as child support and alimony payments.

I believe that people should be held personally accountable for their debts. I voted Yes on the substitute bill offered by Congressman NADLER, which would have reformed bankruptcy provisions in a fair, balanced manner. I regret that Mr. NADLER's restructuring substitute did not pass. I voted to pass the amendment offered by the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Judiciary Committee, Congressman HENRY HYDE and Congressman JOHN CONYERS which created a flexible method of computing a debtor's monthly living expenses by providing guidelines to account for extenuating circumstances. This bipartisan amendment balanced a creditor biased bill. The Hyde-Conyers amendment also failed.

As the bill stands, I am unable to vote for it.

HONORING SPRAGUE HIGH SCHOOL

HON. DARLENE HOOLEY

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 6, 1999

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I stand before you this morning to salute Sprague High School in Salem, Oregon, which has been named a 1999 "Grammy Signature School, Gold Award."

I want all my colleagues in Congress, everyone involved in the Sprague Music Department, and everyone who cares about kids and music to know how proud I am of them and of this accomplishment.

The Grammy Signature School Program is a special part of the Grammy Awards that recognize professional artists. We've all seen the Grammy Awards on television, and this Signature School Program is a special part of that prestigious recognition that singles out excellent high school music programs.

I am delighted to congratulate Sprague High School as one of sixteen schools across the

country to receive the inaugural Grammy Signature School Program award.

Salem's Sprague High School is known world-wide as a high school that is committed to fine music. Whether it is the orchestra winning world-wide awards in Europe, the choir taking top national honors, or the band setting toes to tapping across the continent, Sprague teachers and students have worked hard together to make music that inspires.

These days, it's not easy teaching things that some people think are "extras," and music programs are often the first to land on the budget chopping blocks.

But anyone who has seen children in an orchestra practice, or heard the voices of a high school choir warming up in harmony, or delighted to the improvised rhythms of a high school jazz ensemble, knows that music and the arts aren't "extras" at all.

Those are essential elements not only of critical thinking and intellectual discipline, but also important places of physical and emotional refuge for students who are inspired by the arts. We are all too keenly aware of the need for students to have a sense of belonging in their schools, and by honoring the arts, we honor those students who thrive in the arts, and by encouraging them our culture is enriched.

So I am proud today to stand before you to honor the parents, teachers, music directors, principal Mark Davalos, and especially the students who pour their hearts and souls into creating music that brings joy to all.

IN SUPPORT OF AN AMENDMENT
TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL PROVIDING
COMPENSATION TO THE FAMILIES
OF THE RON BROWN PLANE
CRASH IN CROATIA

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 6, 1999

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, after much soul searching, the families of the victims of the military plane carrying Commerce Secretary Ron Brown that crashed in Croatia on April 3, 1996, have allowed us to introduce this amendment. It would provide up to \$2 million in compensation for each of the families of the tragic accident. This amendment is not what the families requested, nor is it what I sought when I first introduced the Ron Brown Tort Equality Act on April 15, 1997. Although this amendment would close the books on the accident, it would not render complete justice to the families; would do nothing to assure that there would not be similar victims of military aircraft in the future; and would have no deterrent effect to ward off serious negligence in the future. Yet surely this amendment is what is minimally required.

The Ron Brown Tort Equality Act had nearly fifty cosponsors in the last Congress and we are on our way to that and more now. This is a notably bipartisan bill in no small part because the victims originated in 15 states and the District of Columbia. The Ron Brown Act would allow federal civilian employees or their families to sue the federal government but only for gross negligence by its officers or employees and only for compensatory damages.

Because there will be few instances where gross negligence can be shown, this is a small change in our law. There also were non-federal employees on that fated plane for whom no compensation is possible today. Astonishingly, federal law does not allow compensation when private citizens are killed or injured overseas. Yet, private citizens can sue under the Act for the same injuries when they occur in this country. The Ron Brown Act would allow individuals who do not work for the federal government, or their families, to sue the United States for negligent or wrongful acts or omissions that occur in a foreign country.

This tragic accident yielded great sorrow and mourning by the nation and members of this body. The mourning period is over, colleagues. It is time now to compensate the families.

NEW DIRECTION FOR OUR
NATION'S HEALTH CARE

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 6, 1999

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, "The crisis in American health care is real and getting worse." Those words appeared in an editorial today in The Washington Post, written by two distinguished scholars, former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop and John C. Baldwin, vice president for health affairs at Dartmouth College.

I hope my colleagues will take a few minutes to read about the state of health care in our nation. Dr. Koop and Dr. Baldwin pointedly stress that universal access to health care must become a national commitment and will require a national investment. As important, they argue against the idea that health care should be treated as a commodity, saying that "(w)e must rid ourselves of the delusion that it is a business, like any other business."

At a time when 16 percent of Americans have no health insurance, health care costs are skyrocketing, and medical decisions are made by HMO executives beholden to shareholders, bold solutions are needed. As Dr. Koop and Dr. Baldwin state, "(o)ur problem is a failure of distribution, a failure to extend care to all of those who need it and a failure to recognize the importance of applying scientific rigor to the problems of broad-based health care delivery. If state-of-the-art American medicine were offered to our citizens in a comprehensive way, our levels of public health would be unexcelled."

They also recognize that we can not continue on our current path, to spend more than any industrialized nation in the world while providing less. Correctly, they conclude that "the movement over the past few years to turn health care into a 'business' through health maintenance organizations and other stratagems has not worked to the satisfaction of most Americans." Indeed, it is time for a new direction.

The crisis in American health care is real and getting worse. A record 16 percent of Americans now have no health insurance—a grave situation that will not be solved by conventional business models. Indeed, the movement over the past few years to turn health care into a "business" through health maintenance

organizations and other stratagems has not worked to the satisfaction of most Americans.

Frustrated, legislators across the political spectrum pursue the notion that legislative tinkering will solve the problems. But since the derailment of President Clinton's health reform plan in his first term—and particularly since the elections of 1994—the country has slipped or been lulled into a false sense of confidence that the real and worsening crisis in American health care can somehow be solved by implementation of "reforms" based on such euphemistic concepts as "gatekeepers," "pathways," "preexisting conditions," "risk pools" and other impediments to access—all disguised as tools of efficient management.

To be sure, health care costs have risen too rapidly in the past 20 years. Highly paid providers and administrators and exceedingly profitable health care corporations have played a role, though their contributions to rising costs have been less important than the effects of an aging population and the continual introduction of new technologies. But we must not abrogate our responsibility to make difficult choices in the vain hope that a "free market," profit-based system somehow will solve the problem for us without our doing anything.

If health care were a business, it would be a strange one indeed—one in which many sectors of the "market" could never be profitable. People with AIDS, most children with congenital, chronic or catastrophic illness, poor people, old people and most truly sick people could never pay enough to make caring for them profitable.

Over the past few years, nevertheless, we have often heard that "health care is like any other product; you buy what you can afford." Most proponents of this idea quickly add that of course "basic" health care should be provided. But what does this mean? Suppose two children, one in an uninsured family and one in a well-insured one, both developed leukemia, a treatable and often curable illness. What is the basic level of care each child is entitled to?

HMO executives properly emphasize that their responsibility is to shareholders. That responsibility is defined in terms of profit and stock price. The volume and market-share considerations in this "business" require aggressive pricing. Sustained profits, in turn, require aggressive cost-cutting. This results, inevitably, in restriction of access and withholding of care.

Both these things may well be necessary to improve efficiency and cut costs. But do we really want to relegate such decisions to analysts within the health care industry, or should we assert the public interest in these crucial ethical, societal and medical issues?

We nod our heads when we are told that the percentage of our GNP spent on health care is "too high" and that inefficiency, the "fat" in the system, results in its providing less effective care than is available in other industrialized nations that spend a lesser percentage. But this argument is specious. The American biomedical research endeavor, supported in the main by the taxpayers, had led the world for more than 30 years and continues to do so. Attendance at any medical scientific meeting anywhere in the world confirms this hegemony and affirms the enormous respect the rest of the world has for American medicine.