

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

COMBAT VETERANS MEDICAL EQUITY ACT

HON. TOM BLILEY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 2, 1999

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to reintroduce the Combat Veterans Medical Equity Act. This legislation guarantees eligibility for Veterans Administration (VA) hospital care and medical services based on the award of the Purple Heart Medal. It also sets the enrollment priority for combat injured veterans for medical service at level three—the same level as former prisoners of war and veterans with service-connected disabilities rated between 10 and 20 percent.

Most people are unaware that under current law, the Purple Heart does not qualify a veteran for medical care at VA facilities. This bill would change the law to ensure combat-wounded veterans receive automatic access to treatment at VA facilities.

We as a nation owe a debt of gratitude to all our veterans who have been awarded the Purple Heart for injuries suffered in service to this country. This bill is long overdue and I am proud to sponsor this bill for our Nation's Purple Heart recipients.

This bipartisan legislation has over 100 original cosponsors and has been endorsed by the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

IN MEMORY OF ANTHONY J. CELEBREZZE

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 2, 1999

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of a great servant of the people of Ohio, Judge Anthony J. Celebreeze. Celebreeze served Ohioans for over five decades. His recent death at the age of 88, is a sorrowful event for myself and many in my state.

Born in Anzi, Italy, Celebreeze emigrated to Cleveland at the age of two. He was one of 13 children. Like so many immigrants, Anthony Celebreeze grew up with modest means, but what he lacked in advantages he more than made up for in effort and ability. He worked his way through college at John Carroll University and through law school at Ohio Northern.

In 1950, Anthony was elected to the Ohio Senate. Three years later he was elected mayor of Cleveland. He was the first foreign born mayor of Cleveland. For an unprecedented five terms Anthony Celebreeze tirelessly served the people in this position. His leadership of the city brought Cleveland national recognition and respect. In 1962, he was appointed by President John F. Kennedy to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of

Health, Education and Welfare. Anthony Celebreeze worked to build Congressional support for Medicare and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, two legislative achievements that reflect the principles of compassion and decency.

In 1965, he was appointed by President Johnson to a federal judgeship. Six years later the Federal Building in Cleveland was renamed the Anthony J. Celebreeze Federal Building. He was in the public eye for five decades, serving Ohio and the nation with honor and dignity. President Johnson said of Celebreeze that "with tolerance and energy with single minded purpose, he presided over the greatest thrust for the future of American education and health that his nation has ever known."

Judge Celebreeze was my role model, a man whose love of family and his community was never ending. I will never forget his warm smile, his friendly greetings, and his sense of decency, honesty and fairness. I am proud to have known him, and I think of him often. I, like many other Ohioans, will miss him terribly.

I ask you to join me in honoring the memory of this great man, Anthony J. Celebreeze. He will be greatly missed.

THE MEDICARE+CHOICE IMPROVEMENT ACT

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 2, 1999

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a number of my colleagues to introduce The Medicare+Choice Improvement Act. I don't need to tell you that the large number of Medicare+Choice plan terminations this past year was a real shock to many of our Medicare beneficiaries. In a number of communities, beneficiaries are left with fewer affordable coverage options in Medicare.

We should take immediate steps to make changes to the Medicare+Choice program that will protect beneficiaries when health plans leave the program, and we should make certain improvements that will aid health plans' abilities to project costs and continue as Medicare providers. I disagree with assertions that the only way to do this is to throw more money into the Medicare+Choice program and will oppose efforts of that nature.

History always has had a way of getting distorted and the Medicare+Choice program is a fine example of that happening. Let us remember, the Medicare+Choice program was created as part of the Balanced Budget Act. In other words, the purpose of creating the Medicare+Choice program was to save money in the Medicare program.

We have known for years that our payment system for Medicare managed care plans overcompensated them for the risk of the patients they were insuring. Medicare HMOs have historically insured younger, healthier

seniors. Because Medicare's payment to managed care plans was based on the average fee for service payment in the county, the HMO payments were higher than appropriate. We also know that there are a number of other ways in which we are still overcompensating Medicare managed care plans. A chart highlighting these current overpayments is attached.

So, rather than rewrite historical evidence to advocate increased funding of the Medicare+Choice program, I have put together The Medicare+Choice Improvement Act to make important consumer protection improvements in the Medicare+Choice Program. The bill would:

Broaden consumer protections so that beneficiaries can leave health plans that have announced that they are terminating Medicare participation and join another Medicare+Choice plan to purchase a Medigap policy;

Provide new protections for Medicare's disabled and ESRD patients.

Prohibit door-to-door cold-call marketing of Medicare+Choice plans to seniors;

Protect state efforts to provide comprehensive prescription drug benefits to their seniors;

End Medicare+Choice plans' abilities to gerrymander their Medicare service areas in comparison to their commercial business;

Require HCFA to calculate the portion of beneficiaries in a region receiving services through VA or DOD;

Require the NAIC to reconfigure the Medigap policies so that they better meet the needs of today's Medicare beneficiaries.

On the health plan side of the equation, my legislation would take care of one of their most pressing concerns: it would move the ACR submission date (the date that health plans must submit their pricing and benefit data for the following year to HCFA) from the current date of May 1 to July 1. This would give health plans two additional months to compile necessary data for the upcoming year. This might not move the date as far as health plans would like, but there are serious costs to move the date further in the year. As one example, moving the date any later would seriously jeopardize the ability of HCFA to prepare the "Medicare&You" beneficiary handbook which is mailed to seniors each year.

On the topic of risk adjustment, I think that HCFA's proposal to phase-in risk adjustment over the next five years is just too long. We have solid evidence that Medicare managed care plans have been enrolling healthier patients and making more money off of them because of that fact (again, see the attached chart). The hospital-based risk adjustment proposed by HCFA is a first step toward fixing this inequity. It would finally put in place a financial incentive to enroll less healthy beneficiaries. We need to be moving forward as quickly as possible with this mechanism. I do concede that a phase-in approach is appropriate, but my legislation would have that phase-in occur over three years rather than five.

• 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.

We have an opportunity this year to make improvements to the Medicare+Choice program that will protect beneficiaries when health plans make business decisions about whether to continue participating in Medicare. This bill makes those improvements without senselessly increasing Medicare expenditures on a program that already costs more than traditional Medicare. I look forward to working with my colleagues to make these important, reasonable, and necessary fixes to the Medicare+Choice program.

CURRENT MEDICARE OVERPAYMENTS TO MANAGED CARE PLANS

[Prepared by Rep. Pete Stark staff]

| Source of overpayment | Cost to medicare | Source of analysis |
|---|---|--|
| Overpayments due to BBA change that removed HCFA's ability to recover overpayments when health care inflation is lower than expected. | \$800 million in 1997 ... \$8.7 billion over 5 years. | Congressional Budget Office. |
| Overpayments due to lack of risk adjustment. | \$31 billion over 10 years. | |
| Overpayments due to inflation of Medicare's share of plan administrative costs. | 5–6% overpayment to HMOs per beneficiary who is enrolled. | Physician Payment Review Commission (now MedPAC) 1996 Annual Report. |
| Overpayments due to inclusion of fraud, waste and abuse dollars from FFS payments. Managed care plans should better "manage" and therefore avoid such fraud, waste and abuse. | More than \$1 billion annually. | HHS Office of Inspector General July 1998. |
| | 7% annual overpayment. Annual savings with a corrected 1997 base year would be: \$5 billion in 2002 ... \$10 billion in 2007 | HHS Office of Inspector General Sept. 11, 1998. |

INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS DAY

HON. PHILIP M. CRANE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 2, 1999

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, The World Customs Organization [WCO] designated January 26 as International Customs Day, a time to give recognition to customs services around the world for the role they play in generating revenue and protecting national borders from unauthorized imports.

The U.S. Customs Service represents the United States in the World Customs Organization which, since 1953, has grown into a 142-member international organization. The WCO's purpose is to facilitate international trade, promote cooperation between governments on customs matters, and standardize and simplify customs procedures internationally. It also offers technical assistance in the areas of customs validation, nomenclature, and law enforcement. The organization's objective is to obtain the highest possible level of uniformity among the customs systems of its member countries. The involvement of the U.S. Customs Service in the WCO reflects the recognition that our country and its trading partners benefit when international trade is facilitated by simple, unambiguous customs operations around the world.

I take this opportunity to offer my congratulations to the World Customs Organization on its past accomplishments and wish it well in its ambitious efforts to further harmonize and simplify customs regulations. I also congratulate the U.S. Customs Service for its many years of fine work both domestically and internationally.

THE 509TH BOMB WING—SECOND TO NONE

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 2, 1999

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, let me take this means to pay tribute to the successful leadership of the 509th Bomb Wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, MO. This superb military unit, located in West-Central Missouri and in the heart of my Congressional District, is home to the B-2 Stealth Bombers.

The history of Whiteman AFB is rich in tradition. In 1981, I began my work to make sure Whiteman AFB would have a future in the rapidly changing military arena, insisting on modernizing what was then becoming a run-down missile base. This modernization set the stage for 21 B-2 bombers that will eventually be based at Whiteman.

People living in the proximity of Whiteman AFB have a great opportunity to observe regularly what can be described as the premier United States Air Force Base. Attesting to the top quality of the base's 509th Bomb Wing was a recent mission in which three B-2s were deployed to Guam for a month of training exercises with 250 troops and other Air Force bombers. The returning B-2s were met at Whiteman by an honor guard and their two commanders, Lt. General Ronald C. Marcotte, the commander of the 8th Air Force, and Brig. General Leroy Barnidge, Jr., present commander of the 509th Wing.

Both commanders praised the success of the training exercise which combined a global power mission with precision bombing training on targets in the South Pacific. The praise of the 509th was given for good reason. Their team performed flawlessly and received high praise on every daily report.

Mr. Speaker, the success of the 509th is due to the high caliber leadership at both the 8th Air Force and Whiteman AFB. Lt. General Marcotte and Brig. General Barnidge possess the expertise and high quality leadership that makes our national defense second to none. The U.S. Air Force and other branches of military service merit the support of every American, including all Members of Congress.

HONORING MARTIN L. KING, FIRE FIGHTER, CITY OF NEW HAVEN

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 2, 1999

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, November 17, 1998, family and friends will come together to hold a testimonial dinner to honor Martin L. King, who retired from the New Haven Fire Department after forty-eight years. It is with great pleasure that I salute Marty King and his notable career of service to the New Haven Fire Department.

Marty King's career as a firefighter began in 1953 when he was transferred from his first public service job with the New Haven Police Department. Marty served the police department with distinction for two years, but his heart was with the fire service. In 1954, Marty was assigned to the old Central Fire Station

on Court Street. It was from this point that he launched his long career of courage and commitment to his community.

Because of Marty's hard work and strong devotion, he was promoted to lieutenant in 1967 where he was assigned to the Lombard Street Station. Following his duty there, he was transferred to headquarters as a veteran firefighter. For the past ten years, Marty worked as an administrative aide in the fire chief's office.

Marty earned a number of awards during the course of his career. He received many citations and a commendation for his bravery, and was also honored as the Fireman of the Year in 1993. Most notably, Marty was presented with the 35-year award from the Connecticut State Fireman's Association in 1987. His awards serve as a testament to his dedication to fire fighting and to protecting residents of New Haven. In addition to his outstanding record with the Department, Marty proudly served his country by joining the Navy during World War II.

Marty remains a legend to many, being the oldest member of the department in years of service, and the last active fireman who fought the most devastating fire the City had ever witnessed. The incident occurred when the factory on Franklin Street caught fire. Tragically, 15 people lost their lives.

I am very pleased to join Marty's colleagues and friends, his wife Kathryn, his six children, and his grandchildren in congratulating him on his retirement. His departure is a great loss to the Department. His efforts have made this City a better and safer place to live. Indeed, Marty, has left an indelible mark on the City of New Haven. I thank you for a lifetime of extraordinary services to the public, and I wish you much health and happiness in your retirement.

INTRODUCTION OF THE JOSEPH BOYD PRIVATE RELIEF BILL

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 2, 1999

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I must introduce a private relief bill for the Boyd family. This legislation will clarify the status of Joseph Samuel Boyd as a public safety officer for purposes of payment of death benefits by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). Joseph Boyd, the dedicated and highly decorated Rangemaster for the Santa Ana Police Department (SAPD), tragically died on-duty while testing an illegal firearm.

I wholeheartedly support awarding the Boyd family death benefits under the Public Safety Officers' Benefit Program due to the contributions Rangemaster Boyd made to the Santa Ana Police Department and our community. Joe Boyd was not only a committed husband and father, he was a critical component of the Santa Ana police force.

In 1995, the Bureau of Justice Assistance awarded SAPD a grant under the Firearms Trafficking Program. The Santa Ana firearms program, along with the Santa Ana Weapons Inspection Team (WIT) has developed into one of the nation's premiere firearms trafficking programs as a result of this grant. Joe was