

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MAJOR R. OWENS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 12, 2000

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, I was unavoidably absent on a matter of critical importance and missed the following votes.

On the bill, H. Con. Res. 253, expressing the sense of the Congress strongly objecting to any effort to expel the Holy See from the United Nations as a state participant by removing its status as a permanent observer, introduced by the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. SMITH, I would have voted "yea."

On the bill, H.R. 4442, the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act, introduced by the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. SAXTON, I would have voted "yea."

On the bill, H. Res. 415, the sense of the House that there should be a National Ocean Day, introduced by the gentlelady from Hawaii, Mrs. MINK, I would have voted "yea."

On the amendment to H.R. 4461, the fiscal year 2001 Agriculture appropriations bill, introduced by the gentleman from Oregon, Mr. DEFAZIO, I would have voted "yea."

On the amendment to H.R. 4461, the fiscal year 2001 Agriculture appropriations bill, introduced by the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. SANFORD, I would have voted "nay."

On the amendment to H.R. 4461, the fiscal year 2001 Agriculture appropriations bill, introduced by the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. BURTON, I would have voted "nay."

On the amendment to H.R. 4461, the fiscal year 2001 Agriculture appropriations bill, introduced by the gentleman from New Mexico, Mr. SKEEN, I would have voted "nay."

TRIBUTE TO ST. MICHAEL'S HOSPITAL

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 12, 2000

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, March 29, 2000, a day when the U.S. Congress was in session, I was present on behalf of the people of my district at a federal bankruptcy court in Wilmington, Delaware before federal Judge Mary F. Walrath, to request the Judge's consideration of my constituents' heartfelt plea to help us save our community hospital. What follows is my testimony in open court—a tribute to St. Michael's Hospital.

Your Honor, I thank your Honor for granting me the privilege to humbly approach this court on behalf of the community interests of the 570,000 people of the 10th Congressional district in Cleveland, Ohio, a city which I served as Mayor and now I represent Cleveland in the U.S. Congress. For this matter is literally one of life and death for my constituents because their access to full service health care, emergency care (13,000

cases a year) surgical care and acute medical care is at stake.

St. Michael's Hospital, which was known as St. Alexis Hospital, has been the heart and soul of an old Cleveland neighborhood on the edge of the steel mills for 116 years.

I know the hospital well. I lived in the neighborhood. I worked there 36 years ago as an orderly, then as a surgical technician. I learned long ago about the spirit of this hospital—about its spiritual connection to the community, about how it provides over 400 jobs, and protects neighborhood health and neighborhood commerce. Our community has a lot at stake here.

St. Michael's has provided care, outstanding care for the sick and the elderly, including my own mother and father, and brothers and sisters, and myself.

It provides care for the poor, the indigent, for people who do not own cars, for people who are dependent on mass transit, for a large elderly population who wait patiently each month for their social security checks.

St. Michael's staff is totally dedicated. Some of its doctors still do house calls. St. Michael's has saved the lives, and prolonged the quality of life of so many people who I know and love and the lives of loved ones of many people here in this courtroom.

St. Michael's gives people hope. It has demonstrated true charity. The people from my district who have traveled here by bus including City Council representatives, are now obligated by the same sentiments of charity and hope to try to save the life of our hospital and to spare the tradition of neighborhood-based full service health care.

Today, when I walk the streets of St. Michael's neighborhoods, I see poverty reflected on people's faces, in the walk, in their clothes. I know the people well, because this is where I come from. This is my home. This is my heart.

I know that for many people in the community this hospital is the only institution in the neighborhood which enables the people to rescue some quality from a hard life.

And that is why I am here on a day when the U.S. House of Representatives is in session—because I can and do speak on behalf of 570,000 people and say that we plead for the wisdom and mercy of this honorable court, in considering the interests of the community. We respect that this honorable court cannot solve all the problems which beset the American health care system—indeed that is work for the institution I am honored to serve, but the court can help give the hospitals a fighting chance to survive, and in the process give the humble people of our community one last chance for the hospital to be saved. I ask your honor to please take notice of the fact that:

On the same day that PHS and Cleveland Clinic privately applied to the Federal Trade Commission for Hart-Scott-Rodino (anti-trust) approval for the asset purchase agreement to close St. Michael's and Mt. Sinai East—on that same day, PHS publicly announced its intention to keep St. Michael's and Mt. Sinai East open, notwithstanding the closure of Mt. Sinai University Circle.

Your honor, the people who I represent are humble people, many minorities, many from immigrant families. They take things at face value. They have trouble understanding people who say one thing and do another. They have faith in people, in one another, and in this court.

The truth is that notwithstanding the three year agreement which PHS and Cleveland Clinic made with the Mayor of Cleveland at St. Michael's:

The adolescent ward was closed in the past three weeks;

The detox unit was closed;

The ambulance service has been stopped;

The elective services have been stopped;

That today the cardiac rehab unit is being closed;

That women's center patients have to find other physicians. PHS did this without the physicians' knowing;

That one physician's patients received letters "to get another physician"—even though PHS never notified the physician;

All this has hurt our community. But St. Michael's Hospital lives. It lives despite PHS billing hospitals for a computer system which still does not work and PHS paying multi-million dollar consultant fees that in and of themselves would cover any deficits which may exist at St. Michael's.

We cannot expect this honorable court to solve the health care problems of America—but it is a fact that on the entire east side of Cleveland, as a result of the closing of Mt. Sinai, University Circle; no level-one trauma center is available. And throughout this process of closing hospitals the community; doctors, nurses and Cleveland City Council were not included in any talks. It is no wonder that the Council voted 18-0 to formally oppose the sale and closure of St. Michael's.

Your honor, I want the court to know that I am sensitive to PHS's position as a debtor in Bankruptcy proceedings and understand that PHS must sell these hospitals. But it seems, that to PHS, St. Michael's and Mt. Sinai are simply assets to be unloaded, worth more to them closed than open. But to the people in my district and in neighboring districts, these represent community resources and access to health care.

To Cleveland Clinic, St. Michael's and Mt. Sinai East represent competition to be snuffed out. That is why Cleveland clinic agreed to purchase these hospitals only under the condition that PHS close them prior to purchase. That's a cold and heartless decision to we who are committed to providing access to health care for Cleveland area residents. It is cruel and it is inexplicable that St. Michael's, which provides 20 percent of its care to indigent and Medicaid patients must close to make way for the sprawling Cleveland Clinic which provides only 2.3 percent of its care to charity patients.

What makes it even harder to comprehend is that the asset purchase agreement freezes out willing bidders, those who would keep the hospitals open. Those who would keep St. Michael's doing what it has always done for 116 years, protecting the people's health care needs. That's all the people I represent want—to keep hospitals open, to keep access to health care.

I join with the objectors to the Asset Purchase Agreement in the request that this honorable court set aside the agreement for a closed sale and open the bidding to provide a clear, honest opportunity for our community hospitals to stay open. Thank you, your honor.

● 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.