

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 16, 2003

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, June 4, I attended an important announcement at the U.S. Department of Labor concerning the funding of a vital initiative to assist dislocated workers and retirees in Minnesota pay for their health care expenses.

As a result, I was unable to cast my vote on the rule (H. Res 257) for the Partial Birth Abortion Ban legislation. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on rollcall vote 236 because I strongly supported the need for the House to consider this important pro-life legislation.

IN HONOR OF THE RETIREMENT
OF DR. BARBARA BENSON OF
THE DELAWARE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HON. MICHAEL N. CASTLE

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 16, 2003

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the achievements of Dr. Barbara Benson upon her retirement as the executive director of the Delaware Historical Society. Dr. Benson has served as the organization's executive director for thirteen years and as staff librarian for ten years prior. She has left the history of Delaware on display for many future generations to cherish and explore our rich heritage.

Dr. Benson is a recognized scholar in her field who set high performance standards for every task she undertook at the Delaware Historical Society. During Dr. Benson's tenure, the Delaware Historical Society grew in both its collections and membership. Furthermore, Dr. Benson led the organization's purchase of the old Woolworth 5 & 10 next to the town hall, which now proudly serves as the Delaware History Museum.

Dr. Benson has challenged Delawareans to think, learn and grow. Delawareans have been called upon to connect Delaware's history with their own lives and relate their own experiences with the future of Delaware's history.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Dr. Benson for challenging the residents of Delaware and for sharing her knowledge with us. The legacy Dr. Benson has left us through her work at the Delaware Historical Society is not one that will soon be forgotten.

HONORING IRVING I. STONE

HON. STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 16, 2003

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Irving I. Stone, founder of American Greetings Corporation, whose generosity to his community and abroad is constantly remembered. Mr. Stone's involvement with the company started when he was a

young boy. His father sold postcards from a horse and buggy. Immediately after graduating high school, he became a salesman. He made the largest sale of the company at age 19 to the management of Cleveland's Euclid Beach Park.

In the 1930's, Stone convinced his father that the company should design and print its own cards. In order to implement this, he started the American Greetings Creative Department, one of the largest art studios in the country. Irving Stone continued to bring innovative ideas to the company and retailers, making the greeting card industry what it is today.

More important than his accomplishments with his company was his commitment to his community by participating with many civic organizations: Chairman of the Board, Hebrew Academy of Cleveland; Member of the Board of Directors, Young Israel of Cleveland; Board Member, Cleveland Institute of Art and Bar Ilan University; Regional Board Member, Liberty Mutual Insurance; Founding Trustee for Life, Cleveland Jewish News.

It is because of his commitment to the community and desire to see it move forward in the future that the Young Israel of Greater Cleveland will honor Mr. Stone by dedicating the Synagogue to him on June 22, 2003. Irving I. Stone was an outstanding man who will always be remembered for his outstanding good deeds to his community and beyond.

HONORING RIPLEY, OHIO, THE
PARKER SOCIETY, ANN
HAGEDORN FOR KEEPING THE
HEROIC STORIES OF THE UNDER-
GROUND RAILROAD ALIVE

HON. ROB PORTMAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 16, 2003

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the Village of Ripley, the Parker Society and author Ann Hagedorn, for working so tirelessly to commemorate the lives and stories of people who risked life and property for the cause of freedom: the conductors on the Underground Railroad. The Village of Ripley and Ann Hagedorn were honored during the Salute to Trailblazers Underground Railroad event on Capitol Hill in March.

The Village of Ripley is in Brown County, Ohio, which I represent. It is home to two former conductors on the Underground Railroad, Presbyterian minister Reverend John Rankin, and freed slave, John Parker. Both the Rankin house and Parker house have been restored and help tell the story of how hundreds of slaves escaped via the Underground Railroad. Today in Ripley, the Parker Historical Society is comprised of many dedicated people, committed to preservation of the homes, artifacts, and stories of the brave people who believed so strongly in freedom for all.

The mission of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, located in Cincinnati, Ohio, is to educate the public about the struggle to abolish slavery and secure freedom for all people. For many years, the Parker Society has worked tirelessly to restore the John Parker House, collecting artifacts, and recounting the life and history of John Rankin, John Parker, and the heroes of the

Underground Railroad. Ann Hagedorn's recent book, *Beyond The River*, recounts in gripping detail the history of bravery and determined resolve of ordinary people who accomplished extraordinary deeds. The Brown County Commissioners had extraordinary vision and were particularly supportive of the Parker Society's restoration efforts.

All of us in Southwest Ohio join in congratulating the Village of Ripley, the Parker Society, Ann Hagedorn, and the Brown County Commissioners for their vision in keeping the heroic stories of the Underground Railroad alive.

RECOGNIZING THE COMMUNITY
LEADERSHIP OF GROVER AND
BETTY POTEET

HON. JOHN S. TANNER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 16, 2003

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of two outstanding leaders and dear friends, Grover and Betty Poteet. The service they have provided over the years resonates throughout our community.

Both natives of Spring Hill, Mr. and Mrs. Poteet now live in Trenton, Tennessee. They have three children, Melinda Poteet Goode, Doug Poteet, and Melia Poteet Anderson. They are also the proud grandparents of Garner Goode and Crockett Goode. Together, Grover and Betty earned the 1999-2000 Citizens of the Year Award, presented by the Trenton Elks Lodge.

Grover graduated from Spring Hill High School in 1955 and served in the United States Army from 1955-1957. Grover has contributed so much to his community, including his service as a member of the Gibson County Court from 1974-1994. Grover also showed his compassion for people by serving as a member of the National Guard Equal Opportunity Race Relations Council. He is currently chair of the Gibson County Lake/Water Board Authority and was recently honored with the Trenton Elks Dedicated Service Award for 2002-2003.

Betty graduated from Spring Hill High School in 1957 and began working at the Milan Army Ammunition Plant, a career that lasted 45 years. Betty also served for 15 years as the parade director for the Trenton Teapot Parade, one of the biggest local festivals in Tennessee. Her tireless community work earned her the Tennessee National Guard's Hard Worker of the Year Award for 1994-1995.

The Poteets have always been very active leaders in Tennessee, through heavy involvement in the Democratic Party at the local and state level. Their love for our democratic process helps make West Tennessee a great place to live.

Time and time again, Grover and Betty Poteet have proven their love for our neighbors in Trenton and Gibson County. Their dedication has always been and will continue to be appreciated. Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring the accomplishments and dedication of two fine leaders and my friends, Grover and Betty Poteet.

TRIBUTE TO THE BRONX COUNCIL
ON THE ARTS

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 16, 2003

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, it is with great joy that I rise today to pay tribute to the Bronx Council on the Arts, which is currently celebrating its 40th anniversary. Recognized nationally as a leading arts service organization, providing cultural services and arts programs, BCA serves a multicultural constituency in excess of 1.2 million residents.

The Bronx Council on the Arts was founded in 1962 with the mission of encouraging and increasing the public's awareness and participation in the arts, and to nurture the development of artists, arts and cultural organizations. Indeed, throughout its 40 years of service BCA has accomplished its stated mission.

In April of 2000, The Bronx Council on the Arts received the Governor's Arts Award for its contributions to the burgeoning artistic panorama of the Bronx. They joined the ranks of Peter Martins of the New York City Ballet, filmmakers Ismail Merchant and James Ivory, photographer Cindy Sherman and many other celebrated artists and art institutions.

The Bronx Council on the Arts serves more than 250 arts and community organizations and 5,000 artists. Through its various grant programs and services, BCA has given over \$1 million to individual artists and arts organizations in order to support literary, media, performing and visual arts projects. In addition, BCA coordinates arts and education services in public schools throughout the Bronx.

Mr. Speaker, the Bronx Council on the Arts is truly a Miracle in the Bronx. Bill Aguado, the Executive Director, put it best when he stated: "This isn't supposed to be happening in the Bronx or anywhere else for that matter. Poverty, crime, drugs—those are expected, but to pick up a paint brush, raise a voice in song, fill a page with words or lift a foot to dance and say, 'I am a Bronx artist,' seemed absurd. Things have changed a lot."

For the rich contributions this organization has made not only to the Bronx but also to the world of art, I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the Bronx Council on the Arts' 40th birthday.

H.R. 2475—THE VETERANS HEALTH
CARE FULL FUNDING ACT

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 16, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today, along with Representative ROB SIMMONS of Connecticut, Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health, and three dozen other cosponsors, I am introducing H.R. 2475, the Veterans Health Care Full Funding Act, legislation to ensure full funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs' health care system.

This bill would fulfill the central recommendation of the President's Task Force To Improve Delivery of Health Care for Our Nation's Veterans, which reported an alarming

mismatch between demand for services and available resources that threatened the quality of VA health care. The Task Force recommended that the veterans' health care funding process should be overhauled in order to achieve full funding.

As early as 1993, national veterans organizations were calling for guaranteed funding for VA health care. Last year I introduced H.R. 5250, legislation to achieve that goal by funding VA health care through a permanently fixed formula, one possible approach recommended by the President's Task Force.

The legislation we are introducing today takes the other major approach identified by the Task Force, establishing an independent board of experts on health care economics, with an independent budget and staff, to determine the annual funding levels necessary for veterans' medical care and to be included in the Administration's budget.

Under our legislation, a three-member Funding Review Board would be appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for staggered 15-year terms. The Board would have full access to VA's economic, actuarial and other data relevant to determining health care funding, as well as the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) economic and forecasting analysis, but would be independent of both.

The Board would produce an annual budget request and a budget forecast for funding necessary to provide full health care benefits in a timely and cost-efficient fashion to all enrolled veterans in Priority Groups 1-7, primarily those injured or disabled while serving their nation, or with low income levels. The amount calculated by the Board for the next fiscal year would become the President's budget request submitted to Congress. From that point forward, the congressional budget and appropriations process would remain unchanged.

To ensure that veterans are receiving timely care, the legislation would require VA to provide care in a timely manner; if VA is unable to furnish care to veterans who need it within reasonable timeframes, it would be obligated to contract for that care with private sector health care providers.

In order to promote fiscal discipline within VA health care, the Board would be required to identify areas where VA program efficiencies and savings can be achieved, as well as be required to consider recommendations from OMB.

Mr. Speaker, for at least the past five years, veterans' usage of VA health care services has surpassed every Administration estimate—Republican and Democrat. The continuing rise in demand for VA health care services has been driven by many factors, including VA's establishment of over 650 new and more convenient VA community-based outpatient clinics for primary care, improved safety and quality of care, and the availability of VA prescription drug benefits. VA has become an increasingly important supplier of prescription drugs to veterans, particularly senior veterans who lack a drug benefit from the Medicare program.

Further evidence of the urgent funding needs of VA health care comes from a report issued last year measuring the amount of time veterans are waiting for medical services. According to VA's report, there were nearly 300,000 veterans waiting for initial medical appointments, half of whom were waiting 6 months or more; and the other half having no

appointment at all. While the VA has indicated progress is being made to reduce this waiting list, the Secretary's decision to halt enrollment of Priority 8 veterans for the remainder of this year is another clear indicator that VA is not properly equipped to handle the current demand for medical services because it lacks the funding to do so.

The President's Task Force (PTF) was established in May, 2001 to improve collaboration and resource sharing between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs health care systems. Within months of the start of its deliberations, the Task Force discovered that a mismatch between demand for VA health care services and available resources prevented VA and DOD from achieving the full advantages of sharing and threatened the quality of VA health care. The PTF recommended in its report that the current budget and appropriations process be reformed. Let me quote from the report:

The Federal Government should provide full funding to ensure that enrolled veterans in Priority Groups 1 through 7 (new) are provided the current comprehensive benefit in accordance with VA's established access standards. Full funding should occur through modifications to the current budget and appropriations process, by using a mandatory funding mechanism, or by some other changes in the process that achieve the desired goal.

The PTF identified two possible approaches to addressing current problems with the funding process: make veterans health care funding a mandatory budgetary item, or create an independent Board of experts, actuaries, or other outside officials to dispassionately review needs and determine funding levels. Both approaches would have the same goal: to achieve full funding to meet demand in a timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, the Veterans Health Care Full Funding Act would accomplish this goal by establishing a funding process similar to one already used by the Department of Defense. Our legislation is modeled on a provision in the 2001 Floyd Spence Defense Authorization Act, Public Law 106-398, popularly known as "TRICARE for Life." Under this legislation, an outside panel of experts and actuaries was established to determine future funding levels to meet health care needs of military retirees and their families in the TRICARE program. Our legislation is modeled on this successful program.

In addition, our legislation would codify standards for veterans' access to health care. Without a requirement that VA meet reasonable access standards, veterans could continue to be denied access to care regardless of any funding. I would like to recognize and thank my colleague on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Representative GINNY BROWN-WAITE, who has introduced separate legislation, H.R. 2357, to achieve this very goal. The standards established in the Brown-Waite bill are incorporated in the legislation we are introducing today.

The VA budget for fiscal year 2003 contained a record \$2.6 billion increase in the funding of medical care for our Nation's veterans and this year, based upon our Committee's recommendations, the House approved another record veterans budget, increasing overall veterans spending by \$6.2 billion, including about a \$3 billion increase for medical care. But even with these historic increases,