

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, October 28, 2003.

Hon. TOMMY G. THOMPSON,
Secretary, Department of Health and Human
Services, Independence Ave. SW., Wash-
ington, DC.

DEAR MR. THOMPSON: The enclosed article describes another tragic account of OxyContin abuse.

How many more stories do we have to read about this problem before you take more action?

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, October 28, 2003.

Dr. MARK MCCLELLAN,
Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration,
Fishers Ln., Rockville, MD.

DEAR DR. MCCLELLAN: The enclosed article describes another tragic account of OxyContin abuse.

How many more stories do we have to read about this problem before action is taken?

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

HONORING THE CIVIC LEADERSHIP
OF ROBERT SIDNEY AND GAIL
PHELAN

HON. JOHN S. TANNER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in honor of Robert Sidney and Gail Phelan, fine public servants who have dedicated themselves throughout their lives as loyal citizens to our community.

The couple married in 1958, months after Gail had been crowned Miss Trenton. They are members of the 1st United Methodist Church of Trenton and the proud parents of Robert Sidney Phelan, Jr., Paul Edmund Phelan, and Mary LeAnn Phelan. Robert and Gail also have three grandchildren and two step-grandchildren.

Robert operated the family business, a Ford automobile dealership, for 50 years, before selling it. He has since started a smaller independent dealership. In 1963, Robert became the acting Postmaster while continuing to run his auto dealership. He also served in the Tennessee National Guard, from which he retired as a First Lieutenant. With the help of U.S. Senator Jim Sasser, Robert was instrumental in establishing a new National Guard Armory in 1991.

He has served as Exalted Ruler of the Trenton Elks Lodge and President of the Trenton Chamber of Commerce. Robert also served on the Trenton Rotary Club, the Gibson County Election Commission, the Trenton Housing Authority Board and the Trenton Industrial Board. He served on the board of Citizen State Bank, spending some of that tenure as Chairman. Robert worked diligently to form Citizen City and County Bank, where he now serves as Chairman of the Board.

The Phelans have always been devoted to the Democratic Party on local, state and national levels, including involvement with generations of Tennessee governors, Members of Congress and Vice President Al Gore. Their son Paul served for 10 years as a State Representative.

The family was instrumental in the formation of the Trenton Special School District and years later helped replace the aging school building with a new high school. Believing that Gibson County could support a satellite community college, Robert and Gail also helped raise money to fund Dyersburg State Community College in Trenton.

Gail has dedicated much of her life to the education of her children and others in our community. She has always been very involved in school parent organizations and takes an active role in making our schools better, including beautiful murals in school hallways.

Gail has not limited her helpful involvement to working with children, however. A cancer survivor, she has been an active participant in Relay for Life efforts of the American Cancer Society and has helped counsel others who are also battling cancer, using her own experiences to help comfort those around her.

Mr. Speaker, please join Robert and Gail's friends and family as we recognize their dedication and service to our community.

IN HONOR OF MAYOR DAVID
PENDERGRASS OF SAND CITY,
CALIFORNIA

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor and pleasure that I am able to rise today to recognize Mayor David Pendergrass, a dedicated public servant of Sand City, California. Mayor Pendergrass has served Sand City for 25 years, where throughout his tenure as a Mayor-Councilmember, Mayor Pendergrass has distinguished himself as a strong leader.

Under Mayor Pendergrass' leadership, the City of Sand City has been enhanced in many different ways. He has overseen the establishment of an active redevelopment program and agency, the organization of a modern city government with a City Administrator-Council administrative structure, and maintained an ongoing forum to receive and respond to citizens' concerns. Furthermore, Mayor Pendergrass has been able to keep Sand City's focus on its primary goals with diplomacy, patience, and consideration.

Mayor Pendergrass' committed public service has improved the quality of life at Sand City, California. He has made great contributions, and his lifelong dedication to public service is commendable. His achievements are truly honorable, and I along with the City of Sand City, honor this great man.

WRITING BY VICKI WILSON

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to share with my colleagues this editorial written by my courageous friend Vicki Wilson. In it she describes her very personal story about her pregnancy and a procedure that was re-

quired to save her life. As Vicki rightly points out, the ban on so-called "partial birth abortion" prevents women—along with their families and doctors—from making private decisions about saving their own lives and protecting their right to future pregnancies.

A short while ago, the House debated the so-called "Partial Birth Abortion" ban. Several members who supported the ban tried to deny Vicki's story.

Those Members didn't know what they were talking about. Here is the truth as printed in the San Jose Mercury News.

[From the San Jose Mercury News]

HEARTBREAK AND A CHOICE: I HAD AN
ABORTION AT EIGHT MONTHS

(By Vicki Wilson)

The right to end a pregnancy is frighteningly precarious, something I didn't understand until I had an abortion at eight months. The new abortion ban covers what is not actually a recognized medical procedure; "partial birth" was coined by the anti-choice lobby to rile public sensibilities and distort the truth.

At 36 weeks of pregnancy, an ultra-sound showed what all my previous parental testing failed to detect—an encephalocele. Two-thirds of my daughter's brain had formed outside her skull. What felt to be strong, big, healthy baby movements were in fact seizures.

My doctor sent me to several specialists in a desperate attempt to find a way to save her. Everyone agreed she would not survive outside my body. As the pregnancy progressed before I went into labor, she would probably die from the increased compression of her brain.

Our doctors explained our options. Let "nature take its course." But how could I let my daughter suffer the ongoing seizures? Second: Abortion. My God! I thought. Here I am at the end of a planned and very much wanted pregnancy: Her name is Abigail. How can one even utter the word "abortion" now? Despite being a nurse, I'd never heard of any abortion in the eighth month. I asked about a Caesarean section. Doctors perform C-sections only to save babies lives. Mine couldn't be saved so they didn't want to risk the possibility of hurting my future fertility. It was a risk I wasn't willing to take either.

We agonized over our options, which doesn't convey the heartbreak and rage we felt. It was hard even to think of these "choices." I wanted my daughter to be born with a brain—period. We decided to make our choice based on what was best for Abigail.

As health-care professionals, my husband and I understood the medical risks of each alternative. We understood that it wasn't "is she going to die"—a higher power had decided that—but "how?" To this day, I thank God that this decision, at least, was ours.

I continue to battle the anti-choice hardliner machine from banning the very procedure that saved my health and ended Abigail's suffering. When will politicians understand: The decision about terminating a pregnancy should be between women, their family and their doctors—not politicians. While I was struggling with the most wrenching choice I have ever made, it never occurred to me to confer with a lawyer or a judge or a politician.

Those opposed to abortion for any reason declare that women are selfishly choosing to end their pregnancies late. They deny medical necessity; they'd rather see Abigail suffer and me lose my fertility than allow us to choose the most decent path for our family.

They state that Americans are opposed to their politically motivated "partial birth" abortions. They don't acknowledge that Americans believe the choice should remain with my family.

Almost nine years have passed since we lost Abigail, and not a day passes that I don't think of her. In my heart I know I did the right thing for me and my family.

EXPLANATION OF VOTE ON CONFERENCE REPORT ON FY 2004 DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, the final version of this legislation continues our shared bipartisan commitment to boost the income for all of our military personnel with a 4.15-percent average increase in base pay. This is an important testament to the brave men and women who risk their lives to defend America's freedom.

In addition, this conference report extends several special pay provisions and bonuses for active duty personnel through December 31, 2004. It reduces the average amount of housing expenses paid by service members from 7.5 percent to 3.5 percent in FY 2004 and eliminates the out-of-pocket expense completely by FY 2005. It increases the family separation allowance for service members with dependents, worldwide, from \$100 per month to \$250 per month for the period beginning October 1, 2003 and ending December 31, 2004. Finally, it increases the rate of special pay for those subject to hostile fire and imminent danger, worldwide from \$150 per month to \$225 per month for the period beginning October 1, 2003 to December 31, 2004.

While I am not satisfied with the provisions in this conference report regarding concurrent receipt for military retirees, it does provide some, overdue redress for this out-of-date policy.

But on balance, I am opposing this final conference report because I fundamentally disagree with key aspects of its policy presumptions and prescriptions. On balance, it will make America less safe in an increasingly unstable world.

First and most importantly, the growing reliance upon nuclear weapons that this legislation encourages makes our nation and the world less safe, not more so. Accordingly, I strongly disagree with the funding in this bill to continue work on high yield, burrowing nuclear "bunker-busters" that target underground military facilities or arsenals. I am equally opposed to the language in this bill that lifts the ban on research leading to low yield "mini-nuclear weapons" of 5 kilotons or less.

Last April, I sent a letter to President Bush that was co-signed by 34 of my colleagues to convey our grave concern that he is weakening long-standing U.S. policy governing the use of nuclear as opposed to conventional weapons. I regret that we have never received a substantive reply from the President. That congressional action coupled with the examples I've cited and other provisions in this conference report further undermine the U.S. non-proliferation efforts of Republican and Democratic Presidents alike and heighten growing international fear that Bush Administration's policies are fueling a new nuclear arms race.

Second, I am opposed to the blanket exemptions from our nation's environmental protection laws for the Pentagon in this bill. There is no convincing evidence that environmental laws like the Clean Air Act and the Endangered Species Act hinder our military's capacity to defend our nation.

But you don't have to take my word for it. Former EPA Administrator, Christine Whitman, testified to the Congress that she does not "believe that there is a training mission anywhere in the country that is being held up or not taking place because of environmental protection." Furthermore, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) has reported to the Congress that the Pentagon has failed to produce any evidence that environmental laws have significantly affected our military readiness.

I do not think the Pentagon or any other federal agency should be above the law. Moreover, current law already allows case-by-case environmental exemptions for the Pentagon, when they are determined to be in the national interest.

Finally, this conference report also contains provisions that will be very harmful to hundreds of thousands of dedicated civilian men and women who make our Defense Department work.

Last year saw the largest government reorganization in more than 3 decades with the creation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, affecting 170,000 federal employees. Following extensive congressional debate, Secretary Ridge was granted authority to establish a more flexible that attempted to protect basic worker rights.

But this legislation will give Defense Secretary Rumsfeld broad authority to rollback worker protections for hundreds of thousands of Pentagon employees. There will be nothing to prevent agency managers from abusing their power for political advancement or engaging in discriminatory practices. Allowing managers the ability to waive such protections under the guise of national security and the need for greater flexibility is wrong. It will not make us safer.

Thanks to this legislation, Secretary Rumsfeld will be able to do away with the current personnel system in the Pentagon. I am unwilling to give the Bush Administration a blank check to undo, in whole or in part, many of the civil service laws and protections that have been in place for nearly a century to safeguard against the return of an unfair patronage system.

I want to be very clear. I support a strong national defense. I support modernizing our military. I support giving our troops the resources and training they need to keep our nation secure. But I cannot support this conference report which contains provisions that will take our military backwards, rather than forwards. I cannot support legislation that will re-ignite a global nuclear arms race, even as our troops in Iraq and elsewhere risk their lives every day to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. I cannot support legislation that takes away the rights of hundreds of thousands of hard-working Pentagon employees. Finally, I cannot support legislation that disingenuously claims that stripping away important environmental protections here at home will somehow bolster our national security.

IN MEMORY OF KESH

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, his full name was Nayaran Dilip Keshavan Ayyangar, but everyone simply knew him as Kesh. Kesh was a journalist, a Hill staffer, a community activist and a friend to anyone who cared passionately about the political, economic and cultural relationship between his adopted country, the United States, and his native country, India.

Last Thursday, November 13th, Kesh was doing what he had done for the past 2 decades. He was advocating that India's interests were in confluence with the United States'. He had just finished taping an appearance on Lou Dobbs's Moneyline on CNN. Ten minutes after leaving the studio, Kesh was dead of a massive heart attack at the young age of 53.

Mr. Speaker, as a former Chairman of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans, I know first hand the gravity of the loss both countries have suffered. Not only was Kesh's knowledge of U.S. India relations comprehensive, the breadth and depth of his contacts, here in Washington and back in Delhi, was truly amazing.

A review of Kesh's career will give our colleagues an idea of why Kesh was such a critical player in the U.S. India dialogue. For the past 2 years Kesh served as President of the New York City Chapter of the Indian American Forum for Political Education. Prior to that he was the Executive Director of the India Caucus here in this body. And for more than 15 years before coming to Capitol Hill, Kesh was a distinguished journalist, serving as Editor in Chief of the India Post, as the Washington Bureau Chief of the Indian American, as a reporter for the Washington Times and as the Chief Diplomatic Correspondent for the New York City Tribune. Kesh was educated here in the U.S. at the School of Journalism at Syracuse University and also in India at Osmanis University in Hyderabad, where he obtained a journalism degree, and at Andhra University, where he was awarded a degree in pharmacy.

Mr. Speaker, I am certain all members of this body join me in expressing our condolences to his father, a former head of the Indian Geological Survey, his sister, and his many friends, both here in the United States and back in India. We have all lost a devoted public advocate. Kesh's loss will be felt for many years.

HONORING SARGENT SHRIVER

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the dedication, spirit, and accomplishments of my good friend Sargent Shriver who celebrated his 88th birthday last week. I met Sarge while I was in Peace Corps Training in Questa, New Mexico in 1963. He was a hero figure: handsome, smart, engaging, and the President's brother-in-law. We were all so proud of being chosen to be in one of the