

in high use for irrigation and the snow has melted. They collect data on how much water flows through streams or ditches; inspect headgates, flumes and springs, and during particularly dry times, undertake the difficult task of enforcing water rights. These hard working commissioners have improved their efficiency field by adding global positioning system technology and many other modern capabilities to facilitate better tracking and locating procedures for water in their districts.

Mr. Speaker, the Gunnison water commissioners work hard and take pride in the stewardship of a precious resource, and I am confident that the Gunnison community is grateful for their dedication. It is a privilege to bring the contributions of these fine water commissioners to light before this body of Congress. I thank them for their service and I wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ST. CROIX
HOSPITAL AND STAFF

HON. DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN

OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 20, 2004

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, it is with pride that I rise today to congratulate the St. Croix—Governor Juan F. Luis—Hospital administration and staff.

On June 30, 2004, the Juan Luis Hospital received accreditation from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. This achievement has brought us a step closer to our goal of providing first-class health care services for the people of the Virgin Islands.

The St. Croix Hospital has faced many challenges over the years, but the past one was particularly difficult. When they were without a Chief Executive Officer, two physicians, Dr. Lloyd Henry and Dr. Michael Potts stepped up and stepped in, to lead. The Board provided continuity and gave them their full support. The staff put differences, and any personal concerns aside and pulled together. When a leader was finally selected, in the person of Mr. Gregory Calliste, they all became one team on a mission.

There are still challenges to be faced and overcome. But with this achievement, they have proven their mettle to the community, and what working together with a common vision can produce, to themselves.

The St. Croix community as well as the entire Virgin Island community—for all of us will benefit—are grateful for the hard work and dedication that went into this successful effort. It is an undeniable testimony to their commitment to providing quality health care to us.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my family, staff, and all Virgin Islanders I once again congratulate the entire Juan Luis Hospital family for their shining accomplishment. Our community looks forward to their continuing superior service and further crowning accomplishments.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MEDICARE
HOSPITAL ACCREDITATION ACT
OF 2004

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 20, 2004

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Medicare Hospital Accreditation Act of 2004. Forty years ago, the Congress abdicated the federal government's regulatory responsibilities to ensure that hospitals meet Medicare requirements. Congress empowered the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) with a unique authority to deem hospitals as eligible for Medicare payments with minimal government interference. That was clearly a mistake. In the decades that JCAHO has had this unsupervised authority, serious inadequacies in hospitals have gone unchecked. Our current process is not working and it's time for the federal government to reassert its authority. This bill would do just that.

This bill today responds to a report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO—04—850) raising serious concerns about the effectiveness of the current system used to accredit and oversee hospitals that serve Medicare beneficiaries. The investigation, based on a retrospective survey of 500 hospitals, indicates that JCAHO failed to detect a large number of serious deficiencies subsequently found later by a team of government inspectors. These deficiencies are not superfluous. They are important, basic minimum standards needed to ensure both a safe environment and quality health care. For example, JCAHO accredited hospitals with inadequate procedures for preventing the spread of infections, inadequate safeguards to assure competent performance of physicians and nurses, and hospitals that outright failed to protect patients and staff from fire-related disasters. While this survey cannot be generalized to the entire hospital community, it implies a troubling lack of compliance with important safety standards and is a signal for change.

This is not the first time that problems in the Medicare hospital accreditation and oversight process have come to light. In 1990, we held a hearing on this issue in the Ways and Means Committee. Gail Wilensky, the Medicare Administrator for President George H.W. Bush, expressed concern that JCAHO-accredited hospitals displayed serious deficiencies when subsequently surveyed by government surveyors. In 1999, an investigation by the Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General (OIG) concluded that JCAHO accreditation surveys were not likely to identify patterns of deficient care. Finally, for the past three consecutive years, CMS has found that JCAHO failed to meet the CMS performance standard for the hospital survey process. This is one more indication of JCAHO's need to improve its performance, and, more importantly, the need to increase CMS' authority to oversee JCAHO.

Despite this body of evidence, until now, the federal government has done little to address the problem. This stems in part from the original Medicare law passed by Congress in 1965. In that Act, JCAHO was granted the authority to "deem" hospitals as meeting the Medicare conditions of participation and qual-

ify for Medicare payments. As a result, the federal agency administering the Medicare program was not granted adequate oversight authority. The agency had no authority to regularly review JCAHO's surveying processes, to mandate or approve changes to the procedures, or to sanction JCAHO for inadequate performance. No other accrediting organization is immune from government oversight.

Thus, Congress delegated oversight to a private entity that is essentially under the control of the very industry it attempts to regulate. In fact, the American Hospital Association and key physician groups appoint approximately 70 percent of the JCAHO Board of Directors! This special status is even more alarming when JCAHO's role in the market is taken into consideration. In addition to its Medicare activities, JCAHO accreditation partially or fully substitutes for state regulators in 49 states, it certifies VA facilities, and is often used by private insurers and plan sponsors as a requirement for plan participation and payments.

The hospital oversight process is comprised of a three-legged stool—the private Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and their delegates at the state level, and the Congress. This report shows that each party needs to act to improve patient safety and assure that taxpayer dollars are spent in facilities that meet Medicare's minimum requirements.

Along with Senator CHARLES GRASSLEY, who is introducing companion legislation in the Senate, the bill I'm introducing today is the first step toward addressing this problem. This legislation would provide CMS with the same oversight authority over JCAHO that it has for all other national organizations with deeming authority. We may need to do more, but this is an important start.

In addition, the Administration has also agreed to make significant improvements under its current, limited authority. Administrator McClelland has worked closely with us on this issue and is committed to make the needed changes. Establishing a clear chain of command will improve accountability, and that is our goal.

As far as I am concerned, the GAO report indicates that all three legs of the hospital oversight process need to be revamped. JCAHO needs to improve its ability to assess the extent a hospital is meeting the Medicare quality conditions of participation. CMS needs to make better use of the limited authority over JCAHO it currently has and be prepared to assume increased authority with the passage of this legislation. Finally, Congress needs to correct a decision made nearly 40 years ago to allow the federal government to abdicate its regulatory responsibilities to ensure that hospitals meet Medicare requirements.

I am here today to announce our bipartisan, bicameral commitment to work with each other, our colleagues, the Administration and the community to do just that. I encourage my colleagues in the House and Senate to support this legislation. It will provide CMS with the tools it needs to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries receive quality hospital care in a safe environment. The time to act is now. It is a matter of life and death.

RECOGNIZING CLINT FLATT FOR
HIS OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO
SCOUTING

HON. JEB HENSARLING

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 20, 2004

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize fellow Eagle Scout Clint Flatt, of Mexia, Texas, for recently being honored with the Silver Beaver Award from the Boy Scouts of America. This award was presented to Clint for his "noteworthy service of exceptional character to boyhood."

Clint is a third generation Boy Scout, who started his Scouting experience as a Cub Scout at eight years of age. Since then, he has earned numerous honors including the Arrow of Light Award in 1980, the God and Country Award in 1986, the Eagle Scout badge and a Palm in 1987 and his Wood Badge beads in 1993.

Throughout his life, Clint has remained committed to promoting the principles of Scouting. He has provided his leadership skills to the Boy Scouts of America in many posts and capacities, from Assistant Scoutmaster in several troops to Den Leader and Cubmaster for his son Tyler's Pack 698.

Since 2001, Clint has served on the Twin Arrows Junior Leader Training Staff and is the Scoutmaster of the new National Youth Leader Training Pilot course at Camp Tahuaya. He is a Vigil member of the Order of the Arrow and has served on the Eagle Board of Review for the Comanche Trails District since 1995. Currently, Clint is serving as District Chairman and member of the Council Executive Board.

Clint is not only a third generation Boy Scout, he is also the third recipient of the Silver Beaver Award in his family. His grandfather Leon, his mother Linda, and his father Dick have also earned the Silver Beaver Award for their distinguished service to Scouting.

I would like to congratulate my friend Clint Flatt on this outstanding accomplishment. I would also like to thank him for his continued service to the Boy Scouts of America. Clint's example of leadership, citizenship and community service is a shining example to the young men he leads. Through his life-long commitment to Scouting, Clint is helping build the character of our country's next generation of leaders and helping shape a better America.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO RUDY
ARGUELLO

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 20, 2004

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise and pay tribute to Rodolfo "Rudy" Arguello of San Pedro, Colorado. Rudy has shown tremendous dedication and commitment to the citizens of our country. I commend his service in our military, and I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating him on his recent appointment to the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs.

A native of San Acacio, Colorado, Rudy began his military service when he joined the

Air Force in 1956. His military career included working as a linguist, a teacher, and an intelligence officer. He served our country in Vietnam, and retired from active service in 1979 as a captain.

However, his retirement from the Air Force did not mark the end of his career in the military. Wishing to continue to serve this nation, he joined the Veterans Affairs and went on to work as an administrator at the Fort Lyon veteran's hospital, a deputy director for the Department of Defense, and a manager of a modernization project at Fort Carson. Throughout his military career, he took time to further his education, receiving a bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree. With his extensive experience, Rudy is a perfect candidate for the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to thank Rudy for his service to this nation and to congratulate him on his appointment to the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs. Rudy stands out for his efforts in answering the call to serve his nation. He is a very loyal citizen and a solid family man and is a true pillar of his community. I thank him for his service and wish him and his wife Casey all the best in their future endeavors.

TRIBUTE TO AMBASSADOR C.J.
CHEN

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 20, 2004

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a good friend to Washington and to the U.S., Ambassador C.J. Chen of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative office. While I know many of my colleagues will agree that Ambassador Chen's return to Taiwan is quite a loss to Washington, I know that his legacy here will be the continued positive relations between our two countries.

Ambassador Chen holds the unique diplomatic experience of not only having more than 30 years experience in Washington, but also gracefully guiding the relationship of his home country through its most pivotal years with the United States. After U.S.-Taiwan relations were severed in early 1979, a young C.J. Chen was part of the embassy team that worked closely with Congress to establish the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). Since its passage, the TRA has been the strong and enduring statutory framework under which the U.S. and Taiwan have quickly expanded and improved cultural, commercial, and diplomatic relations.

While the TRA has been the guiding force behind our improved relations, I must say that my friend C.J. Chen has been the human force. His depth of knowledge, incredible insight, and unrivaled experience has earned him the respect needed to carry the U.S.-Taiwan relationship forward. It has been a great honor and pleasure to work with Ambassador Chen on a wide array of important issues—including but certainly not limited to Taiwan's participation in the WHO, security in the Taiwan Strait, and improved human rights conditions.

Mr. Speaker, I wish Ambassador C.J. Chen and his wife Yolanda all the best as they return to Taiwan. They leave behind many

friends, a great deal of goodwill, and a legacy of service.

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF TURKEY'S
INVASION OF CYPRUS

HON. MARTIN T. MEEHAN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 20, 2004

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Turkey's illegal and immoral invasion of Cyprus. On July 25, 1974, Turkish troops stormed the shores of Cyprus, killing 6,000 Cypriots and forcing more than 200,000 to flee from their homes. Within weeks of a ceasefire and the commencement of negotiations toward a settlement, Turkey defied a United Nations Security Council resolution and launched a second, more aggressive attack. The assault captured more than one third of the island and marked the beginning of three decades of illegal occupation by Turkish troops.

Today, the Green Line that divides Cyprus symbolizes the wounds of a war-torn people. Hundreds of thousands of Greek-Cypriots remain refugees in their own country, denied basic property entitlements and the right of return. The Turkish Cypriot government continues to deprive them of their basic human rights and the freedom to worship freely. Churches have been desecrated, archaeological sites plundered, and towns vacated.

Since the Turkish invasion, the Cypriot government has vigorously pursued efforts to reunify the island through an equitable and viable settlement. While the Turkish Cypriot government under the leadership of Rauf Denktash has repeatedly stonewalled negotiations, the commitment of Greek-Cypriots to a unified Cyprus has been unwavering.

I am disappointed that recent efforts to renew settlement talks have been stalled once more by Mr. Denktash's intransigence. The Annan plan, which was originally drafted by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan in November of 2002, underwent five major revisions to accommodate the demands of Mr. Denktash before a vote could be taken. In the end, the proposal sacrificed too many of the Greek Cypriots' needs in return for Mr. Denktash's acquiescence. The plan would have authorized the indefinite occupation of Turkish troops and settlers in northern Cyprus, imposed tough restrictions on the right of displaced Greek-Cypriots to return to their homes, and failed to adequately compensate displaced Greek-Cypriots for the loss of their property. Greek-Cypriots wisely mobilized to vote it down.

I represent a large and active Greek-American community, and I have been proud to support U.S. participation in negotiations over Cyprus and the fight for freedom and human rights for all Cypriots. As we remember the anniversary of this tragic invasion, we must renew our commitment to achieving a fair and comprehensive settlement. I urge both sides to once again come back to the negotiating table. A settlement to the Cyprus problem is critical—not only to ensuring the basic rights of Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike—but to promoting stability in the Eastern Mediterranean and United States national security interests as well.