

something in its place that will account for the increase in volume and intensity of physician services in Medicare.

At the same time physician groups and members of Congress have been focused on the SGR, other issues with the physician fee schedule have emerged, including the accuracy of pricing for primary care services. These issues, although less well known, are critical to maintaining beneficiary access to high quality care. It has been 14 years since the current reimbursement system was implemented. It is time for Congress to receive an evaluation of how well this system is meeting its goals. In our effort to find a permanent solution to the SGR, we should not miss an opportunity to address these underlying issues.

Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act calls on the Medicare Payment Advisory Committee (MedPAC) to conduct a comprehensive review of the physician payment system, including recommendations on the accuracy of Medicare pricing and alternatives to the SGR. To allow time for MedPAC to complete their work, the bill provides for a 1.5 percent increase for the next 2 years for physicians.

The bill also provides two important additional components. First, the bill protects beneficiaries from Part B premium increases that would otherwise result from the physician update. Second, it repeals the so-called "45 percent trigger," which was created in the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 to restrict Medicare's general revenue support. If this trigger is left in place, physician increases will force a counter-productive, cyclical effort to cut Medicare spending.

Given problems with potentially unjustifiable increases in volume and intensity of physician services, coupled with other perverse financial incentives in the system, repeal of the SGR is irresponsible and unaffordable. Likewise, the status quo is unacceptable. It is clear that problems with the physician fee schedule go far beyond the difficulties of the SGR, and Congress needs expert guidance to find solutions.

Congress has become quite proficient at short term solutions to Medicare physician payment problems. Unfortunately, this near-sighted view comes at the expense of other Medicare changes that could directly improve benefits or decrease costs for Medicare beneficiaries. This bill lays out a plan for a permanent solution enabling physicians to count on fair annual payment adjustments. It's better for physicians, patients and the American taxpayer.

Numerous proposals have been introduced to find solutions to these payment problems and such a fix is included in the Senate version of the pending budget reconciliation legislation. The concept of pay for performance is also heavily promoted as a potential solution, though everyone should admit that it would take many years for it to be implemented and prove effective.

I think it's imperative we ask the experts for their recommendations before acting, while at the same time ensuring access is maintained and beneficiaries are protected. The Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act of 2005 will provide the intellectual foundation to enable Congress to enact a thoughtful, permanent solution for the physician reimbursement system by 2008. I urge my colleagues to consider this approach as the best alternative to ensure that physicians are appropriately paid and beneficiaries are protected.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. TRENT FRANKS

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 13, 2005*

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I deeply regret that I was unable to be present on the House floor to cast my vote in favor of H.R. 4297: the Tax Relief Extension Reconciliation Act of 2005. This bill will maintain and expand the low-tax environment that has catalyzed our Nation's now-booming economy. I strongly support this legislation. Please be assured that I would have voted in favor of the legislation had I been present, and I look forward to voting in favor of the conference report.

## ONGOING OBSTACLES THAT MINORITY BUSINESSES FACE IN OBTAINING CONTRACTS

### HON. CYNTHIA MCKINNEY

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 13, 2005*

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, I support the extension of the Defense Department's program ensuring that its Federal contracting process in no way supports or subsidizes the discrimination that has long been a problem in the contracting business. The extension of the program through September 2009 is needed to help achieve that goal.

Congress has learned a great deal about the effects of discrimination in denying contracting opportunities for minority-owned businesses. The ugly reality is that contracting has long been dominated by "old-boy" networks that make it very difficult for African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans to participate fairly in these opportunities, or even obtain information about them.

Years of Congressional hearings have shown that minorities historically have been excluded from both public and private construction contracts in general, and from Federal defense contracts in particular. Since its adoption, the Defense Department program, called the 1207 program, has helped level the playing field for minority contractors. But there is still more to do, as the additional information we have received since the program was last reauthorized makes clear.

Ever since the program was first adopted in 1986, racial and ethnic discrimination—both overt and subtle—have continued to erect significant barriers to minority participation in federal contracting. In cases, overt discrimination has prevented minority-owned businesses from obtaining needed loans and bonds. Prime contractors, unions, and suppliers of goods and materials have preferred to do business with white contractors rather than with minority firms.

These problems affect a wide variety of areas in which the Department offers contracts, and the problems are detailed in many recent disparity studies, including:

City of Dallas Availability and Disparity Study, Mason Tillman Associates, Ltd. (2002);

City of Cincinnati Disparity Study, Griffin & Strong, P.C. (2002);

Ohio Multi-Jurisdictional Disparity Studies, Mason Tillman Associates, Ltd. (2003);

Procurement Disparity Study of the Commonwealth of Virginia, MGT of America, Inc. (2004);

Alameda County Availability Study, Mason Tillman Associates (2004);

City of New York Disparity Study, Mason Tillman Associates, Ltd. (2005).

The 1207 program helps to correct these problems of discrimination without imposing an undue burden on white-owned businesses. Small businesses owned by white contractors are eligible to receive the benefits of the program if they are socially or economically disadvantaged.

All of us benefit when recipients of federal opportunities reflect America's diversity, and I'm proud to support the reauthorization of the 1207 program.

## CONGRESSIONAL GLAUCOMA CAUCUS TRIBUTE TO STANLEY J. BUD GRANT, PRESIDENT & CEO, FRIENDS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL GLAUCOMA CAUCUS FOUNDATION

### HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 13, 2005*

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, several of my colleagues and I voiced our concerns about glaucoma and its devastating affects to Mr. Stanley Grant. What I will present today is the outcome of that encounter. I am pleased to share with this distinguished body the outstanding work of a responsive and caring citizen, Mr. Stanley J. Bud Grant. Mr. Grant is the President and CEO of the Friends of the Congressional Glaucoma Caucus Foundation. His leadership has brought to this endeavor the vision, the energy and the enthusiasm that has led the Foundation to achieve considerable success. As one of the Founding Members of the Congressional Glaucoma Caucus, a non-partisan body, I have observed the work of the foundation, first hand, and have watched the Congressional Glaucoma Caucus grow to more than 80 Members.

The mission of the Foundation is to serve as the action arm of the Congressional Glaucoma Caucus by providing free glaucoma and vision screenings for at risk groups in congressional districts throughout our beloved country. Screenings for diabetes and hypertension, both risk factors for glaucoma, are documented in the family history, with these screenings frequently being incorporated into the screening protocol.

The emphasis has been on glaucoma screenings since this dreaded eye disease affects more than 3,000,000 Americans and is a silent thief of sight. It can attack children, but is more commonly seen in the later years. Far too many of our people go blind from this disease without even knowing they had it. The true tragedy is that their sight could have been preserved if they had been screened and the disease caught in the early stages. Picture if you will, the boundless joy that the patient and the staff experience when sight is saved.

Since 2001, more than 82,000 men and women from all walks of life have been screened. The early signs of glaucoma were detected in 11,500 individuals. Another 13,000

had vision problems other than glaucoma. Equally important was the fact that 57,000 were given the good news that no eye disease was detected.

One outstanding initiative has been the Student Sight Savers Program. Through this project grants have been awarded to 46 medical schools and teaching hospitals across the country. The aim is to expose medical students to a clinical specialty, ophthalmology in their earlier years of medical school. Through this community service initiative, medical students across the country have screened as many as a quarter of the patients.

We, thus bear witness to a man and his dream. A dream we shared. He joined with many of my colleagues, and myself in seeking to preserve the sight of our people. He convinced glaucoma specialists, other experts and a team of volunteers to follow his lead. Mr. Grant also had the unwavering and committed support of his wife, Mrs. Eleanor Beers Grant. She not only lent him encouragement, but she became quite active in the affairs of the Foundation.

In his indefatigable pursuit, he challenges all of us to match his efforts. He is, moreover, sensitive to the cultural strands of our great nation and the need to seek out and care for those who lack health care services. He has taken his staff on mobile vans into what would be considered inaccessible areas.

This great body has honored many a deserving individual. I am extremely proud to offer a special tribute and recognize Stanley J. Bud Grant for all that he has done and will continue to do on behalf of the American people.

#### REBUILDING NEW ORLEANS

### HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 13, 2005*

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, 106 days ago, the world watched as one of the worst natural disasters in the history of the United States came crashing down on our Gulf Coast. I spent much of the last weekend in New Orleans, touring the affected areas and speaking with folks about the recovery efforts.

The effects of the hurricane and its aftermath are eerily similar to natural disasters that in recent years have befallen my home state of West Virginia—floods of the 100-year variety.

Displaced families. Businesses boarded up. A sense of despair and unease in the community. Helpless citizens looking for someone, anyone, to provide some guidance to a sound and quick recovery.

The damage done to the Gulf Coast and New Orleans, in particular, is well documented. But so are the promises made to those residents who call New Orleans home. And those promises have so far gone unfulfilled.

Billions of dollars will be needed to rebuild New Orleans. First and foremost, the levee system, which failed New Orleans' residents in the aftermath of the hurricane, must be upgraded to protect from future 100-year storms. Some estimates put that cost at more than \$32 billion—and many in Washington are balking at the price tag.

My question is this: Can't we afford America? We have spent more than \$300 billion in Iraq and Afghanistan, yet this Republican Congress doesn't have a concrete plan to rebuild New Orleans, or the budget blueprint to do it. We are investing billions of American taxpayer dollars for bridges, levees and infrastructure in Baghdad, yet we can't get a commitment from our leaders to rebuild the levees in New Orleans for Americans. We have enacted tax cut after tax cut—most recently a \$95 billion cut for the wealthiest Americans—yet 78,000 American families displaced by the hurricane are still waiting for FEMA trailers in Louisiana.

And what about West Virginia? Parts of southern West Virginia are still recovering from the major floods of the past five years. Many families displaced by those floods have yet to be able to move back to their homes. And we are still unable to secure the necessary investment from the Corps of Engineers to prevent this kind of flood from ever happening again.

It is long past time to look inward and focus on the many issues confronting Americans in America. The flooding of New Orleans exposed more concerns than just the failure of the levee system. Investment in our schools, health care system, infrastructure and homeland security needs to be high on our list of priorities going forward.

This Administration and this Congress have decisions to make. For the sake of all of us who have been—and will be again—affected by severe flooding, it is my sincere hope that they choose to stand with the American people and invest in the rebuilding of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.

#### TRIBUTE TO GORDY NEWSTROM

### HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 13, 2005*

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Gordon (Gordy) Newstrom, who was a true pioneer and visionary in commercial aviation. A long-time resident of Grand Rapids, Minnesota, Gordy Newstrom passed away yesterday, December 12, 2005, at the age of 93.

After training Naval Air Cadets during World War II, Gordy Newstrom returned to Coleraine, Minnesota to establish a flight school in 1944. That same year, Gordy Newstrom founded a charter airline service which he named Mesaba Airlines, to reflect its Minnesota roots. "Mesaba" is a Chippewa Indian word meaning "soaring eagle." For several years, Gordy Newstrom operated Mesaba Airlines as a Fixed Base Operator, while sharing his love of aviation by teaching aspiring pilots to fly. In 1950, Gordy Newstrom moved Mesaba's operations from Coleraine to Grand Rapids, Minnesota. Gordy Newstrom owned the company for its first 26 years of operation; in 1970 he sold it to the Halverson family of Duluth, who began the airline's first scheduled service in 1973.

Over the years, Mesaba Airlines has evolved into the eighth largest regional airline in the United States, with the distinction of being the nation's oldest regional airline. Although many operators in the aviation industry have come and gone, the airline founded by

Gordy Newstrom celebrated 61 years of continuous service earlier this year. Today, Mesaba Airlines flies to 100 destinations throughout the United States and Canada, through a cooperative agreement with Northwest Airlines.

To honor the many remarkable contributions Gordy Newstrom made to aviation and Northern Minnesota, the region's airport was renamed the Grand Rapids/Itasca County Airport-Gordon Newstrom Field. It was a well-deserved tribute to the founding father of Mesaba Airlines to honor his vision, dedication and determination.

An avid pilot throughout his life, Gordon Newstrom logged more than 40,000 hours in the cockpit, until piloting his last flight five years ago at the age of 87.

I am proud and honored to share with my colleagues this brief, but deserved tribute to Gordy Newstrom, who gave so much of himself to enrich the lives of others and to serve his community and his country.

#### HONORING RON CEFALO

### HON. ROB BISHOP

OF UTAH

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 13, 2005*

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, in this chamber, we often hear rhetoric of great praise for athletes, authors and statesman. With great fanfare we announce legitimate accomplishments. Other times the rhetoric is to trumpet our own actions and plans with grand gestures, receptions and press.

An American humorist, Al Capp, once said, "The man who is not trying to reform the world—will!" Those who truly change our world are those who labor daily, without praise, to create a better life for themselves and those around them.

Today I would like to introduce the body to a man who is changing the world—not by doing something no one else can, but by doing something of which everyone is capable, but few choose to do. This gentleman is changing the world one person at a time.

Ron Cefalo, is a science teacher at Box Elder High School. He was recently recognized for his outstanding efforts in exciting kids on a regular basis to the world of physical science. That by itself is something not easy to do. The Air Force Association, after a rigorous search, first named Ron the AFA Teacher of the Year for Northern Utah. Later he was also chosen from the regional winners as the Air Force Association Teacher of the Year for the State of Utah.

In his 37th year of teaching, Ron can claim such accomplishments as sending two projects into space on the shuttle and coaching an award winning Academic Olympiad Team. Each year Ron takes students to the annual Utah State University Physics Day at Lagoon, an amusement park in Utah, which competitively demonstrates the properties of physics to 5,000 kids from Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming and Utah. Earlier this year Ron Cefalo's group took home seven awards in four different categories. Ron also won first place in the instructor competition for Curriculum Development. Utah State physics professor JR Dennison noted, "Ron has been participating and winning since the inception