

JOURNAL ARTICLE PRAISES VA HEALTH CARE—SECRETARY NICHOLSON: FURTHER PROOF OF VA'S TOP QUALITY CARE

WASHINGTON.—“One of the most striking examples of American health care success”—that is one medical journal's recent assessment of the health care system operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The most recent tribute to VA's health care system came in an article in the medical journal *Neurology*.

“The quality of VA's health care system is recognized by medical professionals and, most importantly, by veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. “Repeatedly, the medical community holds up VA's health care system as a model.”

“The VA has achieved remarkable improvements in patient care and health outcomes, and is a cost-effective and efficient organization,” according to the journal. For example, the article cited VA's comprehensive coverage and said it is especially suited to manage chronic disease.

Dr. Michael J. Kussman, VA's Acting Under Secretary for Health, said the article underscores the Department's commitment to high quality patient care.

“This shows that VA's health system is recognized internationally as the benchmark for health care services,” Dr. Kussman said. “It further demonstrates that our commitment to high quality care is benefiting the men and women who have earned the best possible care through service to our country.”

The *Neurology* article is the second recent study citing the quality of VA health care. In December, a comprehensive study by Harvard Medical School said federal and military hospitals, such as those run by the VA, provide the best care available anywhere for some of the most common life-threatening illnesses.

In 2006, VA received the prestigious “Innovations in American Government” Award from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government for its advanced electronic health records and performance measurement system.

Mr. AKAKA. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator, my friend from Hawaii, for his excellent presentation. I pay tribute to him for his extraordinary work on behalf of the veterans of this country. He has been the real leader in the Senate on this issue, particularly for those who have suffered the wounds of war. He has been a tireless advocate to make sure we get the very best focus and attention to them. We have listened to him frequently. I hope the Senate will pay close attention to his words and his findings and his urging for this body.

I thank him for his comments, as always.

AMENDMENT NO. 71 TO S. 1

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, as I have mentioned before, last year Washington was rocked by the Abramoff scandal and other misdeeds. I am pleased that Congress has shown it is taking seriously its responsibility to the American people by revisiting and tightening the rules and laws that govern Members of the Senate. Many have said that S.1, which overwhelmingly

passed out of the Senate last week, includes the most sweeping ethics reform measures since Watergate.

There is one point that I discussed and pushed forward during last year's debate that I believe needs to again be part of what we are doing now. Last year I offered a sense-of-the-Senate amendment to make many of the reforms we have considered throughout this ethics debate apply to all branches of Government. I am pleased that this sense of the Senate was accepted and is included in the underlying bill.

During the debate last week, I filed an amendment, No. 71, which builds upon the principle behind this sense of the Senate—that the standards employed in this bill should be the minimum standards that guide the other branches of Government. I thought this was a good amendment—in fact, a necessary amendment—that ought to be accepted into this bill. Unfortunately, that did not happen. I have spoken with some of my colleagues and understand that though there is general support for the principle that ethics standards in the executive branch should be as stringent as those made applicable by this bill, some of my colleagues believe the provisions of this amendment warrant further evaluation. Though I am disappointed this amendment will not be included on this bill, I respect and appreciate the importance and value of committee evaluation and will look forward to working on this issue as that committee process proceeds.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I would like to thank my friend and colleague from Nebraska for bringing this amendment and important issue forward. The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs has jurisdiction over these issues which impact the executive branch. As chairman of that committee, I can appreciate that this amendment warrants more thorough evaluation and deliberation. Later this year, the committee will consider the reauthorization of the Office of Government Ethics—the executive branch's ethics arm. I look forward to working with my friend from Nebraska on the issue throughout the year and as we consider this reauthorization and other matters.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. I thank my good friend from Connecticut. I appreciate his thoughtfulness in this debate, and I look forward to discussing it further as his committee proceeds this year.

UNI-CAPITOL WASHINGTON INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, as modern communication makes our world increasingly smaller, linking global societies at unprecedented business, government and social levels, it is critical that America and other democracies worldwide engage in a process of ongoing co-education about the efforts and work of democratic governments. This educational exchange is best facilitated

by hands-on learning and personal experience. A terrific example of this effort is the Uni-Capitol Washington Internship Programme, in which outstanding college students from seven of Australia's top universities compete for the opportunity to serve as interns for Members of the U.S. Congress. In its eighth year, the program has facilitated internships for 68 Australian students thus far.

I am fortunate to be able to participate this year. Charis Tierney from Brisbane, Queensland, has been a wonderful addition to my office this winter. She says of this opportunity:

The UCWIP has been a once in a lifetime to not only observe but participate in the work of the U.S. Congress. Working within Senator Crapo's office has given me the kind of unique appreciation for the United States Senate's work that can only be gained from behind the scenes. My daily interaction with the fantastic staff of the Senator's office has only enhanced the experience.

I offer my congratulations to Director Eric Federling and his wife Daphne for their support and dedication of this important educational program. The additional activities such as visits to historic sites, meetings with other government agencies and outside organizations and special events helps enhance the experience for these promising young women and men. The Federings' commitment to comprehensive bilateral civic education has made it possible for students like Charis to take their experiences here in the legislative branch of the U.S. Government back to Australia and apply lessons learned as they pursue their own course of study across a wide range of academic pursuits.

This valuable program bridges the 9,000 miles that separate the United States and Australia with the friendship of shared experiences and realization and application of common goals and interests.

RECOGNIZING CONNIE FEUERSTEIN

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today in celebration of my longtime friend and staff member, Connie Feuerstein. After working with me for over a decade, Connie has decided to join her husband, Jack, in retirement.

Long before joining my staff, Connie was active in her church, community, and Genesee County politics. Her efforts were critical in my successful campaign for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1996, and I am so fortunate that she was willing to join my congressional staff.

For Connie, her work has always been so much more than just a job. She brings such passion and energy to everything she does. Whether it is attending a community event, walking in a parade or advocating on behalf of a family or for the needs of her community, Connie always gives 110 percent to whatever she is doing.

As a district representative in my congressional offices in Brighton and

Flint and a regional manager in my Flint/Saginaw/Bay office in the Senate, Connie has been my link to the community. She is a respected community leader in her own right. Through the years, she has mentored interns and staff members, many of whom have caught her zeal for public service and have kept in touch with her long after they left the office.

My staff and I will miss her sense of humor, boundless energy, optimism and enthusiasm, although I am certain that retirement will not stop her from staying involved. I also know that many people in Michigan, whose lives she touched through her work, will miss her.

Upon leaving the Senate, Connie plans to spend time in Florida, where she will be closer to one of her daughters and her three precious grandchildren. She has a love for life that is contagious and I know her family will appreciate having more of her time and attention.

Mr. President, I am sad because I am losing a trusted and valued member of my staff, but I am happy to see a dear friend move on to new challenges, and I wish her the best of everything.

RECOGNIZING RICK HUMMEL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor one of our Nation's finest sportswriters, Rick Hummel, and congratulate him on receiving the J.G. Taylor Spink Award, the highest honor awarded by the Baseball Writers Association of America.

The great sportswriter, Red Smith, once said "There's nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and open a vein." He meant, of course, that writing is not easy. Sports writing can be particularly challenging, but when done well it can be some of the best journalistic writing there is. Rick Hummel does it well.

Those who know Hummel best call him the "Commish" a nickname he earned by organizing the newsroom's softball and bowling league teams. Over the years, the moniker has taken on deeper meaning. Today, it serves as a nod to his extensive knowledge of the game of baseball and as a tribute to his venerable career.

Rick Hummel was born and raised in Quincy, IL. He graduated from Quincy High School in 1964, went on to earn a degree from the University of Missouri School of Journalism, and then served in the U.S. Army for 3 years.

Hummel joined the staff of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in 1971. At the Post-Dispatch, he learned the ropes, as many sportswriters do, by covering high school athletics. Hummel was given his first chance to write about the World Champion St. Louis Cardinals in 1973. By 1978, covering the Cardinals was Hummel's full-time job. He spent the next 24 years as a beat reporter and continues to write for the Post-Dispatch as a regular columnist.

Hummel is passionate about baseball, but as a writer he is known for his uncomplicated style and humility, as well as his ability to work with players, coaches, and managers alike.

Hummel was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1980 and the National Sportswriters and Sportscasters Association named him Missouri Sportswriter of the Year on four separate occasions. Now as the 57th winner of the J.G. Taylor Spink Award, presented annually for "meritorious contributions to baseball writing," Hummel will be recognized in a permanent exhibit at the National Baseball Hall of Fame. He joins such legendary sportswriters as Red Smith, Ring Lardner, Grantland Rice, and Damon Runyon.

I congratulate Rick Hummel on this achievement and recognize his accomplishments throughout his long and successful career.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO ERLANGER, KENTUCKY, FIRE DEPARTMENT

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to the city of Erlanger, KY, which is the recipient of the 2006 Award for Municipal Excellence at the National League of Cities' Congress of Cities. This city's Tiered Advanced Life Support System Program for Emergency Medical Services earned Erlanger the Gold Award, which is presented to cities that have a population below 50,000 people. By winning this prestigious award, the Erlanger Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services, EMS, team exhibit the power of hard work as well as their dedication to their community while serving as an example to the rest of the United States.

Since 1989, the goal of the Awards for Municipal Excellence has been to recognize cities that improve the lives of citizens in their communities. These awards identify and feature outstanding city and town programs that show innovation in enhancing the quality of life in America's communities.

The fire department and city of Erlanger recognize the need to have paramedic response and transport capabilities for the safety and welfare of the citizens in its community of 17,000 people. After debating several options, they found a fire service-based EMS delivery model that was affordable and could be enacted immediately. This model provides two cross-trained EMS firefighters on a transport rescue unit, followed by a cross-trained firefighter paramedic in a staff car who can assist and ride in the rescue ambulance with the patient. If the patient does not need advanced life support, the paramedic is ready to respond immediately to the next emergency call. This model delivers the best medical care available and keeps more firefighters on the street to deliver the highest quality fire protection. This joint partnership has made a positive difference in both fire and EMS delivery services in the community of Erlanger.

I congratulate the city of Erlanger, KY, for receiving this Award for Municipal Excellence. By using an innovative approach to address an important community need, they have created this outstanding program. This cut-

ting-edge approach to community emergency response shines as a model for all communities in Kentucky and the United States. This is a true example of Kentucky at its finest and a leadership example to the entire Commonwealth.●

TRIBUTE TO JANE BOLIN

• Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, today I honor the life and legacy of Ms. Jane Bolin.

Jane Matilda Bolin of Queens, NY, passed away on Monday, January 8, 2007 after a lifetime of public service. In 1939, Ms. Bolin was the first Black woman to become a judge in the United States, and she continued to serve honorably on the bench for the next 40 years. Her lifelong dedication to social justice, civil rights, and to the betterment of our American society serves as an inspiration to us all.

A trailblazer in so many arenas, Ms. Bolin pursued her goals in the face of widespread discrimination and prejudice. She was the first Black woman to graduate from Yale Law School, the first to join the New York City Bar Association, and the first to work in the city's legal department. In addition to being a fellow Yale Law graduate, she and I also share the same undergraduate alma mater. Ms. Bolin attended Wellesley College in the 1920s as one of only two Black freshmen. She went on to graduate as a Wellesley Scholar, an honor given only to the top 20 students in her class.

Ms. Bolin's tenacity set a powerful example for the women of my generation. In 1958, she commented on the struggle for women's rights that "we have to fight every inch of the way and in the face of sometimes insufferable humiliations." And Ms. Bolin never stopped fighting. She spoke out against segregation in her native Poughkeepsie. She used her position on the bench to end the assignment of probation officers and the placement of children in childcare agencies on the basis of race. As a family court judge, she heard cases ranging from homicides and battered spouses to child support and paternity suits.

Jane Bolin was truly a remarkable woman.

I offer my deepest sympathies to her son, Yorke B. Mizzle, and to all those whose lives she enriched. My thoughts and prayers are with her family during this difficult time.●

TRIBUTE TO JOHN AND JILL MAHAN

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to John and Jill Mahan, an exceptional young couple from Kentucky who are the recipients of the American Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers National Achievement Award. By winning this prestigious award, the Mahans exhibited an unprecedented passion and skill for farming, beating out competition from across the United States.

The American Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers National