

millions of families, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and individuals in gratitude to this Congress, led by chief sponsor, Representative PATRICK KENNEDY, who have joined forces in a bipartisan manner to help those suffering from mental illness. Today, we tell Americans from all walks of life that we understand that mental illness is just like any physical illness, we understand the difficulties you have been facing, and we are here to end discrimination against patients seeking treatment for mental illnesses.

One out of every five adults in the United States suffers from mental or substance abuse disorders, which according to the Wall Street Journal, cost our economy \$550 billion last year. Of course, treating mental illness is not about dollars and cents. It's about lives which are ruined and lives which are lost. Last year one, more than 30,000 Americans committed suicide from untreated depression and 150,000 Americans died as the direct result of chemical addiction. When people are not properly treated, or not treated at all, our Nation as a whole suffers.

H.R. 6983 permanently reauthorizes and expands the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 to provide for equity in the coverage of mental and substance use disorders compared to medical and surgical disorders. The legislation ensures that group health plans do not charge higher copayments, coinsurance, deductibles, and impose maximum out-of-pocket limits and lower day and visit limits on mental health and addiction care than for medical and surgical benefits. As under current law, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor, and the Internal Revenue Service may penalize health plans for discriminatory practices under the bill and individuals may bring a private right of action to receive covered benefits.

Discrimination on all counts must be eliminated in this country. This bill takes a giant step in the right direction. I am grateful to our leadership for moving this bill which is sure to help millions of Americans.

PAUL WELLSTONE AND PETE DOMENICI MENTAL HEALTH PARITY AND ADDICTION EQUITY ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 23, 2008

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Paul Wellstone-Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act.

This important bipartisan piece of legislation would not have been possible without the vigorous advocacy of the late Senator Paul Wellstone and the continued dedication and commitment of Senator Wellstone's family.

In addition, I want to thank Congressmen KENNEDY and RAMSTAD as well as Senators KENNEDY and DOMENICI. Without their tireless efforts, this bill would not be before us today.

Mental illness and substance abuse affects millions of families across this country.

Without treatment, those suffering from mental illness and substance abuse often struggle to hold a job or make ends meet.

Today, approximately 44 million Americans suffer from mental illness, but only one-third receive treatment.

A key component of this problem is that private health insurers generally provide less coverage for mental illnesses and substance abuse than for other medical conditions.

A 2002 Kaiser Family Foundation study found that, while 98 percent of workers with employer-sponsored health insurance had coverage for mental health care, 74 percent of those workers were subject to annual outpatient visit limits, and 64 percent were subject to annual inpatient daily limits.

H.R. 6983 amends the Employer Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) to prohibit employer group health plans from imposing mental health or substance abuse treatment limitations, financial requirements, or out-of-network coverage limitations unless comparable limitations requirements are imposed upon medical-surgical benefits.

The out of network coverage provisions are particularly important.

Under this provision, if a health plan permits individuals to go to an emergency room for a medical condition without prior authorization; or an out-of-network hospital or treatment center at network rates for a medical condition, then the plan must apply the same rules to an individual suffering from a mental illness or substance disorder.

In addition, the bill does not require group health plans to provide any mental health or substance abuse coverage.

However, if the group health plan does offer mental health and/or substance abuse benefits, there must be equity between mental health and/or substance abuse coverage and all comparable medical and surgical benefits that the plan covers.

As a result, more Americans will be able to access affordable mental health and substance abuse benefits.

Nothing in H.R. 6983 is intended to preempt stronger state mental health and substance abuse parity laws.

The Committee on Education and Labor has analyzed each state's mental health and substance abuse law; it is our understanding and intent that this legislation will not preempt any of these laws.

In other words, a state law that may contain broader or more favorable mental health and/or substance abuse benefit requirements will not be preempted.

Finally, this bill directs the Department of Labor to provide information and assistance to individuals, employers, and states in order to help them comply with the requirements of this law.

H.R. 6983 enjoys broad, bipartisan support.

And, I would particularly like to recognize the dedication and commitment of Paul Wellstone's family to getting this bill passed. We know how important this issue was to Paul and it is in his memory that we take this vote today.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in voting for the Paul Wellstone/Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act.

It is time to end the stigma and provide fair coverage to those in need.

RECOGNIZING THE HONORABLE BUD CRAMER AND THE HONORABLE TERRY EVERETT ON THEIR RETIREMENT FROM CONGRESS

SPEECH OF

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, let me take this means to add my tribute to two fine Alabama Congressmen, BUD CRAMER and TERRY EVERETT. Through the years, I have had the pleasure of working with these outstanding lawmakers. They have been friends to me both personally and professionally. They have exhibited the best of this institution—looking after the interests of the people they represent and ensuring our Nation has a strong economy, strong foreign policy, and strong national security.

They, like I, represent rural areas of our country. There are few of us serving in Congress who have the privilege of representing predominantly small town America. Typically, we rural Congressmen and women bond together on rural matters, working across party lines to ensure the interests of rural America are best represented in the laws we make in Washington. Both BUD and TERRY have worked on behalf of rural people, not only in Alabama but across our country.

BUD and TERRY have also worked for a strong national defense. I have worked with TERRY on the Armed Services Committee, and I have always been honored by his commitment to our men and women in uniform. BUD, too, has been a stalwart supporter of our troops and of the NASA community in Northern Alabama.

While I am sad to see BUD and TERRY leave the House, the institution has been strengthened by their service. I hope they enjoy the next chapter in their lives.

BULLETPROOF VEST PARTNERSHIP GRANT ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 25, 2008

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Speaker, as a proud cosponsor of this bill I urge its approval by the House.

The bill will extend through fiscal year 2012 the highly successful grant program for armor vests for law enforcement officers.

The program was originally established in 1998 through enactment of legislation sponsored by Colorado's Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell. Since then, over 11,900 jurisdictions have participated in the program, with \$173 million in Federal funds committed to support the purchase of an estimated 450,000 vests.

For example, in fiscal year 2007, 60 separate jurisdictions in Colorado received more than \$352,000 to assist with the purchase of 1,883 vests.

And while of course the most vests were purchased by the largest law enforcement

agencies—570 by the city and county of Denver, 344 by the State of Colorado, 131 by Adams County and 45 by El Paso County—the program also assisted many smaller agencies as well, including those in Hinsdale County, Moffat County, Federal Heights, Glenwood Springs, and Durango.

Police officers from across our State have told me the program has been a great success, improving the safety and security of American law enforcement officers and better enabling them to do their job. And while President Bush's budgets have repeatedly neglected to request the full funding authorized for the program, Congress has stepped up and recognized its importance and appropriated the funds needed to keep it strong.

Bulletproof vests are expensive but essential. No officer should be without one and they should be basic equipment made available to officers when we ask them to perform dangerous jobs. If we can afford to pay for training and equipment for Iraqi police—and we indeed are paying for that—I think we can afford to help pay for bulletproof vests for the officers who protect Americans here at home.

So, Madam Speaker, I urge approval of this bill, to renew and extend the authorization for this very important program.

HEALTH CARE SAFETY NET ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 25, 2008

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1343, Health Centers Renewal Act of 2008. This bill fulfills America's promise to its citizens by protecting access to high quality health care.

Health Centers Renewal Act of 2008 will continue Congress's commitment to our Nation's 1,200 community health centers that provide high quality, affordable primary health care to more the 18 million Americans in over 7,000 communities nationwide. Numerous studies have shown that health centers are particularly effective because they remove barriers to care and deliver services in a manner adapted to the patients of individual communities. Health centers improve outcomes and mitigate health disparities, resulting in better health care for their patients and savings for the health care system. In fact, there is evidence that people who get most of their primary care from a health center have 41 percent lower overall health care costs than others, saving Federal taxpayers \$10 to \$17 billion in 2007 alone. The Community Health Centers program has been consistently rated as one of the most effective programs in the Department of Health and Human Services by the Office of Management and Budget.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 1343 will ensure that the millions of Americans who rely on health care centers continue to have access to high quality and affordable health services.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for H.R. 1343.

TRAVEL PROMOTION ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 25, 2008

Mr. FARR. Madam Speaker, as co-chair of the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus and an original co-sponsor of this bill, I am pleased to see The Travel Promotion Act (H.R. 3232) pass the House of Representatives.

This legislation will re-establish the United States as a premier destination for foreign travelers. Since September 11, the United States has seen a decline of more than 46 million overseas travelers costing our economy \$140 billion. This bill will put us back on track.

H.R. 3232 creates a nonprofit corporation to promote the United States to international visitors—this is a public-private partnership with no cost to the American taxpayer. With the current level of the dollar, the United States is a travel bargain and that message needs to get out.

Nearly every developed nation in the world spends millions of dollars to attract visitors, an investment that pays big dividends. Overseas visitors stay longer and spend more. The United States is missing out on a large share of the global tourism market, and we will continue to lose out without this sensible investment.

Another benefit of this bill is the increased person-to-person contact that we will enjoy. At a time when our image abroad is tarnished, this is an opportunity to use our communities to serve as diplomats to the world. There are no better ambassadors than the American people.

I want to thank Congressman BILL DELAHUNT and Congressman ROY BLUNT and for their leadership on this bill.

Additionally, I would like to thank my co-chair on the Congressional Travel & Tourism Caucus, Congressman JON PORTER of Nevada, it has been my pleasure to work with him on his legislation and on many other travel-related issues. His tireless efforts for the travel community and the caucus are truly admirable.

CALLING CARD CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. MARY BONO MACK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 25, 2008

Mrs. BONO MACK. Madam Speaker, I would like to express my opposition to the Calling Card Consumer Protection Act, H.R. 3402.

Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 3402, the Calling Card Consumer Protection Act. This bill—while well-intentioned—would only add to an increase in regulatory confusion because it sets up a system where lateral government organizations will not only be enforcing laws but also issuing their own interpretations of those laws. This is inefficient and it will breed confusion and conflict.

How can we reasonably expect multiple governmental organizations, in this instance the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Trade Commission, to agree on the meaning of a particular statute when members of those individual commissions can't seem to agree among themselves? The truth is we can't and that is why the FCC and FTC dual authority provision should be corrected.

Finally, I recognize that State attorneys general can play a role in enforcing a Federal statute. However, empowering multiple entities with this authority will only force American businesses to spend valuable resources fighting litigation rather than investing in infrastructure, jobs, and consumer services.

Madam Speaker for these reasons I ask that my colleagues oppose H.R. 3402.

EFFECTIVE CHILD PORNOGRAPHY PROSECUTION ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JUDY BIGGERT

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 25, 2008

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong support for H.R. 4120, the Effective Child Pornography Prosecution Act. I am very pleased to be the lead Republican cosponsor, and I thank the gentlewoman from Kansas for all of her hard work on this legislation that will close an unacceptable loophole in the Federal criminal code.

Last year, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit overturned a lower court's decision in *U.S. v. Schaefer* and freed a defendant who had been convicted of receiving and possessing child pornography. The case was not overturned for lack of evidence, but rather because the prosecution failed to prove that images downloaded from the Internet moved across State lines in "interstate commerce."

The judges who decided this case pointed out that the use of the phrase "in commerce" instead of "affecting commerce" in the law signaled Congress' intent to limit Federal jurisdiction in the prosecution of child pornographers. As co-chair of the Missing and Exploited Children's Caucus, I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We in Congress know the horrible consequences that result from the sexual exploitation of children used to create these images. We also take very seriously our duty to do everything in our power to protect children, punish predators and deter future acts of abuse.

That is why the bill we are considering today deserves our full support. It will close the loophole in current law by replacing the phrase "in commerce" with the phrase "affecting commerce" in the child pornography statute.

I also was pleased that the Senate chose to include additional provisions making it easier to prosecute those who willfully access child pornography on the Internet. These changes will give prosecutors the tools they need to ensure that predators who use the Internet to transmit or access child pornography end up behind bars, where they belong.

I would like to take this opportunity to again thank the gentlewoman from Kansas, my good friend, NANCY BOYDA, for introducing this legislation. I also would like to thank the National