

MARKING THE 9TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE START OF THE IRAQ WAR

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2012

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 9th anniversary of the start of the Iraq War. Nine years ago this month, members of the U.S. Armed Forces invaded Iraq in what became one of the bloodiest and most protracted missions in our military's history. Today, our country is still paying the extraordinary price for the nine years in Iraq, both in terms of lives lost and trillions of dollars that could have gone toward nation building here at home.

For many veterans, coming home marks the beginning of another fight—fight for treatment, care, and integration into civilian life. Invisible wounds of war, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, affect one in five veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I also submit an article by Jon Soltz, a former Iraq War veteran, on the need for my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to own up to the promise to care for veterans instead of paying lip service. The title of his article, "GOP Budget Doesn't Even Say The Word 'Veteran,'" speaks for itself.

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GOP BUDGET DOESN'T EVEN SAY THE WORD
"VETERAN"

(By Jon Soltz, Co-Founder of VoteVets.org
and Iraq War veteran)

Do Republicans care about keeping our promise to veterans?

Looking at the recently released GOP budget, written by Rep. Paul Ryan, it's hard to see how they do. In fact, looking at the nearly 100 page document, the word "veteran" doesn't appear once. Not once.

Today is the 9th anniversary of the start of the Iraq War. Last night, I spoke with someone who served with me in Iraq during my first tour. And for the first time in almost nine years, she wanted to talk to me about an incident where she drove through an IED and a soldier was killed. It was a profound moment that shows how war and sacrifice stay with us, always. For those of us who served, in many ways, yesterday is today. And today, we read that the GOP doesn't even talk about veterans in their budget.

But, without saying the word "veteran," the budget tells us a lot about what they think about veterans. The budget calls for across the board spending freezes and cuts. If enacted, the Ryan GOP budget would cut \$11 billion from veterans spending, or 13 percent from what President Obama proposes in his own plan.

It's unconscionable that they'd do this at a time when so many Iraq veterans have just come home and rely on veterans care. Over 45,000 US troops were wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, and more will come who will rely on VA services, on top of veterans of other wars and eras who depend on the VA. But, this shortsightedness isn't new.

Back in 2005, President Bush underfunded the Department of Veterans Affairs by about a billion dollars, despite its need. The result? Secretary Jim Nicholson was forced to crawl before Congress and plead with it to pass emergency supplemental spending, just so it could keep the doors open. After that debacle, I have to admit, I never thought Republicans would do the same thing again, if for

no other reason than that it just looks bad politically, leaving aside the horrible effect it would have on veterans in need.

Additionally, after the backlash against ending Medicare the last time Paul Ryan released a budget, they're at it again. That, too, affects veterans. I was speaking with one veteran in Missouri, who lost both of his legs in Iraq. His entire primary care now relies on Medicare. It pays for all of his primary care, as it does for so many veterans with 100 percent disability. So, no, I couldn't believe that Paul Ryan and the GOP would again propose ending Medicare.

Yet, here we are. A budget from the GOP that short changes veterans, horribly. And where does that money go? Not to reducing the debt. The debt as a share of GDP would actually increase under the Ryan plan. The money doesn't go towards anything, really. But it does go towards some people. As in \$3 trillion in tax giveaways to the richest Americans and corporations. People like Mitt Romney, who already pays a tax rate lower than most of our troops.

That's the choice the Ryan plan presents to America—do we want to fund the wealthiest Americans and corporations, or keep our promise to our veterans? Ryan and the GOP say the former. I can't believe that most Americans wouldn't say the latter.

PROTECTING ACCESS TO
HEALTHCARE ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. MAZIE K. HIRONO

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 21, 2012

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5) to improve patient access to health care services and provide improved medical care by reducing the excessive burden the liability system places on the health care delivery system:

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Chair, this week we celebrate the 2nd anniversary of the Affordable Care Act.

The Affordable Care Act is designed to fix so many of the things that ail our health care system and burden everyday families. The new law has already had a major impact on families in Hawaii.

Senior citizens in Hawaii now have some relief from the high cost of prescription drugs. In 2010, over 24,000 people with Medicare in Hawaii received tax rebates to cover prescription drug costs.

One senior from Waimea on Hawaii Island told me her \$250 Medicare rebate check was "a blessing" in these tough economic times. She was able to use that money to pay for her other medical bills.

In 2011, more than 21,000 people in Hawaii with Medicare saved close to \$7 million on prescription drugs. The "donut hole" gap in coverage will be closed by 2020.

A mother in Kailua told me that because of the Affordable Care Act, she could now add her 21 year-old son and 24 year-old daughter to her work-sponsored insurance plan.

These are just two of the over 5,000 Hawaii young adults who can now stay on their parents' plan until age 26. This Kailua family is now using the thousands of dollars saved on health insurance each year for other household needs, including paying down past medical debt.

The old saying is true, that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Preventive services like mammograms, colonoscopies, and wellness visits can detect problems early and prevent higher costs later.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, nearly all 210,000 Hawaii people with Medicare can now get preventive services without a co-pay or deductible. In addition, 240,000 people in Hawaii with private insurance are now eligible for preventive services—including women's health services such as domestic violence screenings and contraception—without a co-pay or deductible.

The Hawaii Prepaid Health Care Act already covers employees who work for more than 20 hours per week. As a result, a large percentage of our people can get the healthcare they need to stay healthy. We have a low rate of uninsured. And that saves all of us money.

This is why I fought hard to preserve the Hawaii Prepaid Health Care Act in the House bill. I offered an amendment to preserve Hawaii's law and defended my amendment in committee, convincing my colleagues to support my amendment. Then, all of us in the delegation worked together to make sure the final Affordable Care Act law maintained Hawaii's law.

Because of Hawaii's Prepaid Health Care Act, most employers in Hawaii already provide health coverage. The Affordable Care Act makes it easier for Hawaii small businesses by providing tax rebates to help pay for health care costs. Nearly 29,000 Hawaii businesses are eligible for tax credits under the law.

Today I also met with leaders from eight of Hawaii's Community Health Centers. The Affordable Care Act helps fund these 73 health center sites that serve our highest-need rural and underserved communities, especially on the Neighbor Islands and rural Oahu. These health centers care for over 130,000 people and provide nearly 1,300 jobs throughout the state. The message these health leaders shared with me today is that the Affordable Care Act has made a positive difference in the lives of so many.

Given how much the Affordable Care Act is already helping Hawaii, it is unfortunate that some in Congress want to repeal it. Because they can't repeal the law all at once, they have continued to try to de-fund the law or repeal one piece at a time.

Today we're seeing another example of this, with H.R. 5. This bill would repeal the law's Independent Payment Advisory Board, also known as the IPAB.

This board is a panel of experts that will make recommendations so taxpayers aren't paying for unnecessary Medicare procedures. This will save taxpayers billions of dollars, while protecting Medicare patients. The board would not be allowed to recommend any cuts to reimbursement rates that ration or harm patient care. Congress would vote on the board's recommendations, or come up with an alternative that reduces cost growth by more.

In fact, because the Affordable Care Act has already reduced the growth in Medicare costs, the Board's recommendations wouldn't even be triggered until 2022 at the earliest.

I have heard from some medical providers in Hawaii who are worried the IPAB will recommend cuts to their specialty. These providers say they might choose not to see Medicare patients. I can understand their concerns, but here's the thing: Medicare costs are going

up partly because of expensive and sometimes unnecessary procedures. Most members of Congress aren't scientists or health care researchers, so a panel of experts would be better suited to use the best research to recommend reforms. I will vote against a bill to repeal IPAB that doesn't put a better system in its place.

Unfortunately, this week the House Majority released a budget plan (the Ryan Budget) that would end the Medicare guarantee for our seniors. The Ryan Budget would again turn Medicare into a voucher system where seniors would have to purchase private plans. Private plans could deny and delay coverage, without Medicare's consumer protections our seniors get today. Last year's House budget tried this same plan, and the Congressional Budget Office said it would increase costs to people on Medicare by \$6,000 per person starting in 2022.

The bill we're voting on today, H.R. 5, also recycles an old misguided proposal for medical negligence reform. Someone who is harmed by misconduct by a health professional should not be barred from appropriate compensation for a permanent disability or loss of a loved one.

The reality is that most medical providers are doing the right thing. A small percentage of doctors are responsible for over half the medical malpractice cases. We shouldn't be protecting this minority of providers over the rights of patients injured through these providers' negligence. Today's bill would deny justice to those who have been harmed by a small number of medical providers.

Today's bill, H.R. 5, would also hurt states' rights by preempting state medical malpractice laws. A cap on damages for physical impairment, pain, suffering, and even death could not exceed \$250,000, regardless of individual states' existing limits.

Today's bill also extends far beyond medical malpractice. It would also apply to limit patients' rights in all "health care lawsuits," which could include cases against pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers, nursing homes, HMOs, insurance companies, and hospitals.

While proponents of medical malpractice reform argue that frivolous lawsuits are driving up insurance premiums, the fact is, economic studies have shown that medical malpractice payouts are not the cause of higher premiums for consumers. Instead, premium increases are caused by other factors, such as too little competition in the private insurance market.

I urge my colleagues to reject H.R. 5.

On the second anniversary of the Affordable Care Act, we should be fighting to make healthcare more accessible for our people, not less.

Mahalo nui loa (thank you very much).

CELEBRATING THE SERVICE OF
MS. SYLVIA WHEELING OF THE
BALDWIN CENTER

HON. GARY C. PETERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2012

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute Ms. Sylvia Wheeling, Baldwin Center Director of Food Services, on the occasion of

her retirement from the human service agency, located in the great city of Pontiac, Michigan.

A 30-year volunteer at Baldwin Center, Sylvia Wheeling truly epitomizes what it means to be a dedicated servant to the community. In 1981, as a member of the former Baldwin Avenue United Methodist Church, Sylvia was the first person to respond to her pastor's appeal to the church that it reach out to the surrounding community and be a good friend and neighbor. She started by cooking a few meals. Now, some 30 years later, Sylvia manages a kitchen that served more than 65,000 meals to men, women and children.

Baldwin Center has grown significantly during Sylvia Wheeling's tenure there and she has been an integral volunteer dutifully supporting its many programs and services.

As testament to her impact on the lives of many neighbors in the Pontiac community, one person recalled how a man, who was trying on a pair of pants at the center's Clothes Closet, had his size 13 pair of boots stolen from him. Within a half hour, a compassionate Sylvia had driven to a store and purchased a new pair for him.

Another person remembered how Sylvia stayed in the Intensive Care Unit with a homeless woman until her father could be found.

Similarly, others can recite many times when her influential presence defused conflicts, and how even when she had to be stern, Sylvia nonetheless showed grace under fire.

In a December 31, 2009 Oakland Press feature story titled, "Soup kitchen volunteer feels 'blessed'" Sylvia Wheeling said the following: "I am very grateful I could be a part of that. I have been very blessed."

We are very grateful and blessed that she has shared her time, her talent and her treasure with Pontiac, Michigan's Baldwin Center for 30 wonderful years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues join me today in saluting and congratulating, Ms. Sylvia Wheeling, Director of Food Services at Baldwin Center of Pontiac Michigan. We wish her all the best in her well-deserved retirement.

HONORING DANIEL CASAS

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2012

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to interact with some of the brightest students in the 22nd Congressional District who serve on my Congressional Youth Advisory Council. I have gained much by listening to the high school students who are the future of this great nation. They provide important insight into the concerns of our younger constituents and hopefully get a better sense of the importance of being an active participant in the political process. Many of the students have written short essays on a variety of topics and I am pleased to share these with my House colleagues.

Daniel Casas is a freshman at Clear Brook High School in Galveston County, Texas. His essay topic is: Select an important event that has occurred in the past 50 years and explain how that event has changed our country. Daniel chose September 11th, 2001.

An important event that has occurred in the last 50 years was September 11, 2001. September 11, 2001, was a big disaster for the United States of America. Thousands of people died from this tragic event, people were scared when they boarded airplanes, which were the vehicle by which this much of this destruction was brought on the United States of America. Islamic terrorists that were linked to Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda, hijacked four American airliners. The terrorists crashed all four planes into different locations on the east coast of America, two crashed into the World Trade Center towers located in financial district of New York City, one into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, and the final one crashed into a rural field in Pennsylvania. The passengers on flight 93 fought to regain control of the aircraft from the hijackers but did not succeed. More than 3,000 people in total were killed during these attacks. Most of the people killed were located in the World Trade Center. New York Army National Guard units were quickly called up to restore order and provide disaster relief in the wake of this tragedy. At the pentagon, 74 military and civilian personnel were killed. President Bush called approximately 10,000 soldiers up to active duty in Iran. Due to this terrorists act which occurred many American's were enraged and then enlisted in the military to retaliate for what the terrorists had done to our country. In December 2001, more than 17,000 soldiers from reserve components from various home land security functions were called to service. The Department of Defense called this effort "Operation Noble Eagle". Because of what these terrorists did a lot of Americans now refer to all Muslims as terrorists. Due to these events the United States has created more effective metal detectors and improved the security around our airports, ports and other points of entry into the country. The United States was bought together as a nation in this great time of despair.

RECOGNITION OF LYNCH
SYNDROME AWARENESS DAY

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2012

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute and to honor Lynch Syndrome Awareness Day. Lynch Syndrome is a hereditary condition that exposes families to a higher risk of contracting aggressive cancers at a younger than average age.

First identified in 1966 by Dr. Henry T. Lynch, Lynch syndrome is a genetic disorder caused by a mutation in mismatch repair genes MLH1, MSH2, MSH6, EPCAM, and PMS2. Mismatch genes typically protect the body from cancers by repairing the errors in DNA replication, but due to the mutation, those mismatch genes have stopped functioning properly. Consequently, the defective gene causes individuals affected by Lynch Syndrome to sustain a lifetime risk of up to eighty-two percent of developing Colorectal Cancer, sixty-five percent of contracting Endometrial Cancer, nineteen percent Gastric Cancer and a much higher than average risk of contracting many other cancers, most often at a younger than average age.

The only accurate method of diagnosing Lynch Syndrome is through genetic testing and a comprehensive assessment of the family's medical history. To be diagnosed with