

keep hundreds of hospitals, nursing homes, maternity clinics, and primary care providers from closing as this latest round of funding cuts will compound the trillion-dollar loss enacted as part of the 'Big Beautiful' Bill Act (H.R. 1). Provider closures will cause many communities to lose crucial services altogether and will incur job losses of more than 600,000 in the health care sector.

The choices are clear, and on behalf of America's working families, we urge you to vote against the Lower Health Care Premiums for All Americans Act and to join the Jeffries discharge petition.

Sincerely,

JODY CALEMINE,
Director, Government Affairs.

—
AFSCME,
December 16, 2025.

*House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.*

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of the 1.4 million members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), we write to express our opposition to the lower Health Care Premiums for All Americans Act (H.R. 6703), which is scheduled for a vote this week.

At a moment when millions of Americans are facing a looming health care cliff, this legislation fails to address the urgent reality before Congress. Without action to extend the Affordable Care Act's enhanced premium tax credits, families will see sharp premium increases or lose coverage altogether. Instead of advancing meaningful solutions to protect coverage and affordability, this bill puts the health and financial security of millions at risk and would make health care less affordable.

This bill prioritizes the expansion of Association Health Plans (AHPs), coverage arrangements that are exempt from key Affordable Care Act consumer protections. Rather than strengthening coverage, AHPs have a documented history of insolvency, inadequate coverage, and higher out-of-pocket costs for workers and families. These plans allow employers and self-employed individuals to band together outside the ACAs regulated markets and pull healthier individuals out of comprehensive coverage, weaken insurance risk pools, and increase costs for those who remain.

While we appreciate that the bill includes provisions to improve transparency and oversight of pharmacy benefit managers (PBM), these reforms are overshadowed by other provisions that undermine comprehensive coverage and affordability. PBM transparency is important and should be included as part of a broader package to extend the ACA enhanced premium tax credits, not used to advance policies that weaken consumer protections.

Congress already has a clear and workable solution, a three-year, clean extension of the ACA enhanced premium tax credits. This would prevent premium spikes, protect coverage for millions, and provide families with much needed certainty before Congress recesses for the holidays.

AFSCME urges Congress to vote no on the Lower Health Care Premiums for All Americans Act and instead act swiftly to extend the ACA enhanced premium tax credits, ensuring access to affordable, quality health care for millions of Americans.

Sincerely,

ELIZABETH S. WATSON,
Director of Federal Government Affairs.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF HAL SMITH

HON. DARIN LAHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor and remember Hal Smith of Springfield, Illinois, a devoted public servant, respected community leader, and most importantly, a loving husband, father, and grandfather. Hal passed away on December 3, 2025, leaving behind a remarkable legacy of leadership and service.

A proud 1968 graduate of Springfield High School, Hal went on to earn his Bachelor of Arts in Business from Sangamon State University in 1972 and later a master's degree in public administration in 1976. From the very beginning of his career, Hal embodied the best qualities of a servant leader. His work for U.S. Senator Charles H. Percy beginning in 1977, quickly established him as a trusted member of the district team, known for his warm personality, strategic insight, and unwavering commitment to helping others.

In 1984, Hal transitioned to the private sector, beginning a thirty-year career with three global gaming and entertainment companies. His love for history and Illinois heritage led him to serve as executive director of the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition from 2008 to 2010, where he shared lessons of leadership drawn from Abraham Lincoln and other notable Illinois leaders.

After decades of private sector success, Hal announced his retirement, but public service called him back. In 2016, newly elected Congressman DARIN LAHOOD asked Hal to join his district team, where he oversaw operations of the Springfield office. In that role, Hal once again served his community with humility, kindness, and deep respect for the people of Central Illinois.

Always embracing new challenges, Hal left the congressional office in 2019 to become Executive Director for Development at the SIU Foundation at the School of Medicine. His exceptional communication skills and genuine passion for people made him an invaluable asset, earning admiration from colleagues throughout the School of Medicine.

Above all, Hal was grounded by faith and family. He was an active member of Blessed Sacrament Church and the devoted husband of forty-two years to Meg Moore Smith. He was a loving father to Elizabeth Lucin and David Reid and a proud granddad to Madison and Caden. Hal will be deeply missed by all who knew him and will be remembered as the epitome of a servant leader whose faith, character, and dedication to his community will endure for years to come.

CELEBRATING A HISTORIC MOMENT FOR MONTANA COLLEGE FOOTBALL

HON. RYAN K. ZINKE

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Mr. ZINKE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate an extraordinary moment

for not only Montana college football, but for our entire state.

This Saturday, the Montana State Bobcats and the University of Montana Grizzlies will face off in the semifinal round of the NCAA Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) Playoffs, continuing a rivalry that has defined Montana sports for more than a century.

These two programs have met on the gridiron 124 times in the "Brawl of the Wild", a rivalry that began on Thanksgiving of 1897 and is among the oldest and most storied in college football. For decades, the winner of this annual clash has brought home the coveted Great Divide Trophy and united Montanans from across the state in spirited competition and pride.

This weekend's meeting carries even greater significance. For the first time in history, the Bobcats and the Grizzlies will face each other in the post season, the 2025 FCS Playoffs, with a berth in the national championship game on the line.

In the regular season, these teams showed just how closely matched they are. The teams have each been ranked 2nd and 3rd nationally, with Montana State narrowly defeating Montana 31-28 in their November matchup to secure a share of the Big Sky Conference title and home-field advantage. Since then, both programs have continued their playoff runs with commanding performances, dominating the field to set up this historic rematch.

No matter the outcome this weekend, Montanans everywhere will be proud that our state is represented on one of college football's biggest stages. That pride is rooted not just in wins and losses, but in the character of the players and coaches who represent our communities, many of whom grew up pulling calves, floating rivers, and playing pee-wee football right here in Montana. Notably, the Montana teams include a combined 76 Montana high school graduates who are suited up for the semifinals, showcasing the ability of Treasure State communities to develop exceptional student-athletes able to compete on a national stage.

As our state prepares for a weekend filled with camaraderie, friendly rivalry, and spirited support for our teams, I want to extend my gratitude to the athletes, coaches, staff, athletes' parents, and fans who have made this season one to remember. Bravo Zulu on a remarkable journey thus far. Mr. Speaker, I wish them good luck this weekend. Win or lose, Montanans will be watching and cheering them on. I include in the RECORD the names of the players and coaches for the University of Montana and Montana State University:

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA PLAYERS

Monte Gillman, Terahiti Wolfe, Drew Deck, Micah Harper, Brooks Davis, Jeilani Davis, Blake Bohannon, Dane Parker, Ian Finch, Kyon Loud, Prince Ford, Michael Wortham, Malae Fonoti, Kash Goicoechea, Keali'i Ah Yat, Kenzel Lawler, Justus Breston, Jordan Dever, Eli Gillman, TJ Rausch, Cameron Gurnsey, Elijahwah Tolbert, Elijah Brady, Gage Sliter, Brock Beaner, Lekeldrick Bridges, DeAnte Gentry, Korbin Hendrix, Jake Jensen, Kade Boyd, Luke Flowers, Cody Schweikert, Drew Price, Sage Salopek, Stevie Rocker Jr., Rashid Mansour, Diezel Wilkinson, Brady Beaner, Chase Cook, Hashim Jones, Tanner Huff, Kade Cutler, Tommy Running Rabbit, Geno Leonard, Peyton Wing, Taylor Jones, Talen Reynolds,

Grady Walker, Ty Morrison, Garrett Speer, Clay Oven, Caleb Moran, Fynn Ridgeway, Colton Lentz, Giovanni Pifferini, Grayson Pibal, Titus Rohrer, Caleb Otlewski, Jo Silver, Kellen Detrick, Styles Goodman, Isaac Keim, Sam Merriman, Spencer Tripp, Cy Stevenson, Bridger Salveold, Austin Buehler, Hunter Peck, Jake Mason, Solomon Tuliaupupu, Hayden Opitz, Dillon Botner, Lincoln Hoefler, Everett Johnson, Kaikoa Kanakaole, Matt Hilden, Dylan Jemtegaard, Ezra Meyer, Torin Jeske, Cannon Panfiloff, Colin Amick, Quinlan Hyatt, Cade Klimczak, Trevor Steinbach, Tate Templeton, Jose Balver-Mendoza, Patrick Matan, Carter Bowen, Lucas Freitas, Liam Brown, Jammel Ward, Josh Gale, Evan Shafer, Bridger Smith, Weston Adams, Jake Olson, Danny Sirmon, Jareb Ramos, Cooper Buffington, Zekiel Seumalo, Cole Muilenburg, Cole Harpole, Derek Moreland, Logan Knaevelsrud, Hayden Schwartz, Matai Mata'afa, Braydon Bailey.

COACHES

Bobby Hauck, Brent Pease, Roger Cooper, Tim Hauck, Rob Phenicie, Justin Green, Bobby Kennedy, Kim McCloud, Cameron Norcross, Mike Linehan, Dan Ryan, Jimmy Morimoto, Keaton Johnson, Will McFarland, Kent Baer, Alex Gubner, Eric Price, Tanner Sneed, Max Milton, Brayton Boyer.

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

PLAYERS

Takhari Carr, Chris Long, Jhase McMillan, Taki Uluilakepa, Kory Boyd, Jared White, Jacob Trimble, Caden Dowler, Javonte King, Bryant Meredith, River Warren, Tayden Gray, Justin Lamson, Carson Williams, Seth Johnson, Ryan King, Bryce Grebe, Jabez Woods, Kenneth Eiden IV, Maxwell Hendrick, Ryan Bowles, Jordan Reed, Jackson Harmon, Chance Wilson, Taco Dowler, Patrick Duchien, Ife Ohalette, Brendon Ross, Hayden Gunlock, Grant Vigen, Parker Mady, Tim Thomas II, Tom Carter, Neil Daily, Kee Christiansen, Marcus Coleman II, Shanko Kornachuk, Adam Jones, Colter Petre, Nick Seymour, Cale Breslin, Luke Oxarart, Malachi Claunch, Brock Steel, Colson Coon, JJ Dolan, Colby Frokjer, Vinnie Souza, Julius Davis, Mason Dethman, Cole Taylor, Tommy Springman, Zac Crews, Josh Woodberry, Michael Rubich, Myles Sansted, Brody Johnson, Paul Brott, Ryan Krahe, Xavier Ahrens, Jake Vigen, Hunter Parsons, Logan Fredericksen, George Helms, Blaine Downing, Zac Waible, Zack Black, Dalton Noble, Nicholas Maloff, Zac Nyland, JT Reed, AJ Tanupo, Samora Ezekiel, Everett Carr, Dominic Solano, Tommy Nilson, Aiden Kaplan, Dylan Rollins, Burke Mastel, Vaughn Wirkus, Titan Fleischmann, Nate Thornton, Jaren Perkins, Braden Zimmer, Cedric Jefferson, Ben Winters, Jonathan Luhmann, Luvens Valcin, Carter Cocke, Luke Smith, Kash Embry, Dane Steel, Carter Curnow, Hunter Provience, Thomas Buchanan, Rylan Schlepp, Rocky Lencioni, Hunter Sharbono, Seth Brock, Grayson Schneider, Josaiiah Asuega, Major Thornhill, Alec Eckert, Hudson Wiens, Talon Marsh.

COACHES

Brent Vigen, Shawn Howe, Pete Sterbick, Marcus Monaco, Jody Owens, Nick Jean-Baptiste, Sam Mix, Bryan Shepherd, Matt Smith, Jordan Walsh, Josh Firm, Trenton Greene, Jake Dusenbury, Jesse Moser, Sean Chambers, Kianté Goudeau, Derek Griebel.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ADRIANO ESPAILLAT

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, December 17, 2025, I was not able to cast a vote on Roll Call No. 343, H. Res. 953. Had I been able to vote, I would have voted NAY on Roll Call No. 343.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LLOYD DOGGETT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, at the end of a long series of votes today, I missed the final vote on Representative CRENSHAW's misnamed Do No Harm in Medicaid Act, which would prohibit Medicaid from covering gender-affirming care for youth. I would have voted No, just as I did when Republicans proposed this outrageous policy earlier this year.

Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 361, and NAY on Roll Call No. 362.

HONORING TEXARKANA BEING DESIGNATED AS A MILITARY FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

HON. NATHANIEL MORAN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the cities of Texarkana, Texas, and Arkansas, recently designated as a Military Friendly Community.

This is a proud moment for Texarkana, on both sides of the state line. I want to congratulate the Texarkana USA Regional Chamber of Commerce, the cities of Texarkana in Arkansas and Texas, and community partners on this meaningful recognition.

This recognition reflects the deep values of East Texas. For generations, Texarkana has been shaped by the service and sacrifice of the men and women serving our country. Our community has long understood that supporting our military means creating real opportunities, strong partnerships, and a welcoming environment for service members, veterans, and their families.

I am especially proud of the Chamber's leadership in leading this effort and bringing together businesses, employers, and organizations that recognize the skills and leadership our military community brings to the workforce.

Texarkana continues to set an example of what a supportive military community looks like. I am grateful for the commitment to duty and honor that leads our community.

I congratulate them on this important accomplishment. Together, we will continue to stand united in support of those who have served and those who continue to serve our great Nation.

RECOGNIZING JUDGE HERBIE L. SOLOMON

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a distinguished jurist, public servant, and Navy veteran as he retires after over two decades serving as a Juvenile Court Judge in Dougherty County, Georgia. A community event to celebrate his retirement will be held on December 30, 2025, in Dougherty County.

Originally from Milledgeville, Georgia, Judge Solomon is a graduate of J.F. Boddie High School, and he received his Bachelor of Science in History from Tuskegee University with honors in 1972. He was awarded a Juris Doctor from The National Law Center, George Washington University, in 1975, before earning the Master Advocate from the National Institute of Trial Advocacy, Emory University, College of Law.

After law school Judge Solomon served in the United States Navy as a Judge Advocate General at NLSO San Diego, California from 1976 to 1980, as defense and prosecuting attorney in over 300 Special and General Court Martials. He continued his military service in the Naval Reserve until the year 2000 when he retired with the rank of Commander.

Judge Solomon is an attorney who has fulfilled many legal roles in service to others. From 1980 to 1994 he served as Senior Staff Attorney with the Georgia Legal Services Program, a nonprofit organization that provides free civil legal help for low-income people and seniors. In this role he was able to practice law throughout Southwest Georgia and help countless families in need. He also taught Military Justice NROTC at Morehouse College, has served on the State Supreme Court Committee for Justice for Children, has been a lecturer on legal trial advocacy, and has argued several cases before the Georgia Court of Appeals. In December 1999, he was appointed as the Juvenile Court Judge of Dougherty County and was appointed as Dougherty County's first full-time Juvenile Court Judge in July 2005, where he currently serves today.

Judge Solomon is a member of Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church where he serves as a trustee. He is a member of the National Bar Association, American Bar Association, National Naval Officers Association, and past president of The Criterion Club of Albany, Georgia, charter president of Albany Midtown Optimist Club, and past board member at the YMCA. He previously coached youth basketball at the local YMCA, helping his teams capture three state championships.

Former Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm once said that "service is the rent we pay for the space we occupy on this Earth." Judge Herbie L. Solomon has paid his rent and paid it well. Whether he was serving our country in the U.S. Navy, providing free legal services to Georgia families, or teaching in the classroom, or presiding at the bench, Judge Solomon has consistently served others and worked to uplift humankind.

Judge Solomon has accomplished so much throughout his life, but none of it would have been possible without the grace of God and the love and support of his late wife, Jean Wright Solomon, and his two children, Tamara and Herbie Solomon, Jr.