

patient "case-mix"—or level of patients with similar conditions (from minor to severe). Therefore, it is hard to believe that high costs must be protected by the current IPS agency-specific formula when VNAs and other cost-efficient agencies provide high quality care to diverse populations at less than national average costs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in restoring home health care equity by cosponsoring this important legislation.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 26, 1998

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, March 25, 1998, I was granted an Official Leave of Absence to attend a family funeral.

As an elected Representative of Wisconsin's Fourth Congressional District, I have responsibility to my constituents to inform them of the votes from yesterday and to apprise them of how I would have voted.

The following indicates how I would have voted on Rollcall Votes Nos. 68, 70 and 71.

Rollcall No.	Bill No.	Position
68	H.R. 2589 (McCollum Amdt.)	No
70	H.R. 2578 (Pombo Amdt.)	Yes
71	H.R. 2578	Yes

The outcome would have been no different on any of these votes if I had been present.

#### RESTORE FAIRNESS TO MEDICARE'S HOME HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

### HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 26, 1998

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I am joining with my good friend and colleague, Rep. MIKE PAPPAS, in introducing legislation to restore fairness and equity to the Health Care Finance Administration's (HCFA's) new Medicare reimbursement program for home health care.

This new Medicare reimbursement program, known as the "Interim Payment System" (IPS), is based on an incomplete and inequitable funding formula which directly jeopardizes home health care agencies and the elderly who serve in my state.

The value of home health care is obvious. All of us intuitively know that enabling our seniors to receive quality, skilled nursing care in their own homes is preferable to other, more costly, sometimes isolated, settings. Senior citizens receive the peace of mind from familiar settings and their loved ones close at hand. And the cost savings to Medicare from proper use of home health care are considerable.

The legislation we have introduced today corrects several flaws contained in the IPS formula and assures fair and reasonable Medicare reimbursement for quality home health care. This bill is a good complement to another legislative effort (H.R. 3108) I am sup-

porting with fellow New Jersey Representative JIM SAXTON. The Pappas-Smith bill is more targeted and limited in scope, focusing on equity issues between home health care agencies, while H.R. 3108 is broader in application and primarily deals with providing more resources to all home health agencies.

One thing that both bills address, however, is the need to reform the IPS. If left unchanged, the IPS will cut Medicare reimbursement for home health care in New Jersey by \$25 million in fiscal year 1998 alone. Several agencies in New Jersey could lose \$2 million or more in anticipated reimbursement for homebound Medicare patients.

One of the most unfair aspects of the IPS is that it seeks to treat efficient and inefficient home health agencies alike, despite the fact that average utilization rates in New Jersey's agencies—43 visits per beneficiary served in 1996—are far lower than the national average of 74 visits that year.

Because the IPS reimbursement rates for each home health care agency are linked to earlier utilization rates and costs, agencies that were efficient and honest all along still find themselves struggling to squeeze another 12 to 15 percent reduction in aggregate reimbursement rates from already lean operations—a very tall order indeed. Meanwhile, agencies in other parts of the country with abnormally high home health costs and utilization rates are permitted to use base year utilization rates that were badly inflated in the first place. Thus, they will continue to receive high reimbursement rates because they had inflated costs in the past. The IPS, therefore, effectively punishes efficient operations and does not comprehensively address the problem in areas with inordinately high home health utilization statistics.

For example, home health agencies serving senior citizens in NJ will only receive enough funding to provide as few as 30 to 35 visits per patient. Meanwhile, agencies in other parts of the country—such as Tennessee and Louisiana—may continue providing their patients with almost triple that number of visits at twice the cost per visit. Disparities of this magnitude are inherently unreasonable and unfair, and must be corrected.

There is no reason whatsoever why the senior citizens of New Jersey should receive less quality care than senior citizens of any other state. While I understand that special circumstances in other states and counties will always generate some variation in home health care usage, the disparities that are enshrined in the IPS are simply absurd. Are Louisianans and Tennesseans that much sicker or that much more frail that they need to receive 100 or more visits per person? And how can the costs of treating these patients in other states be significantly higher than New Jersey? The wage rates and cost of living indexes in many of these high utilization states are among the lowest in the entire nation. Senator JOHN BREAUX stated that in Louisiana, there are more home health care agencies than there are McDonalds restaurants. Clearly, something is amiss.

In response, our bill—which we have strived to craft in a budget neutral manner—restores fairness and equity to the Interim Payment System in the following ways:

First, our bill will protect efficient home health agencies from drastic cuts in Medicare home health reimbursement through the IPS.

Under our legislation, we provide relief from the Interim Payment System for those home health care agencies whose average cost per patient served, as well as their average number of visits per patient, are below the national average. In this manner, agencies that have been doing a good job in keeping their cost structures under control will not be punished for their own best efforts.

The second provision contained in our bill restores the per visit cost limits for home health agencies to their September 1997 levels. The reason for this change is based on an assessment that unless this change is made, it will be virtually impossible for home health agencies to reduce their average number of visits per patient, and still live within their cost limits.

The provision is a matter of basic math: if an agency is to reduce its average number of visits per patient—as HCFA demands—it must do more with each visit. However, if an agency fits more activities and services into each visit, then by definition its costs per visit are going to rise significantly. So while the number of visits per patient will fall, its costs per patient will rise to some extent, because more services are being performed in an attempt to make the most out of each home health visit.

Under our bill, home health agencies will reduce their visits per patient and still operate within realistic per visit cost limits. HCFA's per visit cost targets, upon close examination, are unrealistic and will not allow home health agencies to accomplish the goal of more efficient home care.

Lastly, our legislation will give the Secretary of Health and Human Services the flexibility to make special exceptions for home health agencies treating unusually expensive patients. Among the problems with the IPS is that as initially implemented, the IPS gives providers a perverse incentive to avoid treating critically ill, chronic, or more expensive patients. Unlike a fully implemented prospective payment system (PPS), the Interim Payment System (IPS) makes no attempt to distinguish between agencies that are simply inefficient and agencies that are treating a disproportionately sicker patient population. Our legislation creates a mechanism for financially pressed home health care agencies to address and care for unusually expensive patients.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is balanced and carefully crafted to make improvements to the Medicare Interim Payment System. It is designed to be budget neutral. It will enable our senior citizens to continue to receive high quality, medically necessary home health care services. It also will appropriately target federal efforts to reduce waste and fraud in the Medicare program. I urge all of my colleagues to consider this legislation and support our efforts to protect the homebound Medicare patients who are now at risk.

#### HONORING THE JEWISH HERALD-VOICE

### HON. KEN BENTSEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 26, 1998

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Jewish Herald-Voice as it celebrates 90 years of uninterrupted weekly publication on April 1, 1998. Established in 1908,

The Jewish Herald-Voice has a rich tradition of serving and reflecting the pride of the steadily growing Jewish communities in the Greater Houston and Gulf Coast areas.

Published weekly, plus two annual holiday magazines for Passover and Rosh Hashanah, this award-winning publication is read by almost every Jewish household in the area. Besides covering national and international news and events from over 90 local Jewish organizations, the Herald publishes monthly specialty pages for the Greater Southwest Houston Chamber of Commerce, seniors, parents of young children, party planners, plus weekly pages devoted to business, medical issues, singles, food, arts, and entertainment.

Three families have been responsible for this exceptional continuity; founder, Edgar Goldberg—1908–1937; David H. White—1937–1973; and Joe and Jeanne Samuels—1973–present. Not only is this the 90th anniversary of the paper, but also Joe and Jeanne Samuels' 25th Anniversary as owners and publishers of The Jewish Herald-Voice.

Ninety years ago, Edgar Goldberg envisioned a newspaper that would reach everyone in Houston's diverse Jewish community, crossing denominations, transcending organizational boundaries and providing a platform for every Jewish citizen regardless of affiliation. Goldberg started with a circular, the Houston Jewish Bulletin in 1907; then in 1908, the first edition of The Jewish Herald began publication.

In 1914, appealing to Jewish communities statewide, Goldberg created an advertising slogan—"Texas News for Texas Jews"—and changed the paper's title to The Texas Jewish Herald. Throughout the prosperous years of the 1920s, The Texas Jewish Herald grew in circulation and content. The Great Depression struck the Herald hard and Goldberg was forced to scale the paper back to four pages from its usual eight. The paper was his livelihood and as long as the U.S. Postal service would cooperate, he was determined to carry on. In 1933 Goldberg grew weary at fighting the battle to keep the paper afloat. While deciding to put the paper up for sale, Goldberg was diagnosed with cancer. Sadly, he died in 1937, 29 years after his first edition of the Herald went to press. Goldberg's wife, Esther, maintained control of the paper for several years but she, too, grew weary from the effort from the effort and agreed to sell.

The chain of weekly Jewish Heralds continued unbroken when David H. White, publisher of the recently established Jewish Voice in Houston, purchased The Texas Jewish Herald. Preserving the name of both publications, White continued Goldberg's legacy, renaming the paper The Jewish Herald-Voice. Throughout the 1940s the Herald-Voice continued to grow as White instituted additional columns and special holiday editions, creating a reflection of the times.

In 1972 when David White died, his wife, Ida Schwartzberg White, who worked by his side throughout the years, stepped up to edit and publish the Jewish Herald-Voice during the remainder of the year. Shortly thereafter, she sold the highly successful D.H. White Company printing plant and began to search for a successor to continue publishing the Jewish Herald-Voice.

A casual conversation with a neighbor prompted Joseph W. Samuels to telephone Murray White, David White's youngest brother

and part owner of the Jewish Herald-Voice. In April of 1973, Joe and his wife Jeanne F. Samuels purchased the 65-year-old paper. It was a dream come true for Joe, whose father, Morris Samuels, a printer in Dallas, had planned to begin his own Jewish newspaper.

What Joe Samuels and Jeanne purchased 25 years ago was the name and reputation of a 65-year-old weekly newspaper, a mailing list of less than 3,000 subscribers, its payables and receivables, together with archives, a typewriter, two desks, two chairs and two filing cabinets. Over the past 25 years, they have nurtured the paper, more than doubling the number of subscribers and increasing its size from 8–12 pages to 36–80 pages.

Since 1994, when the Jewish Herald-Voice entered its first newspaper competition, it has received various awards each year. The Herald-Voice has received award recognition from the Texas Press Association, Gulf Coast Press Association, and the American Jewish Press Association, as well as honors from local Jewish agencies and organizations. Most recently, in 1997, the Herald received two awards from the American Jewish Press Association: first place for Excellence in Special Sections covering "Educational Alternatives: Where Do They Go From Here?" and second place for Excellence in Overall Graphic Design.

The Herald-Voice continues to grow and constantly endeavors to broaden its scope and appeal for readers and advertisers, alike. It is comforting to know, that the next generation, the Samuels' daughter, Vicki Samuels Levy, who has headed the advertising department for many years and knows the operation of the paper, is destined to take the reins one day as owner and publisher of the Jewish Herald-Voice.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Jewish Herald-Voice on 90 continuous years of excellence in journalism and the current owners and publishers, Joe and Jeanne Samuels, who have successfully continued the founder's dream. Ever since it was established in 1908 by Edgar Goldberg, the Herald has upheld the promise of remaining the voice of the Jewish community of Greater Houston and the Texas Gulf Coast.

#### TOWN OF ONONDAGA CELEBRATES BICENTENNIAL

##### HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 26, 1998*

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, as a newly born nation expanded and grew two centuries ago, townships in America sprouted amidst the excitement and despite great obstacles. Such a town was mine, the Town of Onondaga, which this week celebrates its 200th Birthday.

Although many of the festivities will occur this summer, culminating with a Bicentennial Parade on August 15, many are focused now on the Annual Dinner Dance April 4.

I would like to thank the entire Town of Onondaga Bicentennial Committee for their important and historic work. I would ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating this fine group of civic leaders for their dedication to preserving the history which guides us into our future.

They are: L. Jane Tracy, town historian and co-chair; Thomas Andino, Jr., town supervisor and co-chair; David and Cathy Hintz; Ken Pienkowski; Gwynn Morey; Beatrice Malfitano; Mr. and Mrs. Willie Royal; Bonnie Romano; Gary and Karen Livent; Suzanne Belle; Mary Ryan; Charles Petrie; Donald Hamilton; Dorothea Schmitz; Leo Kelly; Margaret Chesebro; Jeanne Tanner; and Dan Willis.

On a related note, I am very proud to be one of three Onondaga residents in town history to have represented Central New York in Congress. The others included my father, William F. Walsh, and one of the first settlers, James Geddes, who also served as Town Supervisor in 1799.

I am pleased also to mark this memorable time for us in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, in addition to presenting a United States flag to town leaders in a ceremony April 2.

Together, these people named today, joined by our fellow residents, thank God for our freedom, our country and our homes—just as we pray that we will impress on the next generation the importance of what our ancestors accomplished and the magnitude of the task. Only from history will we learn.

#### RECOGNIZING AUGUST KNISPSEL

##### HON. MICHAEL PAPPAS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 26, 1998*

Mr. PAPPAS. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, March 21, 1998, residents from Franklin Township in Hunterdon County, New Jersey will honor one of the area's political legends at a testimonial dinner. For 31 years August Knispel has served the residents of Franklin Township as their Mayor and as a member of the Township Committee.

Mr. Knispel, the son of German born parents that immigrated to America, is a living example of the American Dream come true. He grew up on his parents farm in Franklin Township raising and selling ducks to make extra money during the depression at the age of seven. It was not too long thereafter that August became an active hand in the family farm which itself has become an area landmark.

In 1963, Mr. Knispel made his first run for Township Committee. The election ended in a tie that ultimately was decided in favor of his opponent. Not one to be discouraged, Mr. Knispel entered the race a year later and was successful. His election to the Township Committee that year began the first of 11 more victories. During his years of service, Mayor Knispel has been a leader in agricultural and open space issues.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the residents of Franklin Township and Hunterdon County in thanking August Knispel for dedicated service to his community. For almost a generation Mr. Knispel has dedicated a tremendous amount of his time and effort to serving the needs and addressing the concerns of Franklin Township. Saturday night's dinner is just a token of the well deserved recognition that is appropriate in thanking him for his service.