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HEALTH CARE IN RURAL AMERICA

HON. TERRY L. BRUCE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 8, 1987

Mr. BRUCE. Mr. Speaker, this year Congress began work in reviving the health care delivery system in rural areas. But we have some hard work ahead of us. A 1986 study conducted by the University of Illinois School of Public Health and the American Hospital Association's Data Center indicated that a total of 83 hospitals closed last year. Over 50 percent of these were in rural areas. The total bed loss among closed rural hospitals was 106 percent higher than in 1985. In addressing rural health care issues we must ask why rural hospitals are in such dire straits.

Mr. Speaker, my experience in the 19th Congressional District of Illinois has brought into focus a few basic facts. First, rural hospitals face lower reimbursement rates from Medicare. In fact, payments under PPS are both inequitable and inadequate. On equity, rural hospitals are paid 17 percent less than their urban counterparts. On adequacy, I would point out that since 1984 the hospital's market basket has risen 12.5 percent while the rate of Medicare hospital reimbursement has increased by only 5.5 percent. Second, rural areas face greater difficulty in attracting physicians and other health care professionals for reasons that include high levels of uncompensated care and high proportion of Medicare and Medicaid patients. In addition, rural hospitals often do not have the resources to

furnish all the medical equipment that physicians need to provide the quality of care that patients have come to expect. Third, the impact of hospital closings in rural areas extends beyond the loss of inpatient hospital services. Hospitals are often the second or third largest employer in a rural area and are a hub of economic and community activity. As much as 60 percent of a hospital's total outlays are dedicated to payroll and for each dollar that is earned by a rural hospital that dollar is spent between 1.5 and 3 times in that rural community.

A recent editorial by Professor Anthony R. Kovner in American Health Association News identifies six factors which contribute to rural hospital closures. The factors identified by Kovner mesh with my experiences in downstate Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I believe that all us concerned with the plight of rural hospitals will find this article to be of interest and would, therefore, like to include this article in the RECORD.

RURAL CLOSURES GO BEYOND PAYMENT—AND INTO THE TROUBLES OF RURAL LIFE

(By Anthony R. Kovner)

A 1986 study, conducted by the University of Illinois School of Public Health and the AHA's Hospital Data Center, indicated that a total of 83 hospitals closed last year, with 52.1 percent of those hospitals located in nonmetropolitan areas. Total bed losses among closed rural hospitals were 106 percent higher last year than in 1985.

Why do such rural hospital closures seem to continue unabated? Identifiable threats include:

Demographic factors. A low population density, worsened by the emigration of the younger population in search of employment in larger communities, results in a higher proportion of elderly people remaining in rural communities. This elderly population is known to absorb a significant amount of health care services. A weak farm economy also decreases local tax bases and increases the proportion of rural Americans who lack adequate health insurance.

Utilization factors. Overall utilization of inpatient services in rural areas continues to decline, while those same services are increasingly utilized by the elderly who are covered by decreasing Medicare reimbursement. Consequently, rural hospitals reach base levels of fixed costs with high costs per case and low net operating margins.

Greater competition. Urban hospitals' solutions to declining utilization have included market expansion to adjoining rural areas, from which urban facilities attract mostly the younger population; access to urban hospitals often is difficult for the elderly, the poor and their families—who constitute a high proportion of the rural population and who are in greater need of services. These groups then tax rural facilities' resources.

Reimbursement changes. Although a large percentage of elderly patients utilize the acute care services available in rural hospitals, rural facilities are reimbursed at lower PPS rates than are their urban counterparts; also, rural hospitals do not usually benefit from teaching-facility adjustments to DRG payment.

Insufficient physician supply. Rural communities continue to experience difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified physicians (mostly generalists and family practitioners). Although the total number of U.S. physicians may be sufficient—or more than sufficient—for the nation, there are shortages in many rural areas.

Technological changes. The rapid technological advancement in many areas of medical practice sometimes renders rural health care practitioners and rural hospitals technologically obsolete. Too frequently, facilities, equipment and training are no longer adequate to compete with those at urban hospitals.

There is no one strategy or solution to these problems. But policymakers must realize that rural hospitals have fewer resources than do their urban counterparts to adapt to change—and many needed rural facilities may require emergency governmental financial support to survive.

Anthony R. Kovner is a professor at New York (City) University's Graduate School of Public Administration and director of the Princeton, NJ-based Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Hospital-Based Rural Health Care Program.

BOB DOLE'S PROBLEM

HON. LOUIS STOKES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 8, 1987

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, November 15, 1987, the New York Times published an article written by Anthony Lewis entitled, "Bob Dole's Problem." Mr. Lewis is regularly featured on the editorial pages of the Times in his "At Home Abroad" column.

Mr. Lewis' article represents a sensitive discussion of political realities in South Africa and the impact of these realities on our electoral politics. I would like to bring Mr. Lewis' article to the attention of my colleagues in the Congress. The article follows:

[From the New York Times, Nov. 15, 1987]

BOB DOLE'S PROBLEM

(By Anthony Lewis)

BOSTON.—Senator Robert Dole is a formidable candidate for President: sensible, knowing in the ways of Washington, a conservative who has no time for the fantasies of Reaganomics. He has shed the meanness of the past, showing us instead a man with compassion for the dependent and rejected in society.

But when he formally announced his candidacy last week, there was one sour note, small but irritating. In Iowa, the first key state, television advertising and protesters waving signs objected to his position on South Africa, in particular his support for President Reagan's veto of economic sanctions last year.

Senator Dole was angry. "There's not a racist bone in my body," he said. I am sure he means that. But he has a problem here, a serious one. It is a problem of perceived insensitivity.

Not just on sanctions, but on a series of African issues, Senator Dole has lined up with the extreme right. He joined Jesse Helms in holding up the nomination of a new American ambassador to Mozambique as a way of pressing the Reagan Administration to deal with Renamo, the South African-supported guerrillas who carry out mass murders in Mozambique.

Last summer, in a letter to a Kansas constituent, Senator Dole denounced the African National Congress of South Africa, the outlawed anti-apartheid organization. He said the A.N.C. "espouses 'necklacing,'" the gruesome practice of killing suspected Government spies in the black townships by putting burning tires around their necks.

The constituent sent me the letter. I wrote and asked Senator Dole what the basis was for his statement: Could he please cite an official A.N.C. document or statement that "espoused necklacing"?

Various spokesmen for Senator Dole promised an answer to the question but did not provide one. Finally, last week, a spokesman produced a reply. But it did not cite an official A.N.C. position urging necklacing.

The horror was in fact carried out by angry youths in the townships, not by any A.N.C. policy. There has been no A.N.C. statement espousing necklacing. Winnie Mandela, wife of the imprisoned A.N.C. leader, spoke once of liberating the country "with our necklaces," but she does not speak for the A.N.C. Oliver Tambo, its president, in an anti-apartheid meeting in Zimbabwe in September called for an end to necklace killings.

The point of all this is not just that Senator Dole made a rough accusation that he could not back up. It is that he dealt with the A.N.C. and the whole South African situation as a matter of cheap domestic politics. He showed gross insensitivity to a problem that is tragic in human terms and dangerous in international affairs.

"More than any other organization the A.N.C. represents the aspirations of most of South Africa's blacks." That statement was made by *The Economist*, the conservative British weekly. Virtually everyone knowledgeable about South Africa agrees. That is why Secretary of State Shultz met Mr. Tambo this year. It is why the South African Government itself has toyed with approaches to the A.N.C. There can be no solution without it.

Beyond that reality there is the deeper truth of Reaganism in South Africa. Black groups, of which the A.N.C. is the oldest, were all peaceful for many years. But they saw blacks killed by the Government, tortured, banned, imprisoned, moved from their homes by the millions. They had no vote, no voice. In the end, they turned to guerrilla activity.

To talk about black protest and violence in South Africa without reference to what brought it on—the long history of official white violence and oppression—is grotesque. How would Bob Dole feel if he and others like him were victims of a political system that deprived him of the most elementary rights for one reason only: his color?

Senator Dole said recently in an interview that "right-wingers who don't want the [Republican] Party to grow, so they kept out the blacks and those kind of folk, probably aren't going to be for me." But he is playing for the support of that extreme right with what he does on Africa.

In today's Republican Party, the radical right has enormous influence in choosing the nominee. But after being nominated it is necessary to be elected—and to govern. Bob Dole understands those realities as well as any politician. But he is not practicing that wisdom when he alienates blacks and others who care about Africa.

A TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE HAROLD WASHINGTON

SPEECH OF

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 2, 1987

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, death always leaves in its wake a seemingly insurmountable void, much heartache, and great confusion.

We are never prepared for it, but must endure its consequences. I am sure that all of my colleagues joined here today to pay tribute to the Honorable Mayor Harold Washington will agree that his passing has left the city of Chicago and this country in deep sorrow.

I heard and read many statements and public tributes paid to Mayor Washington last week and the consistent theme from all speakers noted his ability as a true public servant and a great political leader. He was able to overcome great odds by creating a feeling of cohesive unity in the city of Chicago, breaking down the longstanding chasms that has evolved over the long years of machine domination in that city.

His prowess as an intelligent, effective leader had its foundation in his early exposure to the political process as a steward for his father, who was the South Side Democratic precinct captain. Even as a young politician, Harold Washington was able to build solid coalitions from factional groups. Always working for the good of his constituents, his base of support continued to grow as he won seats in the State house and senate and the U.S. Congress.

I had the good fortune of working with Harold in this House. I am sure that most of my colleagues who had the same good fortune would agree that his foresight as a legislator was unbounded. He championed the successful effort to preserve key features of the 1965 voting rights act, which was vehemently opposed by the Reagan administration.

Today, all around the country, we can see the positive effects of the move by Congress to protect and continue enforcement of voting rights. The power of the black vote was first realized in Chicago, during Harold Washington's bid for mayor. It was successful voter registration drives and massive organization of the minority community that helped him over the top. Harold's success in Chicago then became a role model for other voter registration drives around the country. The success of which can be measured by the Democratic U.S. Senate and increased number of black elected State and local officials.

As is the case for most great African-American leaders, Harold Washington had to be greater than great and stronger than strong. He was both of these things and more. He won his fight against the organized self-serving establishment, and returned city hall to the people of Chicago.

Last week, the city of Chicago and America lost one of its greatest political leaders and public servants of our time. The unfortunate and unexpected death of Mayor Harold Washington touched the pulse of America, particularly in its black community.

His strength and conviction can never be replaced, however, we must do all in our power to keep his legacy alive. We must tell our children about him, and our children must tell their children. Too often the history and good deeds of African-Americans fall deaf on the ears of our historians. It is our duty to carry on the tradition. It is our duty to keep our heroes alive.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE POOR

HON. JAMES J. FLORIO

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 8, 1987

Mr. FLORIO. Mr. Speaker, the state of education in the United States today has not reached out to all the children who are in need.

At a recent conference, Owen Butler, the former chairman of Procter & Gamble, and Ernest Boyer, the president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and past Commissioner of Education, addressed the crisis in education. Indeed, as Mr. Butler and Mr. Boyer indicate, our educational system is neglecting a core group of poor children from the inner cities and rural areas alike.

Across the Nation, an estimated one-fourth of all children are living in poverty. In urban areas, poverty becomes more pronounced with the needs of half of those children not being met.

One of those unmet needs is education. Without a proper education, the future of these children is not as bright as it could be.

If the fullest potential of these children is to be realized, the Nation must accept the challenge of providing educational opportunities creatively.

Addressing the lack of opportunities in their report, Mr. Butler and Mr. Boyer have drawn up recommendations to improve the educational opportunities available to all children in the Nation's schools but particularly for the neediest of the children.

Included in the trade bill, currently in conference between the House and the Senate, and in the education reauthorization bill are provisions, which I crafted along with Congressman PAT WILLIAMS and Senator BILL BRADLEY, establishing a more effective Federal role in education at the secondary school level for disadvantaged students.

This particular aspect of the trade bill funds basic skills programs in secondary schools, improving the level of education for millions of children in our secondary schools. In the past, secondary schools have received only 12 percent of all Chapter I funding for the disadvantaged.

As the inclusion of these provisions in the trade bill suggests, education, is, in part, a matter of competitiveness.

However, education is more than a matter of competitiveness. Rather, without the essential educational foundations, these needy children will go without realizing their own potential for success and a better life.

The time has come for creative approaches in the improvement of education for our nation's children. Avenues exist for both the Federal government and the community to become more involved in education. With funding for basic skills programs in secondary schools, millions of disadvantaged children in our nation's high schools will have an opportunity to learn what they would not have had the chance to learn otherwise.

I am including below an article from the New York Times describing the findings and the recommendations of "Children in Need," the report by Mr. Butler and Mr. Boyer: