



7th Congressional District News House Approves Respite For Caregivers Bill

Representative Mike Ferguson

WASHINGTON - The House on Wednesday last week approved bipartisan legislation written by Rep. Mike Ferguson, R-N.J., District 7, to help 50 million family caregivers - including 900,000 in New Jersey - who provide daily care for loved ones with disabilities, chronic conditions or illnesses.

The Lifespan Respite Care Act, H.R. 3248, won House approval unanimously by voice vote. The Senate is scheduled to consider the House legislation later this week. If the Senate gives the bill final congressional approval, the White House has said President Bush would sign it into law. Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., is the chief Senate sponsor of the bill.

For family caregivers, respite care is the ability to find temporary relief from care-giving - time to prepare meals, run errands or simply to take a break. The legislation would coordinate federal respite services and provide \$289 million during five years in grants to states to train volunteers and offer information counseling and other respite care services.

Rep. Ferguson said the advantages of family care-giving include delaying or even avoiding institutionalized care, which is dramatically more expensive for both families and taxpayers.

"While the benefits of in-home care can be significant for the family compared to institutionalized care, the cost for the caregiver - from emotional to financial - can be enormous," Rep. Ferguson said on the House floor during debate on his bill. "America's family caregivers just need a break, and this legislation lets these individuals know that help is on the way."

Rep. Ferguson began working on the legislation more than two years ago. He said he was motivated to push the effort after seeing the care-giving his father, Tom, provided his mother, Roberta, for six years as she battled multiple myeloma.

"My own family's experience gave me a firsthand perspective about care-giving and how important a brief break can be for family caregivers," Rep. Ferguson said. "There are tens of millions of family caregivers across the country who provide the same loving and compassionate care that I saw my dad provide for my mom near the end of her life. In our family, we were fortunate to have a support structure of relatives and friends who were able to provide a break for my dad when he really needed one. But other caregivers are not blessed with a similar built-in support structure, and they're desperately in need of a respite."

Karen Pinter of Hillsborough provides round-the-clock in-home care for her 10-year-old autistic daughter, Jessica. For Mrs. Pinter, respite means receiving \$40 once-a-week from the New Jersey Family Support Center to hire a tutor for her daughter. With the tutor, Mrs. Pinter can take a much-needed break to do simple things for herself and her family, like writing out the week's grocery list, preparing dinner, paying bills or simply taking a break herself.

Eugenia and Roger Gore of Scotch Plains use respite funds so their 13-year-old autistic son can attend an extended-day program at school, which enables Eugenia Gore to work outside the home to help their family make ends meet.

Under the bill, families like the Pinters and Gores could benefit from federal grants given to states to coordinate and administer respite care programs. States like New Jersey

WFMS Red Cross Reports on Drill

WESTFIELD — Fifteen Red Cross volunteers from the Westfield/Mountainside Chapter with other local agencies conducted a drill focusing on "Disasters do not take a Holiday" last Saturday. The drill began at 9 a.m. with a call from the police dispatcher initiated by the Westfield Office of Emergency Management. The Red Cross was requested to provide shelter and food for 30 to 40 people affected by a mock disaster.

Those of the Red Cross facilitated the response at the Chapter House on Elm Street. By 9:45 a.m., volunteers were registering clients at town hall that was converted into a shelter for the day. By 10:30 a.m., more than 30 clients were provided with coffee, tea and refreshments.

Volunteers provided counseling, health services and recreational activities. The Westfield Fire Department assisted in setting up the shelter. The Westfield First Aid assisted with medical emergencies. Throughout the day, the Westfield police monitored the shelter. The Westfield recreational department also provided assistance.

A lunch of spaghetti, meatballs, salad, rolls, fruit, pudding and Jello was provided to 50 people. A lecture and an information kit were also presented on preparing for disasters.

The Red Cross said the drill was a success and validated the Westfield/Mountainside Chapter's ability to set up a shelter and serve the needs of the community in a time of disaster. They thank all who participated, including the Westfield Fire Department, Office of Emergency Management, the Westfield First Aid Squad, Westfield Recreation Department, the First Presbyterian Church and volunteers.

could apply to the federal Department of Health and Human Services to receive grants to establish respite care programs to deliver relief to family caregivers.

The legislation would create a national coordinated approach among different levels of government and advocacy groups to help those who need respite care to find it, qualify for it or pay for it.

National, state and local advocacy groups endorsed Ferguson's bill, including the AARP, Alzheimer's Association, Epilepsy Foundation, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Paralyzed Veterans of America, The Arc of the United States and United Cerebral Palsy.

For more information, contact Angie Lundberg of Congressman Ferguson's office at (202) 226-9695.



LIGHT SHOW... Parker 3D of Scotch Plains, working with lighting programmer Carson Williams, created a show of lights and sound for the Northfield Stapleton Mall in Denver for the holiday season. The show consists of a three-song presentation that synchronizes 250,000 LED lights to the music of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. Parker 3D creative director John Carter, known for his designs for NYC Christmas windows, joined in the work, which took nearly six months of planning. Visit forestcity.tv/videos/symphony700k.wmv to see a video of the show.

Scotch Plains Company Lights Up Denver Mall

SCOTCH PLAINS - Parker 3D of Scotch Plains created a show of lights and sound that covers the area of a football field in Denver for the holiday season. Entitled "Symphony in Lights," the show consists of a three-song presentation that synchronizes 250,000 LED lights to the music of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra.

The show was created in conjunction with Forest City Development for the Northfield Stapleton Mall, Denver's newest lifestyle shopping center. In planning for nearly six months, the project used a team of 50 professionals ranging from electricians to sound engineers who worked for more than 15 days to complete the installation.

Lighting programmer Carson Williams, who received national attention for his home light display, and creative director John Carter, known for his designs for NYC Christmas windows, joined in the work.

The show is free and will continue until December 31. There are four shows nightly on the hour beginning at 6 p.m.

Parker 3D presents holidays all over the US, including Madison Square Garden, the SONY atrium on Madison Avenue and the Tropicana Casino in Atlantic City. The company is part of 58-year-old Parker Interior Plantscape in Scotch Plains.

To view a video of the show, go to: forestcity.tv/videos/symphony700k.wmv. For information, call Christine Fletcher at (908) 322-5552, see parker3d.com or e-mail chris@parkerplants.com.

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UMDNJ spokeswoman Anna Fameski said university officials had not seen the lawsuit and could not comment.

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Wines & Spirits Marketplace

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