

Florida support needed for Pepper's Aging Committee | Opinion

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Bravo to Thomas J. Spulak whose excellent opinion piece, “Remembering the legacy of Senator Claude Pepper, appeared in the Tallahassee Democrat on May 29th, one day before Florida Congressman Claude Pepper’s passing almost 30 years ago.

Although Spulak, President of the Claude Pepper Foundation, tells a through story as to Pepper’s impact on the world stage of foreign affairs, his fight against poverty, for equal payment and an adequate minimum wage, and improving the nation’s health care, it barely scratched the surface as to his accomplishments in fighting for the nation’s seniors.

More: [Remembering the legacy of Senator Claude Pepper | Opinion](#)

As Bob Weiner, the former staff director to Pepper when he chaired the House Select Committee on Aging (HSCoA), stated, Pepper’s congressional legacy, especially as he grew older, was chairing the HSCoA, which featured banning mandatory retirement (with Colonel Sanders as a witness), protecting nursing homes, expanding home health care, and protecting Social



Security with solvency through 2034.”

Last March, the Leadership Council on Aging Organization endorsed Rhode Island Congressman David Cicilline’s H. Res. 583, reestablishing the HSCoA. Two months later, the Coalition to Strengthen Social Security announced its support of the resolution, too. The two national coalitions represent almost 400 national and state aging organization’s conservatively representing almost 100 million voters age 50 and over.

After Pepper’s passing, no national advocate has emerged to take the place of the former Chairman of the House Aging Committee, who served as its chair for six years. As a result,

House Democratic lawmakers and aging advocates are forced every new session of Congress to fend off proposals to cut aging programs, Social Security, and Medicare.

Today, H. Res. 583 has only 50 co-sponsors, six from Florida. It's time for 21 Florida lawmakers to join their six colleagues to step up to the plate and become cosponsors for Cicilline's resolution.

If not for the fact that it is sound aging policy, support should be given to celebrate Pepper's legacy and legislative impact that has enhanced the quality of life of the nation's seniors.

Herb Weiss is a Pawtucket, Rhode Island-based writer who has covered covering aging, health care and medical issues for over 40 years. His weekly editorials appear in two Rhode Island daily newspapers and RINewsday, a statewide news blog. Weiss covered Pepper's Pepper's HSCoA's legislative hearings, during his tenure as HSCoA Chair and as Chair, and ultimately its Aging & Long-Term Care Subcommittee.

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