

Consumer Power Report CPR# 145, September 17, 2008

We lost a giant this week. J. Patrick Rooney passed away on September 15 in Indianapolis. More than anyone else, Mr. Rooney was responsible for moving the political agenda in favor of consumer driven health care, first by working with Andy Jacobs (D-IN), chairman of the Health Subcommittee of Ways and Means and then with Bill Archer (R-TX), Chairman of the entire Committee after the Republican revolution of 1994, to get Medical Savings Accounts enacted into law in 1996.

Pat continued to work on consumer empowerment until his death. He helped get HSAs enacted in 2003, and more recently has been working on fair hospital pricing for self-pay patients through his Fairness Foundation. Only four months ago he had his first book published with co-author Dan Perrin, "America's Health Care Crisis Solved." (see our review in CPR #129, May 28, 2008)

The opponents of consumer empowerment used Pat as a whipping boy, with Pete Stark calling him "that crazy old man in Indianapolis" (looked in the mirror lately, Pete?), but Pat was resolute, and not just on health care issues. He was a complete vegetarian and wouldn't even use animal products in clothing. He was as anti-racist as anyone I've ever met. He belonged to a mostly black Catholic church and was a vehement opponent of racial bias in educational testing. He was one of the preeminent backers of vouchers for poor children and helped create private scholarship programs for inner city kids around the country.

I am grateful that we at Consumers for Health Care Choices were able to give Pat a small smidgeon of the recognition he deserved by presenting him with our Lifetime Achievement Award in December, 2006. See his presentation at --
<http://health.scribemedial.org/2007/03/05/lifetime-achievement-award-patrick-rooney/>

God doesn't send us many people of the caliber of J. Patrick Rooney, but we should appreciate the gift when he does.

-- Greg Scandlen