Most of us physicians do good work on a daily basis. With a busy schedule every day that we are working—and we work a lot—most of us find it hard to get involved in community activities. We rarely get involved heavily in political campaigns. Most of us have not gone to the state house or to Congress to lobby our representatives on behalf of medicine. Yet we know of some physicians who are so inclined.

J. Roy Rowland, MD, is one such person. After many years of private practice in Dublin, Georgia, he got involved deeply in organized medicine. He got his feet wet with an organization called CONTROL, advocating a limit to government interference with medical care. He was a stalwart in the Medical Association of Georgia. He served in the Georgia Legislature for 6 years before retiring from practice and taking the incredible risk of running for Congress against an incumbent. He won and was reelected five times. He had a distinguished career for 12 years in the US House of Representatives from 1983 to 1995. In his autobiography, he outlines this exciting story of his life’s work in medicine and government service. This encompassed the time of Ronald Reagan’s presidency, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the banning of Quaaludes, the Iran/Contra affair, and many other smaller issues. As one of the few physicians in Congress at the time, he became a respected leader when health care reform was front and center with the Clinton presidency.

This book is a captivating story of the times, the struggles, and the ultimate stalemate on health care reform. Just how close he came to forging a more moderate alternative to the Clinton plan becomes apparent to the reader. Spiced with humor and wise perspective, this book is a great guide for physicians. How to become more involved (the good, the bad, and the ugly) becomes clear through his life story. It is amazing how he kept his head on straight and maintained humility and a gentle persistence to act for the common good. I could not put the book down. I encourage physicians to read this newly published 300-pager. It tells a story for all time to remember about a great man who makes us proud to say we are his fellow physicians. We can learn much from his example.

The reviewer, Thomas B. Gore, MD, is a cardiologist in Lagrange, Georgia.