

Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2008—S. Con. Res. 21; Revisions to the Conference Agreement Pursuant to Section 310 Deficit-neutral Reserve Fund for Terrorism Risk Insurance Reauthorization—Continued

FY 2008 Budget Authority	13,496
FY 2008 Outlays	-1,678
FY 2008-2012 Budget Authority	67,193
FY 2008-2012 Outlays	-15,443

DOCTOR'S PAYMENT FIX

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I wish to address the issue of what is commonly referred to as the Medicare "doctor fix." Unless Congress acts, there will be a 10-percent reduction to Medicare reimbursement rates in the coming year; putting good doctors further at odds with Medicare payments for their service.

This is a problem that not only affects patients with Medicare but also our military veterans, many of whom rely on Medicare as their primary health care provider.

Delaying the issue will put our veterans relying—on Tricare until the age of 65 and Medicare after retirement—at increased risk of additional health problems if their ability to see a doctor remains in question.

If not addressed, millions of Americans could be denied immediate access to treatment when they need it most. It would also put an even greater strain on doctors, who are already forced to be selective in determining which Medicare patients they can treat.

This is a choice no doctor should have to make, and our seniors and doctors deserve better. We have the opportunity to act before we leave in the coming days, and I urge my colleagues to consider the consequences that would result from an additional cut to the program.

In my home State of Florida, the dilemma has reached a critical mass, with an increasing number of doctors leaving the program—refusing to continue treating a very vulnerable population. All because the bureaucracy is too much and reimbursement is too low.

These are doctors that play important roles in treating seniors in their communities. These are doctors like Dr. Troy Tippet, a neurosurgeon in Pensacola, who is often faced with the choice of continuing to treat Medicare patients at a loss or refuse them because of declining reimbursements from Medicare.

Dr. Tippet was so worried about the threat of further cuts to the Medicare reimbursements he receives, he recently called to let me know the detrimental impact the declining reimbursement rate would have on his ability to continue treating Medicare patients.

I hope for the sake of good doctors like Dr. Tippet we can develop a comprehensive, long-term solution that fixes this problem once and for all.

This is a problem, I believe, that we must fix soon, rather than kicking the

can down the road and hoping the next Congress will provide an answer to the more than 40-million Medicare patients. But today, we can do our part by opposing a cut to the broken payment system that penalizes our doctors for treating Medicare patients.

We owe it to the people who have worked so hard in life and need quality care now more than ever. We also owe it to the doctors who treat them on a regular basis.

I urge my colleagues to support fixing the reimbursement rate that so many doctors in my State—and around the country—depend on, especially in the face of rising medical costs and skyrocketing medical malpractice insurance premiums.

It is my understanding that we are very close to coming to agreement on a doctor fix and that floor action could occur very soon. I am hopeful we will have the opportunity to approve that fix. We must act because our physicians and their patients are counting on us.

And while I am pleased we are about to address the problem—let's not make the mistake of leaving it as a short-term fix. The American people deserve a long-term solution. I look forward to coming back next year and working on a permanent "doctor fix."

RENEWABLE CONSUMER AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACT

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, today, I am pleased that the Congress is sending energy legislation to the President. For too long, the United States has taken a back seat in the fight against global warming. This bill is a good first step in moving our Nation's energy policy in the right direction.

Without the support of a number of Senators, this legislation, and title I in particular, would not have been possible. I wish to extend particular thanks to Senators FEINSTEIN, STEVENS, LEVIN, SNOWE, KERRY, DORGAN, LOTT, CARPER, BOXER, DURBIN, ALEXANDER, CORKER, and CANTWELL for their work in increasing automobile fuel economy standards.

In addition, the tireless efforts of groups dedicated to conservation and improving national security were vital to enacting this legislation. Of special note is the support of a nonpartisan group of business executives and retired senior military leaders concerned about global energy security, known as Securing America's Future Energy, SAFE. I am grateful for the support and hard work of its leaders, Frederick W. Smith and General P.X. Kelley, as well as Robbie Diamond, who served as their liaison. The Union of Concerned Scientists—David Friedman in particular—provided significant technical support and advocacy for the Ten-in-Ten Fuel Economy Act.

The White House says that the President will sign the bill tomorrow. I thank him for taking swift action on this landmark legislation.

NEW CENTURY FARM PROGRAMS

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I certify that neither I nor any of my family members have a pecuniary interest in the New Century Farm Programs for which I requested congressionally directed spending via floor action on Harkin amendment No. 3500, a substitute to H.R. 2419.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, this chamber approved the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act. I am particularly pleased with the inclusion of an important provision contained in section 846 of the legislation to modernize the whistleblower protections afforded to defense contractor employees. At a time when reports of fraud, waste, and abuse in defense contracts are rampant, it is absolutely vital that we have in place the types of whistleblower protections for contractor employees that I will empower them in reporting such abuse and therefore will protect those who wish to protect American taxpayer dollars.

I would like to thank Senator COLLINS for working with me on this important provision and further thank Senators LEVIN and MCCAIN for their leadership and stewardship of this provision through the Senate and conference-considerations of the Defense Authorization Act.

I come to the floor, however, to make one explanatory clarification as to the final language of this amendment because I think it critical that the record be clear as to the intent of the Congress. Last year in *Garcetti v. Ceballos*, the Supreme Court canceled constitutional protection for speech made within the normal course of an employee's execution of his or her job duties, specifically because those disclosures are covered by other whistleblower statutes. There should be absolutely no confusion that the Congress believes that the logic and holding of *Garcetti* is inapplicable to the defense contractor whistleblower protection statute, 10 U.S.C. 2409, as amended by section 846 of this act.

Disclosures taken to carry out job responsibilities, within the normal course of an employee's duties, are protected by this provision for three core reasons. First, they are essential preliminary steps for a responsible disclosure to the government. Second, often they in fact are indirect disclosures to Government inspectors, auditors, and investigators who must study associated internal corporate records to engage in informed oversight. Third, the purpose of whistleblower statutes is to reduce waste. But waste would be maximized if employees had to avoid their own organizations and go straight to the Government in order to avoid waiving their whistleblower rights. The law's goal is maximized by employees being empowered to safely