

that. So I appreciate that very much. I encourage a “no” vote on this. We will separate the two, vote them up or down, go home and explain them, and be proud of what we are doing in the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, colleagues, this bipartisan package is the biggest tax cut for working families and the biggest anti-poverty plan Congress has moved forward in decades, and it is the biggest bipartisan tax agreement in 15 years.

All together, 50 million Americans are going to benefit from the child tax credit and the expanded earned-income tax credit because they are made permanent. And on a permanent basis, students will be able to count on the American opportunity tax credit to cover up to \$10,000 of a 4-year college education. That is a lot of money they won't have to borrow.

This also includes a permanent tax break for research and development, which for the first time will be available on a widespread basis to help small businesses and startups pay wages—a booster shot for the innovation economy in America. There will be permanent small business expensing that is going to help our employers invest and grow.

To just wrap up, it will include permanent small business expensing to help many employers invest and grow and create new highways and high-skilled jobs for our people. I believe, finally, this clears the deck for us to move to comprehensive bipartisan tax reform because it provides the breathing room Congress needs to throw the broken Tax Code into the trash can and get bipartisan tax reform.

So I urge my colleagues to waive the budget point of order, give millions of families across this country the predictability and certainty they need on their taxes, and put this Congress on a path toward achieving bipartisan comprehensive tax reform in the days ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 73, nays 25, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 338 Leg.]

YEAS—73

Alexander	Barrasso	Blunt
Ayotte	Bennet	Booker
Baldwin	Blumenthal	Boozman

Brown	Heinrich	Perdue
Cantwell	Heitkamp	Peters
Capito	Heller	Reed
Cardin	Hirono	Reid
Casey	Hoeven	Roberts
Coats	Inhofe	Rounds
Cochran	Isakson	Schatz
Collins	Johnson	Schumer
Cooms	Kaine	Scott
Corker	Kirk	Shaheen
Cornyn	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cotton	Leahy	Sullivan
Donnelly	Markey	Thune
Durbin	McCain	Tillis
Ernst	McConnell	Toomey
Feinstein	Merkley	Udall
Franken	Mikulski	Vitter
Gardner	Moran	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murkowski	Wicker
Graham	Murphy	Wyden
Grassley	Murray	
Hatch	Nelson	

NAYS—25

Burr	King	Sanders
Carper	Lankford	Sasse
Cassidy	Lee	Sessions
Crapo	Manchin	Shelby
Cruz	McCaskill	Tester
Daines	Menendez	Warner
Enzi	Paul	Warren
Fischer	Portman	
Flake	Risch	

NOT VOTING—2

Boxer Rubio

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 73, the nays are 25.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion to waive is agreed to.

MOTION TO CONCUR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question now occurs on the motion to concur.

There is 2 minutes for debate equally divided.

The majority's time is yielded back.

The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, this is a bill that protects America. It rebuilds it and invests in the future. I think it is a great bill, as a result of bipartisan effort.

Let's vote for it, and may the force be with us.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the motion to concur.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) would have voted “No.”

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 65, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 339 Leg.]

YEAS—65

Alexander	Feinstein	Mikulski
Ayotte	Franken	Murkowski
Baldwin	Gardner	Murphy
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Murray
Bennet	Graham	Nelson
Blumenthal	Hatch	Perdue
Blunt	Heinrich	Peters
Booker	Heitkamp	Reed
Brown	Heller	
Cantwell	Hirono	Roberts
Capito	Hoeven	Rounds
Cardin	Inhofe	Schatz
Carper	Isakson	Schumer
Casey	Johnson	Shaheen
Coats	Kaine	Stabenow
Cochran	King	Tillis
Collins	Kirk	Udall
Coons	Klobuchar	Warner
Corker	Lankford	Warren
Cornyn	Leahy	Whitehouse
Donnelly	McConnell	Wicker
Durbin	Menendez	

NAYS—33

Boozman	Grassley	Sanders
Burr	Lee	Sasse
Cassidy	Manchin	Scott
Cotton	Markey	Sessions
Crapo	McCain	Shelby
Cruz	McCaskill	Sullivan
Daines	Merkley	Tester
Enzi	Moran	Thune
Ernst	Paul	Toomey
Fischer	Portman	Vitter
Flake	Risch	Wyden

NOT VOTING—2

Boxer Rubio

The motion was agreed to.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

PATIENT ACCESS AND MEDICARE PROTECTION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. 2425.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2425) to amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to improve payments for complex rehabilitation technology and certain radiation therapy services, to ensure flexibility in applying the hardship exception for meaningful use for the 2015 EHR reporting period for 2017 payment adjustments, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I know of no further debate on this measure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (S. 2425) was passed, as follows:

S. 2425

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Patient Access and Medicare Protection Act”.

SEC. 2. NON-APPLICATION OF MEDICARE FEE SCHEDULE ADJUSTMENTS FOR WHEELCHAIR ACCESSORIES AND SEAT AND BACK CUSHIONS WHEN FURNISHED IN CONNECTION WITH COMPLEX REHABILITATIVE POWER WHEELCHAIRS.**(a) NON-APPLICATION.—**

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall not, prior to January 1, 2017, use information on the payment determined under the competitive acquisition programs under section 1847 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w-3) to adjust the payment amount that would otherwise be recognized under section 1834(a)(1)(B)(ii) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1395m(a)(1)(B)(ii)) for wheelchair accessories (including seating systems) and seat and back cushions when furnished in connection with Group 3 complex rehabilitative power wheelchairs.

(2) IMPLEMENTATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary may implement this subsection by program instruction or otherwise.

(b) GAO STUDY AND REPORT.—**(1) STUDY.—**

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study on wheelchair accessories (including seating systems) and seat and back cushions furnished in connection with Group 3 complex rehabilitative power wheelchairs. Such study shall include an analysis of the following with respect to such wheelchair accessories and seat and back cushions in each of the groups described in clauses (i) through (iii) of subparagraph (B):

(i) The item descriptions and associated HCPCS codes for such wheelchair accessories and seat and back cushions.

(ii) A breakdown of utilization and expenditures for such wheelchair accessories and seat and back cushions under title XVIII of the Social Security Act.

(iii) A comparison of the payment amount under the competitive acquisition program under section 1847 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w-3) with the payment amount that would otherwise be recognized under section 1834 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1395m), including beneficiary cost sharing, for such wheelchair accessories and seat and back cushions.

(iv) The aggregate distribution of such wheelchair accessories and seat and back cushions furnished under such title XVIII within each of the groups described in subparagraph (B).

(v) Other areas determined appropriate by the Comptroller General.

(B) GROUPS DESCRIBED.—The following groups are described in this subparagraph:

(i) Wheelchair accessories and seat and back cushions furnished predominantly with Group 3 complex rehabilitative power wheelchairs.

(ii) Wheelchair accessories and seat and back cushions furnished predominantly with power wheelchairs that are not described in clause (i).

(iii) Other wheelchair accessories and seat and back cushions furnished with either power wheelchairs described in clause (i) or (ii).

(2) REPORT.—Not later than June 1, 2016, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report containing the results of the study conducted under paragraph (1), together with recommendations for such legislation and administrative as the Comptroller General determines to be appropriate.

SEC. 3. TRANSITIONAL PAYMENT RULES FOR CERTAIN RADIATION THERAPY SERVICES UNDER THE MEDICARE PHYSICIAN FEE SCHEDULE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1848 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w-4) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(11) SPECIAL RULE FOR CERTAIN RADIATION THERAPY SERVICES.—The code definitions, the work relative value units under subsection (c)(2)(C)(i), and the direct inputs for the practice expense relative value units under subsection (c)(2)(C)(ii) for radiation treatment delivery and related imaging services (identified in 2016 by HCPCS G-codes G6001 through G6015) for the fee schedule established under this subsection for services furnished in 2017 and 2018 shall be the same as such definitions, units, and inputs for such services for the fee schedule established for services furnished in 2016.”; and

(2) in subsection (c)(2)(K), by adding at the end the following new clause:

“(iv) TREATMENT OF CERTAIN RADIATION THERAPY SERVICES.—Radiation treatment delivery and related imaging services identified under subsection (b)(11) shall not be considered as potentially misvalued services for purposes of this subparagraph and subparagraph (O) for 2017 and 2018.”.

(b) REPORT TO CONGRESS ON ALTERNATIVE PAYMENT MODEL.—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall submit to Congress a report on the development of an episodic alternative payment model for payment under the Medicare program under title XVIII of the Social Security Act for radiation therapy services furnished in nonfacility settings.

SEC. 4. ENSURING FLEXIBILITY IN APPLYING HARDSHIP EXCEPTION FOR MEANINGFUL USE FOR 2015 EHR REPORTING PERIOD FOR 2017 PAYMENT ADJUSTMENTS.

(a) ELIGIBLE PROFESSIONALS.—Section 1848(a)(7)(B) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w-4(a)(7)(B)) is amended, in the first sentence, by inserting “(and, with respect to the payment adjustment under subparagraph (A) for 2017, for categories of eligible professionals, as established by the Secretary and posted on the Internet website of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services prior to December 15, 2015, an application for which must be submitted to the Secretary by not later than March 15, 2016)” after “case-by-case basis”.

(b) ELIGIBLE HOSPITALS.—Section 1886(b)(3)(B)(ix) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395ww(b)(3)(B)(ix)) is amended—

(1) in the first sentence of subclause (I), by striking “(n)(6)(A)” and inserting “(n)(6)”; and

(2) in subclause (II), in the first sentence, by inserting “(and, with respect to the application of subclause (I) for fiscal year 2017, for categories of subsection (d) hospitals, as established by the Secretary and posted on the Internet website of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services prior to December 15, 2015, an application for which must be submitted to the Secretary by not later than April 1, 2016)” after “case-by-case basis”.

(c) IMPLEMENTATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall implement the provisions of, and the amendments made by, subsections (a) and (b) by program instruction, such as through information on the Internet website of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

SEC. 5. MEDICARE IMPROVEMENT FUND.

Section 1898(b)(1) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395iii(b)(1)) is amended by striking “\$5,000,000” and inserting “\$0”.

SEC. 6. STRENGTHENING MEDICAID PROGRAM INTEGRITY THROUGH FLEXIBILITY.

Section 1936 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396u-6) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by inserting “, or otherwise,” after “entities”; and

(2) in subsection (e)—

(A) in paragraph (1), in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by inserting “(including the costs of equipment, salaries and benefits, and travel and training)” after “Program under this section”; and

(B) in paragraph (3), by striking “by 100” and inserting “by 100, or such number as determined necessary by the Secretary to carry out the Program.”.

SEC. 7. ESTABLISHING MEDICARE ADMINISTRATIVE CONTRACTOR ERROR REDUCTION INCENTIVES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1874A(b)(1)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395kk-1(b)(1)(D)) is amended—

(1) by striking “QUALITY.—The Secretary” and inserting “QUALITY.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—Subject to clauses (ii) and (iii), the Secretary”; and

(2) by inserting after clause (i), as added by paragraph (1), the following new clauses:

“(ii) IMPROPER PAYMENT RATE REDUCTION INCENTIVES.—The Secretary shall provide incentives for medicare administrative contractors to reduce the improper payment error rates in their jurisdictions.

“(iii) INCENTIVES.—The incentives provided for under clause (ii)—

“(I) may include a sliding scale of award fee payments and additional incentives to medicare administrative contractors that either reduce the improper payment rates in their jurisdictions to certain thresholds, as determined by the Secretary, or accomplish tasks, as determined by the Secretary, that further improve payment accuracy; and

“(II) may include substantial reductions in award fee payments under cost-plus-award-fee contracts, for medicare administrative contractors that reach an upper end improper payment rate threshold or other threshold as determined by the Secretary, or fail to accomplish tasks, as determined by the Secretary, that further improve payment accuracy.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply to contracts entered into or renewed on or after the date that is 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

(2) APPLICATION TO EXISTING CONTRACTS.—In the case of contracts in existence on or after the date of the enactment of this Act and that are not subject to the effective date under paragraph (1), the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall, when appropriate and practicable, seek to apply the incentives provided for in the amendments made by subsection (a) through contract modifications.

SEC. 8. STRENGTHENING PENALTIES FOR THE ILLEGAL DISTRIBUTION OF A MEDICARE, MEDICAID, OR CHIP BENEFICIARY IDENTIFICATION OR BILLING PRIVILEGES.

Section 1128B(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1320a-7b(b)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(4) Whoever without lawful authority knowingly and willfully purchases, sells or distributes, or arranges for the purchase, sale, or distribution of a beneficiary identification number or unique health identifier for a health care provider under title XVIII, title XIX, or title XXI shall be imprisoned for not more than 10 years or fined not more than \$500,000 (\$1,000,000 in the case of a corporation), or both.”.

SEC. 9. IMPROVING THE SHARING OF DATA BETWEEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND STATE MEDICAID PROGRAMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Health and Human Services (in this section referred to as the “Secretary”) shall establish a plan to encourage and facilitate the participation of States in the Medicare-Medicaid Data Match Program (commonly referred to as the “Medi-Medi Program”) under section 1893(g) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395ddd(g)).

(b) PROGRAM REVISIONS TO IMPROVE MEDICAID DATA MATCH PROGRAM PARTICIPATION BY STATES.—Section 1893(g)(1)(A) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395ddd(g)(1)(A)) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding clause (i), by inserting “or otherwise” after “eligible entities”;

(2) in clause (i)—

(A) by inserting “to review claims data” after “algorithms”; and

(B) by striking “service, time, or patient” and inserting “provider, service, time, or patient”;

(3) in clause (ii)—

(A) by inserting “to investigate and recover amounts with respect to suspect claims” after “appropriate actions”; and

(B) by striking “; and” and inserting a semicolon;

(4) in clause (iii), by striking the period and inserting “; and”;

(5) by adding at the end the following new clause:

“(iv) furthering the Secretary’s design, development, installation, or enhancement of an automated data system architecture—

“(I) to collect, integrate, and assess data for purposes of program integrity, program oversight, and administration, including the Medi-Medi Program; and

“(II) that improves the coordination of requests for data from States.”.

(c) PROVIDING STATES WITH DATA ON IMPROPER PAYMENTS MADE FOR ITEMS OR SERVICES PROVIDED TO DUAL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall develop and implement a plan that allows each State agency responsible for administering a State plan for medical assistance under title XIX of the Social Security Act access to relevant data on improper or fraudulent payments made under the Medicare program under title XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.) for health care items or services provided to dual eligible individuals.

(2) DUAL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUAL DEFINED.—In this section, the term “dual eligible individual” means an individual who is entitled to, or enrolled for, benefits under part A of title XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395c et seq.), or enrolled for benefits under part B of title XVIII of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1395j et seq.), and is eligible for medical assistance under a State plan under title XIX of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.) or under a waiver of such plan.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MICROBEAD-FREE WATERS ACT OF 2015

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 1321, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1321) to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to prohibit the manufacture and introduction or delivery for introduction into interstate commerce of rinse-off cosmetics containing intentionally-added plastic microbeads.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, across the country, many State and local governments, including counties in New York, have moved to ban products that contain plastic microbeads.

Because of their leadership and because of the advocacy from scientists and others who have shown us the damage that microbeads can do, Congress came together to unanimously ban plastic microbeads from rinse-off cosmetic products.

This is a great bill, and it shows that we can pass smart environmental legislation here in Washington.

Plastic microbeads are the tiny pieces of plastic that we often see in toothpaste, hand lotion, or various other personal care products.

When we brush our teeth and wash our face, most of us don’t consider these acts to be harmful in any way.

But plastic microbeads are smaller than 5 millimeters in size, which means they are too small to be captured by the filtration systems in our water treatment centers.

So these plastic microbeads end up leaching into our lakes, our rivers, our streams, our bays, and even our drinking water supplies.

It might be surprising that a piece of plastic so small can cause such outsized damage.

But we have heard from a wide range of constituents and business groups that all recognize the damage, and all recommended that Congress act to remove plastic microbeads from the marketplace.

We have heard it from the fishing industry, from the tourism industry, from the culinary industry. Even the cosmetics industry is supportive of this ban. Many cosmetics companies have already voluntarily stopped using microbeads themselves.

When tiny plastic microbeads get into the water, they attract pollutants that are already in the water, and they concentrate these pollutants to potentially dangerous levels.

Fish don’t know what microbeads are, so they eat them and end up ingesting all of the pollutants stuck on the microbeads.

This disrupts the food chain, it contaminates huge portions of the wildlife population, and it hurts our commercial and recreational fishing industries, because they can’t sell—and we can’t eat—fish that are filled with toxic plastic.

Many of our counties, cities, and States took the lead on this issue, and they should be commended for that.

But local action isn’t enough to solve a nationwide problem like this—not when so many communities in different States are connected by the same bodies of water—because no one is immune when our waterways are contaminated.

Congress had a responsibility to act—to stop the flow of microbeads into our waterways.

And today we are doing our job in passing this Federal ban on these products.

The Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015 will prohibit the manufacture of rinse-off cosmetic products containing plastic microbeads starting in 2017 and will ensure that they are off retail shelves by 2018.

And while this bill preempts States from regulating rinse-off products containing plastic microbeads differently from the Federal ban, individual States will still have the ability to restrict microbeads in other types of products.

Additionally, the preemption language in this bill restricts their manufacture and distribution in interstate commerce and should not prevent States or local governments from regulating how microbeads are disposed of under laws such as the Clean Water Act.

States can also co-enforce the Federal ban by enacting identical laws.

This is a great bipartisan bill. And it is a smart step forward, as we look for new ways to protect our environment.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 1321) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

ELECTRIFY AFRICA ACT OF 2015

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 291, S. 2152.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2152) to establish a comprehensive United States Government policy to encourage the efforts of countries in sub-Saharan Africa to develop an appropriate mix of power solutions, including renewable energy, for more broadly distributed electricity access in order to support poverty reduction, promote development outcomes, and drive economic growth, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with amendments.

(Omit the parts in boldface brackets and insert the parts printed in italic.)

S. 2152

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,