

Finance Committee's chronic care bill means seniors with multiple chronic illnesses will have their individual needs better met and get the type of care they need earlier.

It is my judgment that the Finance Committee has no job more significant than updating the Medicare guarantee, and that is exactly what today is all about. The CHRONIC Care Act begins a transformational change in the way Medicare works for seniors who suffer from chronic illnesses like cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease.

If you could bring the lawmakers responsible for the creation of Medicare into 2017, they would barely recognize the program they created more than half a century ago. Back then, if a senior needed surgery for a broken hip, he or she visited a hospital and used Medicare Part A. If a senior needed treatment for a nasty bout of the flu, he or she visited their doctor and used Part B.

Today, more than 90 percent of the Medicare dollar goes toward seniors who have two or more chronic conditions. Today's seniors get their care in a variety of ways. It is not just fee-for-service; there are Medicare Advantage, Accountable Care Organizations, and other new systems under development.

Keeping up with those changes—updating the Medicare guarantee—is a big policymaking challenge, and that is why the Finance Committee worked so hard, for so long, to get this bill across the finish line. There are still more steps before these policies reach the President's desk, but with strong bipartisan backing of the entire U.S. Senate, I am confident the job will get done.

The CHRONIC Care Act will mean more care at home and less in institutions. It will expand the use of life-saving technology. It places a stronger focus on primary care. It gives seniors, however they get Medicare, more tools and options to receive care specifically targeted to address their chronic illnesses and keep them healthy. Those are all important steps forward in updating the Medicare guarantee. Still to come is ensuring that every senior with multiple chronic conditions has an advocate to help them navigate through the Byzantine healthcare system.

Finally just a few points about the bipartisan process leading to this bill's passage today. The Finance Committee, in my view, has handed the Congress a model for how to legislate on a bipartisan basis. I want to thank Chairman HATCH, with whom I formed a bipartisan chronic care working group almost exactly 2 years ago, and I want to thank Senators WARNER and ISAKSON who generously took on the challenge of leading it.

Of course this bill wouldn't have materialized at all if not for the sweat equity put in by staff. Somewhere amid all the endless hours of work that went into writing this bill, they found time for multiple weddings, the birth of

three children, and a handful of job changes. Thank you to Karen Fisher, Hannah Hawkins, Kelsey Avery, Leigh Stuckhardt, Liz Jurinka, Beth Vrabel, and Matt Kazan—our chronic care lead—all on my team. Chairman HATCH, I thank you for your commitment to keep working on this and to your staff, including Jay Khosla, Brett Baker, Jen Kuskowski, Katie Meyer-Simeon, and the chronic care lead, Erin Dempsey. Thank you also to Senators WARNER and ISAKSON for lending us Marvin Figueroa and Jordan Bartolomeo.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendment be agreed to, and the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time.

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

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

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

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate on the bill?

Hearing none, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall it pass?

The bill (S. 870), as amended, was passed.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, 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.

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—H.R. 3354

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the first time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3354) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2018, and for other purposes.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I now ask for a second reading and, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill will be read for the second time on the next legislative day.

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2017

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Wednesday, September 27; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be

deemed expired, the Journal of the proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; finally, that following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1519.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks from the Senator from Maryland, Mr. VAN HOLLEN.

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

The Senator from Maryland.

PUERTO RICO AND U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS RECOVERY EFFORT

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I want to start by saying a few words about what is happening in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands where, in front of our eyes on the television sets, we see a growing humanitarian crisis that needs our urgent attention.

Hurricane Maria has left unimaginable devastation. Less than half of the population of Puerto Rico has potable water. Cell service is out on 95 percent of the island, making it difficult to contact loved ones and call emergency services, and only 5 percent of the power grid in Puerto Rico is working.

My office has been fielding hundreds of calls from across the State of Maryland, some from constituents who are eager and desperate to reach their loved ones, others from fellow Americans who are watching the devastation and who are asking us to act quickly.

We all know that in the runups to Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, Texas and Florida braced for impact. We here in the Senate quickly organized to promise we would deliver the resources they would need to rebuild. We provided an emergency downpayment, and we gave them assurances that we would also stand ready to provide assistance when it comes to rebuilding.

We need to make that same urgent commitment to the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, our fellow Americans. The administration needs to bring to bear its full resources from the military, to the Army Corps, to FEMA to deliver critical supplies and access to people in all parts of those areas.

We have heard that we might get an emergency request for appropriations in a week or two. We need to move much more quickly, given the urgency of the situation; 3.5 million of our fellow Americans should not be left to languish without water or power. That is not who we are. We need all hands on deck, and we need them now, so I hope we will move on to that.